



How to Include the People We Serve in a Site Visit or In-District Meeting

Use the below guidance to include our neighbors facing hunger in a site visit and/or in-district meeting planning.

General Considerations

- **Consider privacy and get permission to share people's stories prior to the meeting:** Extra precautions should be taken when children are involved or when the media is present. Make sure everyone is prepared, and be sure to draw clear boundaries, especially for sharing names and photos.
- **Highlight people who are comfortable talking about their personal stories:** Talk to those individuals ahead of time so they know what to expect when elevating their lived or living experience (e.g., how much time they will have to speak, whom they will be speaking with). Also, inform lawmakers on any boundaries they must abide by while hearing from neighbors facing hunger.
- **Some of the people we serve are natural storytellers. However, others may want your help to guide the conversation:** Prepare questions to help those individuals tell their stories, but beware of appearing staged.
- **Be aware of common misperceptions of federal nutrition programs and make sure the stories presented help break down negative stereotypes and false narratives:** By dispelling common misperceptions, we can help eliminate excuses for not supporting the federal nutrition programs.
- **Educate lawmakers about the many factors that contribute to someone seeking food assistance:** Invite people we serve who can speak about experiences with job loss, reduced work hours, family or medical emergencies, or even unexpected issues with housing or transportation. Dispel the idea that people who need food assistance are just not trying hard enough.

- **Demonstrate that participants desire self-sufficiency and that anti-hunger programs offer the assistance needed to move closer toward that goal—and are proven to help lift people out of poverty.**
- **Demonstrate the diversity among people facing hunger**, including those in single- and two-parent households and multigenerational households, grandparents caring for grandchildren, parents attending college, small business owners who have recently fallen on hard times, students and military families.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

Feeding America knows that in order to achieve our vision of a hunger-free nation with an EDI lens, it's critical to keep the people most impacted by hunger at the center of all our efforts to eliminate the unjust and racist policies and systems that create the conditions for hunger to exist.

Use the below prompts, or “choice points,” adapted from and inspired by [The Management Center](#) to help your organization consider opportunities for further including neighbors facing hunger in your site visit or in-district meeting planning.

1. Are we centering the voices, values and priorities of neighbors with lived and living expertise in hunger?
2. Do neighbors hold decision-making power in our activities?
3. Do neighbors have substantive roles in our activities?
4. Are we including neighbors from diverse backgrounds, communities and perspectives in our efforts?
5. Are we properly supporting neighbors who participate in events and other advocacy actions—including through reasonable compensation, transportation and child care support, and disability or translation services?
6. Through our advocacy actions, are we building strong, trusting and respectful relationships with neighbors?
7. How can we make different choices that would result in more equity and inclusion?