The Member Services Department has scheduled a year full of informative and engaging training opportunities, including Agency Roundtable Sessions and the return of the Network Summit. The topics selected were based on feedback from the Agency Satisfaction Survey.

Agencies are strongly encouraged to attend one Agency Roundtable Session and the Network Summit on August 7, 2015. Agencies must attend one roundtable or the Network Summit in order to maintain grant eligibility.

If you have questions about these sessions, please contact Adrienne Bradley, Manager, Programs at abradley@acrfb.org or 330.777.2311.

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Visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/agency/events for full session descriptions and to RSVP. All sessions are at the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank.

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE PRODUCT LABELS?

As we gear up for spring food drives, it is a good time to refresh our knowledge on product labeling and what you need to know to ensure food safety at your program. LEARN MORE ON PG.2
22 MILLION MEALS IN 2014

2014 was a monumental year for the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. In partnership with you, our network of 500 member agency programs, we distributed nearly 26 million pounds of food. This equates to more than 22 million meals for individuals in our community struggling with hunger because of your support.

The Foodbank remains committed to providing quality food at the lowest possible cost to our member agencies. More than half of our products- 68 percent- was distributed at no cost in 2014. While 32 percent of products had a fee associated with them, the average cost was only 15 cents per pound.

In addition, our SNAP Outreach program grew significantly. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks recognized our SNAP Outreach program with the Ohio Benefit Bank Site of the Year Award. With the assistance of 15 SNAP Referral agencies and nearly 100 agencies hosting staff visits, we completed 1,792 SNAP applications. These SNAP applications equate to 1.5 million meals and 3.89 million dollars in support for individuals and families in our area.

The release of Hunger in America 2014 affirmed that more people than ever before are in need of our services. It is estimated that our network of member agencies serves 263,200 different people each year; one third of these clients are either children or seniors.

This year, the Foodbank will complete our strategic plan. This plan will outline our commitments and direction through 2020. We are thrilled to have received input from many of our member agency members and are confident that collectively we will continue to have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and families in our community.

UNDERSTANDING PRODUCT LABELS

SELL BY DATE is most important to retailers, telling them when they should take a product off the shelves. However, it does not mean that the food is no longer safe to eat.

BEST IF USED BY DATE refers to the quality of the product, not its safety. In short, it means that the product will maintain its maximum quality until that date, but it can still be safe to eat for a certain amount of time after the date has passed.

EXPIRATION DATE means a product should not be eaten after the date listed; throw it out.

When sorting and checking product that has fallen into the category of “sell by date” or “best if used by date,” you can reference the Food Keeper on the Food Marketing Institute website at http://goo.gl/p9XSSR.

Freezing product extends its consumable life. Product that has an “expiration date” (examples; retail meat, bakery) but was frozen on or before that date will be under the “frozen category” in Food Keeper. “When in doubt throw it out” should apply regardless of the date code if there are concerns regarding the quality or packaging of any product. If you need further clarification or have any questions please contact Chuck Allen, Director, Product Development at 330.777.7581.

THANK YOU to representatives from Canton Calvary Mission, LifePointe Church of Atwater, Open M and Salvation Army Medina for joining local farmers and Foodbank staff at Lobby Day in Columbus. Pictured from left to right: Estella Hutchinson, Dan Flowers, Representative Emilia Sykes, Greg Grindley, Terry Gram, Marie Seften-Dietz.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

NEW MEMBER AGENCY ORIENTATION
Thursday Mar 12 9am - 4pm
Tuesday Mar 31 9am - 4pm
Monday Apr 20 9am - 4pm

EXPLORING SUMMER FEEDING OPTIONS
Friday Mar 6 9:30 - 11:30am

PANRYTRAK
Monday Mar 10 1pm - 3pm
Friday Mar 27 1pm - 3pm

Orientation includes Civil Rights and Food Safety Training. Due to time limitations, please bring a bagged lunch to Orientation since there will not be enough time to leave the Foodbank for lunch. Please note, lunch will not be provided. Refrigeration for your bagged lunch will be available.

Have you had a change to key staff or volunteers with your program? They are encouraged to attend the full New Member Agency Orientation.

To RSVP for training opportunities, visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/agency/events or contact Gary Green, Manager, Member Services at 330.777.7575 or ggreen@acrfb.org.

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OUR TURN FOR A SITE INSPECTION

Mid-January it was the Foodbank’s turn for a site inspection as we participated in a three-day audit by Feeding America. Our contract with Feeding America requires regular audits of food banks in the network to ensure the highest standards are being maintained in the interest of our Foodbank, Feeding America and the Network as a whole. At the conclusion of the visit, Patrick Colley, Director, Compliance & Capability shared this feedback with our Board of Directors and Foodbank senior leaders, “This was a great audit with many areas that exceeded our standards.”

