



Blue Ridge
AREA
FOOD
BANK

Partnering With Purpose

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PRINT EDITION

A NEWSLETTER FOR FOOD BANK PARTNERS

Health Equity at the Center of Our New Strategic Plan

With input from current guests, missing guests, and our partners, we developed and our Board of Directors approved a new strategic direction for the Food Bank in May. This plan spans the next five years and brings us all together to focus on some important goals:

1. Eliminate disparities in access to nutritious food
2. Improve the health of our guests
3. Support household financial stability

By working together, we can make a real difference in the lives and health of the people we all serve.

Statewide alignment

This initiative is not confined by service area boundaries! We're part of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, an organization supporting all seven food banks in the state. By aligning our strategic goals with theirs, we can and will share resources and take collective responsibility for positively impacting the lives of Virginians who need food assistance.

One important focus in the new plan is health equity. Health equity means making sure that everyone has the same opportunities to achieve their best level of health, regardless of who they are or where they live.



Focusing on health equity

In 2022, the Federation and its member food banks came together to create a three-year Health Equity plan. This statewide effort shows our shared commitment to the health and dignity of our guests.

Implementation of the Health Equity plan across the state has begun, including efforts at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

What does it look like? See the story on page 2 that explains our first big initiative under the new plan.

With a shared vision across the state, our goal is to improve health outcomes and uphold the dignity of the people we all serve. Thank you for helping us bring about positive health-focused changes for our guests in this region, as we can only succeed with your partnership.





THE HEALTHY PANTRY INITIATIVE



We care about the health of our guests, and we know you do, too. We work hard to source and distribute nutritious food to people experiencing food insecurity across our service area.

And we are not alone in this work. Coordinated by the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, last year, representatives of all seven food banks formed a Healthy Pantry design team. Members included people who have lived experience with food insecurity, staff from all seven Virginia food banks, and leaders from affiliated organizations across the state.

Across Virginia, most guests receive food assistance from partners like you—food pantries, soup kitchens, and

shelters. The design team focused on the Healthy Pantry Initiative first because investing resources at the pantry level will have the biggest impact on health equity and nutrition for guests, across Virginia.

The design team members asked, “What makes a food pantry welcoming, accessible, and health-focused for different guests?” The answers led to the Healthy Pantry Initiative (HPI), aiming to transform Virginia’s pantry network into a health-focused, neighbor-centered system.

A fundamental premise of the HPI is that “All pantries in Virginia, regardless of their size or capacity, can implement healthy pantry practices to better support the health and nutrition of neighbors facing hunger.”

The collaboration between the Food Bank and your pantry is the bedrock for this initiative in our service area. It is exciting work, and your organization is a key player.

Joining the Healthy Pantry Initiative

Healthy pantry practices are the key to what’s to come. Twenty practices have been identified that promote the health of our guests within pantry settings. We want to know which of these practices your pantry is already using, and those you might be interested in adopting.

The 20 healthy practices are organized into four categories:

- 1. Food availability:** Foods offered through the pantry network that meet the unique dietary needs of neighbors facing hunger.
- 2. Community connection:** Partners working in collaboration to connect neighbors with additional resources and supports to help them thrive.
- 3. Health education:** Neighbors are empowered with the tools to make healthy choices.
- 4. Neighbor-centered:** Barriers are removed so that guests can access the foods needed to thrive.

The Healthy Pantry Initiative Assessment is open July 24-August 28!

An email was sent to you by an online survey company, Alchemer. Please use the link in that email to take the Assessment.

To be eligible for more 2024 Partner Impact & Innovation funding you must complete the HPI Assessment.

Questions? Contact your Partner Engagement Manager.



To learn more about available resources for leaning into any of the Healthy Pantry Initiatives’ 20 health practices, scan the code or visit www.brafb.org/HPIinfo



We hope you agree that all pantries in Virginia, regardless of their size or capacity, can implement healthy pantry practices to better support the health and nutrition of neighbors facing hunger.



What does this mean for you?

Recently, you received an email requesting your participation in the “Healthy Pantry Assessment.” This survey will help us better understand your needs to implement or expand practices as part of the Healthy Pantry Initiative (HPI).

If you choose to opt into the HPI, you will receive more resources and support to move forward. Your ongoing feedback will also help us learn more about how we can improve the program.

If you haven’t already, we encourage you to take the assessment.

After the survey, then what?

Along the way, we’ll keep you updated with results, next steps, highlights, and lessons learned. You’ll also have access to the HPI resource website, which is chock full of ideas and support for implementing any of the 20 healthy practices. Then, you’ll get individual attention and resources, including an invitation to the Partner Impact & Innovation Grant (PII Grant) application process in January if you need funding to implement your most important HPI practices.

We are here to answer your questions, and we are ever grateful for the ongoing work you do to enhance the health and lives of your guests.

Only with you—our partners—can we accomplish this shared vision!

NEXT STEPS

- 1** Complete the HPI Assessment.
- 2** Join the HPI.

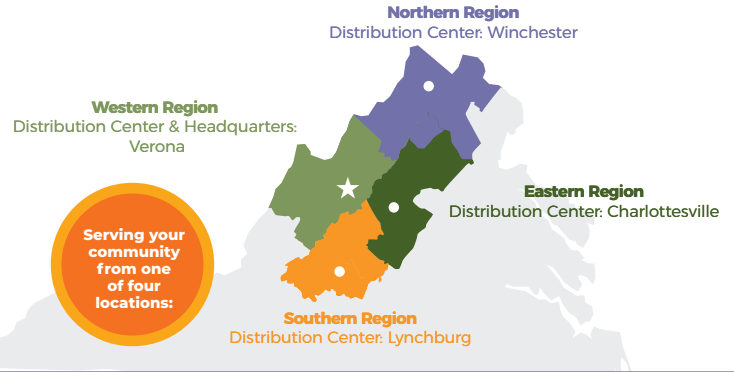


Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.



HEADQUARTERS | P.O. BOX 937 | VERONA, VA 24482



Our VISION: Nourishing food and better health—for everyone, every day.

Our CORE BELIEFS: Hunger is unacceptable, everyone deserves access to enough food, food sustains life and nourishes health, and we are called to serve without judgment.

Our MISSION: To improve food security through equitable access to good nutrition and the resources that support health and well-being.

Snackables



Check out the Food Bank's Agency Resources page for many forms, documents, trainings, and useful resources. *Scan the QR code with your phone or tablet or visit www.brafb.org/agency-resources/*

Interested in learning how to do SNAP outreach and application assistance at your pantry or program? Contact Monica Kelley, our benefits outreach program manager, at mkelley@brafb.org

COMING SOON: Watch for a Grants 101 training opportunity to help support your fundraising success!

