

From Voices to Action Summary: Joint Committee Report

Community Engagement Department | Published October 2024



The collaborative nature of the model promotes transparency & accountability in decision-making processes.

-Partner Committee Member

Overview

To strengthen its mission of combating food insecurity in the region, Houston Food Bank launched a Joint Committee of residents, community partners, and staff. This initiative embraced power-sharing and co-creation to ensure decision-making is collaborative and inclusive of the voices most impacted by food insecurity. Bringing together diverse perspectives, the committee helped identify local needs, improve resource distribution, and enhance strategic decision-making. The committee acts as a bridge to ensure Houston Food Bank's actions & resources create a more equitable, community-driven approach to long-term solutions.

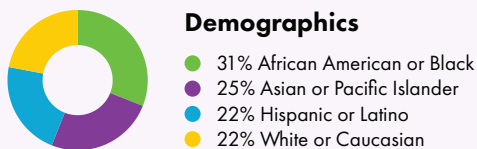
A LOOK AT OUR COMMITTEE

Entire Joint Committee

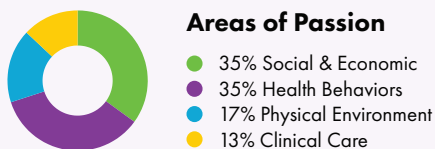
Geographic Area



Demographics

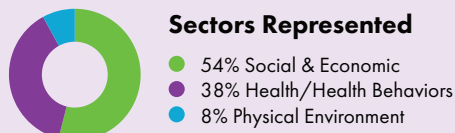


Areas of Passion

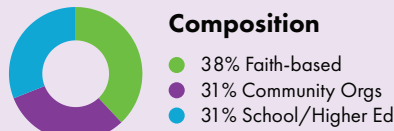


Partners

Sectors Represented

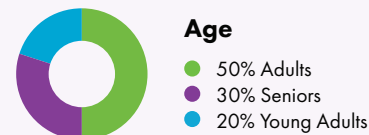


Composition



Neighbors

Age



100% have experience with food insecurity

30% primary caregivers

20% higher ed students

OUR JOURNEY

2021

Committees Formed

Diverse partner & neighbor members selected.

2022

Utilizing Insights

Partner Committee called for changes in grants, infrastructure & decision-making. Neighbor Committee stressed equity, dignity & addressing barriers.

2023

Joint Committees Formed

Joint Committee united food bank staff with partner and neighbor committees to create common agendas in 4 key areas.

2024

The Work Continues

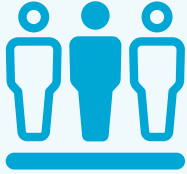
Focused on implementation of agendas. Expanded Advocacy workgroup.

Committee Member Key Reflections

- Within a cultivated safe structure, trust builds and allows for: diverse perspectives to emerge; barriers to be broken; and perceptions and biases to be overcome.
- Collaboration between staff, partners, & neighbors produces understanding that increases agency effectiveness in a cost-efficient way.
- Communities and their needs are constantly changing. This requires an ongoing commitment to receive and act upon inputs from those actively engaged in our shared mission.



COMMITTEE MEMBER EMPOWERMENT



Neighbors and partners gained skills through: trainings; attending local and national opportunities; sharing strategies; practicing community outreach; and reviewing data. The skill-building encouraged through Joint Committee supports members' abilities to be creatively confident in finding agile and relevant solutions for larger-scale projects.

Skill-Building: Partners

- 89%** Better understanding community needs
- 78%** Working alongside organizations, residents, and funders at the same time.
- 56%** Incorporating community feedback into solutions
- 93%** of members reported believing that the workgroup structure is "extremely" or "very" effective.

Skill-Building: Neighbors

- 100%** Sharing their story & experiences
- 86%** Engaging with elected officials
- 57%** Evaluating effective programs

"My voice has been heard, and I've made a difference, but there is still more that we can do."

- Neighbor Committee Member

EARLY IMPACT (2022-2023)

Capacity and Infrastructure

- Framing for organization-wide equitable granting practices & policies
- Drafted grant review matrix & reviewed committee role

Program Enhancements

- Integration of culturally appropriate foods on partner ordering platform
- Movement towards language inclusion
- Began developing rural school choice model

Resources and Tools

- Revised Link2Feed intake form to be more dignified and streamlined
- Developed Food and Culture Guide and Culture Map
- Begun improvements to Partner Locator Map

Advocacy

- Partners replicated committee framework in neighborhood coalitions
- Completed early engagement with local Elected Officials
- Neighbors advocated nationally in relation to Farm Bill

LOOKING AHEAD

Fueled by early successes and insights, HFB is considering adding a second cohort or addressing further opportunities. Our commitment to progress is guided by the desire to see:

- **A full transition to shared leadership:** There was an adjustment as HFB embraced new approaches to thought-leadership and decision-making.
- **An evolution of trust and relationships:** HFB has invested time in building trust and cultivating relationships. This slow, but vital, process is essential to sustained change.
- **Continued Houston Food Bank Leadership support:** HFB recognizes the need for direct involvement from the Board and Executive Leadership to:
 - **Facilitate** bi-directional knowledge sharing
 - **Educate** regarding market and industry trends that influence committee decisions and
 - **Allocate** resources to expand human-centered strategies and innovative system-reaching through the Community Engagement Department.