The audit process involved review of the following areas:

- general administration and management of the organization
- financial health of the organization
- relationship of the Foodbank to its peers in the network, to its member agencies and to the food industry
- compliance with federal regulations pertinent to the Foodbank’s operation
- files and records, including Member Agency files
- in-depth inspection of the facilities

The only area of compliance that requires follow-up because of this audit involves our Member Agency Network, and a new requirement that went into effect Oc. 1, 2014. This new requirement calls for all churches who hold membership at the Foodbank and have submitted a Church Qualifier checklist to verify compliance with IRS tax regulations to complete a new Church Qualifier form and provide supporting documentation for each item checked-off on this form. A minimum of 9 out of the 14 items on this checklist must be met to qualify as a church by IRS guidelines. Previously, the Foodbank only required this document to be submitted on church letterhead and signed by the Chief Executive or Senior Pastor. With this new requirement, all current and future Foodbank members that intend to hold a membership through a church must provide this additional documentation.

To ensure all agency files are in compliance, a new Church Qualifier Form is now available. For each item on the checklist, there are examples of supporting documentation. For example, “Established place of worship” could be documented by submitting a copy of the church bulletin showing the church address. Articles of Incorporation registered with the state, along with a church bulletin could, in many cases, fulfill the requirement.

All churches have already been contact by their Member Services representative via email or phone. Documentation must be submitted by Member Agencies to the Foodbank no later than Friday May 15, 2015. If you have questions, please contact your Member Services representative. Thank you in advance for your cooperation to complete this compliance requirement.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE

Language should not be a barrier to receiving food assistance. The Foodbank is now offering free resources to assist food pantries and hot meal sites in communicating with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) clients. Limited English Proficiency refers to individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English.

Affordable Language Services is a telephone translation service that is provided at no cost to the client or to your agency.

This service is provided in more than 150 languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks provides this service for use by an emergency food pantry or hot meal program that is a member of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank.

TO USE AFFORDABLE LANGUAGE SERVICES:

1. Call 866-350-2971 and enter the password 4394.
2. When they ask for the phone number, use 614-221-4336.
3. Provide your last name and the correct spelling of your last name.
4. Provide the language to the service for which you need interpretation. If you do not know the language you need, ask the interpreter coordinator to help you.
5. You will then be connected with an interpreter.
   - Speak to the customer in the first person DIRECTLY.
   - Give the interpreter specific questions to relay.
   - There will always be pauses while the interpreter repeats each statement in the respective language.

When you are finished simply thank the interpreter and disconnect the call. For more information, visit the Foodbank website or contact Jill Oldham, Director. Programs & Member Services at 330.777.7574 or joldham@acrfb.org.
For more than 30 years, the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank has been committed to connecting people experiencing food insecurity to resources in our community. Our network of member agencies have been, and continue to be, important partners in this effort.

The Foodbank has embarked on a strategic planning process intended to include many voices to ensure that the strategic plan response deeply and broadly to the issue of hunger in our service area.

The information gathered in the first round of stakeholder sessions has been used in the planning process in reviewing the vision and mission of the Foodbank as well as providing a starting place in thinking about the strategies the Foodbank will implement over the next five years.

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!
Please join us for the next stakeholder conversation to provide feedback and advice on the strategies that have been prioritized by the Foodbank strategic planning team.

To RSVP, please visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/agency/events

THOUSANDS OF CLIENTS SERVED THROUGH PANTRYTRAK

Nearly 100 member agencies are using PantryTrak, an online data management system designed specifically for use in food pantries and other emergency feeding sites. Journey’s End, located in Newcomerstown, is one of the largest food pantries in our area and a PantryTrak user.

Journey’s End has been using PantryTrak since March 2014. Janet Gore, Executive Director of Journey’s End, has had an overwhelmingly positive experience using the program. The pantry at Journey’s End serves an average of 2,500 clients each month. Janet said,

“PantryTrak is twice as fast. We are able to check clients in faster, we don’t have to dig through files and we can update client records on the spot. And, best of all, our monthly reports are created on the spot. I used to spend hours putting together those reports and now it’s done for me. It saves so much time.”

A concern for many agencies is how their volunteers, specifically older volunteers, will manage an internet based system. At Journey’s End, several of the volunteers are 75 years old or older and had no technology experience. Once trained by Janet, they were completely comfortable using the new system.

Janet shared her advice for agencies that are thinking of switching to PantryTrak.

“Do it sooner rather than later! It has truly been one of the best things. We use the report for fundraising, we send them to newspapers, and we use the information to advertise to new families. Also, when we first got on PantryTrak, we made suggestions and everyone was very receptive to changes to make the system better.”

Agencies interested in using PantryTrak will need an internet connection at the site where food is distributed to clients and a computer, laptop or tablet. To learn more about PantryTrak, contact Felicia Fullerton, Americorps VISTA, at 330.777.1052 or ffullerton@acrfb.org.

COMPLIANCE REMINDERS

To ensure that the food obtained from the Foodbank remains healthy and safe to consume, our member agencies must be conscious of all aspects of food safety. An important component of food safety that must be emphasized with program staff and volunteers is the safe and proper transportation of products.

Appropriate vehicles should be utilized at all times to transport food. Vehicles should be dry, clean and free of damage that could jeopardize the safety of the food, the driver or the passengers. The Foodbank reserves the right to not allow an inappropriate vehicle to be loaded or depart from the warehouse.

Member agencies must also safeguard refrigerated and frozen products from reaching temperatures in the food safety danger zone during transportation. To accomplish this, products can be covered with refrigeration blankets, placed in coolers or ice chests or transported in refrigerated vehicles.