

Food Bank of the Southern Tier

CEO Report - February 2021

2021-23 Strategic Planning Update

After several months, we have completed our updated strategic plan with Jeanette Batiste of Batiste Leadership in Rochester. The primary focus of the plan was to incorporate the various learnings from our COVID response efforts into our work moving forward. As you may recall, we began this process in June with a SWOT analysis of staff and BOD that became the foundation of our discussions with Jeanette in Q4. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) drove the process with feedback from staff as well as the Executive Committee. The final plan articulates our desired future state and identifies five main strategic priorities as follows:

Desired-Future State

A client-focused, engaged, high-performing team, leading a collaborative effort across our region to ensure equitable access to nutritious food.

Priorities

1. **Culture.** Align the team around our shared purpose, values, and culture to build a cohesive, high-trust, and empowered organization.
2. **People.** Build programmatic and management capacity to sustain our commitment to high performance and increase the strength and continuity of the team.
3. **Equity.** Build and lead a vision for equity within our service area so that everyone can thrive.
4. **Relationships.** Lead and convene partners to engage in our shared mission and accelerate our impact.
5. **Data.** Collect and use data to build a nourished, more equitable food system.

The next step is to establish cross-departmental teams to take ownership and develop an actionable workplan for each priority. Many of the priorities will also be incorporated into our “Glide Path” along with recommendations from the recently completed Needs Assessment. The SLT has identified Equity as a critical priority for 2021 and we will continue working with Jeanette to help us make progress in that area.

Glide Path/Strategic Investment Fund Update

We have met two significant milestones in our Glide Path work over the last few weeks. First, Tim Currie put together a Net Asset Designation and Use Policy for the Finance Committee’s consideration earlier this month. Tim’s proposal included a **\$4.2M “Program & Capacity Building Fund”** that is separate from our property maintenance fund (\$928K) and operating reserves (\$2.5M) as required by Feeding America. Last week, Meghan Parsons and I participated in a webinar sponsored by Feeding America about how to best communicate with external stakeholders about our fundraising success in 2020 and what we plan to do with our surplus. We were pleased to discover that we had already done much of what they recommended including conducting a needs assessment, updating our strategic plan, and considering strategic investments that will help build our capacity as well as the capacity of our partner agencies. I also received information from my colleague at the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank about their \$17M **Strategic Investment Fund** which we plan to use as a template for developing our fund.

Second, we have received the final Needs Assessment report from Horn Consulting which includes many valuable insights and recommendations that will need to be incorporated in the Glide Path/Strategic Investment Fund. Jen Bertron, our Community Impact Manager, has been assigned to be the project manager for this process which will include opportunities for engaging our agency partners and clients before coming to the BOD for final approval in May or June.

In the meantime, we have identified three new capacity building positions to be funded as part of our Glide Path/Strategic Investment Fund as well as two temporary positions (1.5 FTEs) to be funded as part of our disaster relief activities.

New Glide Path capacity building positions: (100% year 1, 60% year 2, 30% year 3)

1. **Truck Driver (FILLED)**- Full-time, permanent position for anticipated increased distribution levels. Expands driver team from 7 to 8 FTEs.
2. **Programs & Partnerships Coordinator (FILLED)** (1) Full-time permanent position responsible for managing programs and partnerships in two counties. Reports to Programs & Partnerships Services Manager. Expands Programs & Partnerships division from 5 to 6 FTEs.
3. **Digital Communications Coordinator**- Full-time, permanent position responsible for all digital donor communications, social media and engagement data tracking. Expands Communications division from 1 to 2 FTEs.

Disaster Relief positions: (est. 12-24 months)

1. **Client Registration Specialist (FILLED)**- Full-time, temporary position to coordinate client registration process for Mobile Food Pantries until we can revert to previous, walk-up model.
2. **Client Registration Assistant (PROPOSED)**- Part-time, temporary position to assist with phone registration until we can revert to previous walk-up model.

Employee Engagement Survey

Since 2017, we have participated in Feeding America’s employee engagement survey. This year, the survey was delayed due to COVID and was sent to staff in November instead of August as in previous years. We were pleased to learn that despite the challenges presented by COVID, we saw a significant improvement in engagement level among Food Bank staff. According to the survey results, 81.2% of staff were either engaged or strongly engaged, compared to 73.6% in 2019. We also saw improvement in multiple categories including Manager Effectiveness, Communication and Personal Empowerment. This year’s survey included several COVID specific questions which showed that Food Bank staff felt supported and informed over the past several months. (See chart below)

Item	% Favorable
I feel well-supported by my food bank at this time.	80.0%
I feel well-supported by my manager at this time.	82.5%
The frequency of communication from food bank leaders has been effective.	75.0%
The communication from food bank leaders helps me feel informed.	85.0%
I have the materials and resources needed to perform my job safely in the workplace.	85.0%