



# **MANNA FoodBank**

## **Strategic Planning Document 2015 – 2020**

Approved by MANNA Board of Directors 01/21/15

## Introduction

The Executive Director and the Board of Directors for MANNA FoodBank contracted Evoking Wisdom in May 2014 to help facilitate and develop a new strategic plan to guide the organization's growth and direction for the next 3 -5 years.

In developing an effective strategic plan, an organization needs to decide who will be involved in the planning process and at what stage. Evoking Wisdom recommended the use of an inclusive planning process for several reasons: to review past performance and critical issues; to promote buy-in of the process; and to establish a smooth course for implementation. As such, the Board of Directors, the Senior Leadership team, and key staff members were all significantly involved in the planning process.

The process began at board meetings held throughout the summer of 2014 and continued until the plan was officially approved by the Board on January 21, 2015.

This strategic planning process aimed to answer four key questions:

**Where are we now?** (Ensures everyone is on the same starting page)

**Where do we want to be?** (Shared vision)

**How do we get there?** (Clear direction)

**How do we measure our progress?** (Monitoring)

In answering these questions, the organization established the following document to guide its growth and direction.

## Achievements from 2011 to 2014 Strategic Plan

Founded in 1982, MANNA FoodBank distributed 40,000 pounds of food in its first year. Both the quantity of food and the number of partner agencies quickly grew over the next ten years, leading to the purchase of a commercial building on Swannanoa River Road in 1993. The combination of continued growth and the availability of a warehouse on the adjacent property led to the purchase of a second warehouse in 2005, when distribution reached 5.7 million pounds. In the years following, two new programs were launched in the fight against hunger: MANNA Packs for Kids and FNS Outreach. Since that time, operations have more than doubled to over 14 million pounds in FY 2013-14.

MANNA met or exceeded a number of key strategic goals that were articulated in the 2011-2014 plan, including:

1. **Strengthening programs that serve children** by increasing average number of bags delivered by 24%, reaching 10% of children on the free lunch program, and piloting a successful Summer Pack program.
2. **Increasing the quantity and improving the quality of food distributed and continuing to find innovative ways to get nutritious food to people facing hunger.** Food distributed increased by 34% and fresh produce distributed increased by 60%. Food and Nutrition Outreach increased the number of applications by 27% and established the MANNA Food HelpLine, which provides FNS Outreach telephonically.
3. **Public policy, greater support for partner agencies through the “Zone Approach,” increased volunteer engagement, increased revenue from contributed income, and better social media and web presence** were also noted as areas of improvement in the last three years.

Beginning in the summer of 2014, the MANNA FoodBank Board of Directors, along with MANNA leadership staff, embarked on strategic planning that would take MANNA into the next decade of food banking. Several sessions, including a day long retreat, addressed the four key questions mentioned in the above introductory paragraph. These questions, with an eye toward our mission and vision, served as the guideposts in planning how MANNA could best carry out the work of ending hunger in WNC in the coming years.

## **MANNA’s Vision:**

A hunger-free WNC

## **MANNA’s Mission:**

To involve, educate and unite people in the work of ending hunger in WNC

## **Core Values:**

Accountability

Integrity

Compassion

Collaboration

## **Preamble:**

To make significant progress in our vision of a hunger-free WNC, we must increase access to nutritious food for those currently in need *and* disrupt the cycle of spending trade-offs that perpetuate the instability of low income households. We will achieve that by seeking ways to leverage our core competencies in food procurement and distribution to engage in cross-sector community partnerships designed to broaden awareness of the consequences of food insecurity and improve the health, housing, and economic well-being of the people we serve.

## **Guiding Principles:**

- The involvement and utilization of community volunteers at all levels of the organization is essential to our success.
- Food safety and the safety of our staff, volunteers and partners are paramount in all aspects of our operations.
- We will reach out to our full 16-county service area for all of our services and programs, ensuring an equitable distribution of resources.
- We will conduct our operations with dignity and respect for all.
- MANNA is a non-partisan organization and will maintain that approach in the presentation of issues and in all advocacy efforts.

## **Strategic Goals:**

The following strategic goals will guide the work of MANNA over the next three to five years. Staff will prepare an annual implementation plan for review and approval by the Board prior to the start of each fiscal year. The annual plan will include initiatives, tasks, and targets to address each strategic goal.

### **1. Collective Impact:**

Leverage our core competencies to promote community collaborations that help the people we serve become healthier and food secure.

**Rationale:** There are multiple and complex factors that contribute to food insecurity in our region, including access to health care, housing, income, quality education, and more.

Social problems, as well as their solutions, arise from the interaction of many organizations operating within the dynamics of a larger system.

**Approach:** MANNA will explore how its expertise in food procurement and distribution can be aligned with organizations from the nonprofit, government, corporate and philanthropic sectors to create a coordinated approach to providing increased opportunities for self-sufficiency for the clients we serve.

**Measurement:** Since this will be a cooperative effort among multiple community partners, one of the primary tasks will be to define common goals and how to measure the collective impact. The food insecurity rates defined and measured by USDA at the county level is one metric that can be applied to this goal.

## 2. Food Supply and Distribution:

Increase the concentration of nutritional food and increase efficiency of food procurement and distribution.

**Rationale:** The *Hunger in America 2014* report for WNC documents that more than 107,000 people in our 16-county service area turn to MANNA partner agencies for assistance during the year. Food insecurity continues to impact more than 25% of children in WNC. Nutritious food is critically needed by those we serve and helps address chronic health conditions (obesity, diabetes) that are especially prevalent in low income families.

**Approach:** Procure, handle, warehouse, and distribute food in an efficient, safe, and cost effective manner, with attention to increasing fresh produce and minimizing waste.

**Measurement:** Total pounds of food received and distributed; percentage of food that is fresh produce; waste management pounds and fees; meals per month; meals per person in need (new metric from FA to monitor both quantity of food and equitable distribution throughout service area); inventory turns; achievement of AIB certification (warehouse and food safety standards); OSHA recordable incidents; inventory accuracy.

## 3. Network Partner Agencies:

Strengthen our network partners to increase their capacity to serve our community.

**Rationale:** MANNA provides food through a network of partner agencies that are responsible for distributing it directly to people in need. Creating a sense of interdependency and mutual support with our partners will increase our collective capacity to receive, store and distribute food.

**Approach:** Further develop the Zone approach to provide localized customer service, capacity building, continuous improvement, and monitoring of partner agencies. Work with local communities to explore creative models of partnership and alternatives in how people are served.

**Measurement:** Percentage of partners actively participating in zone meetings and capacity building initiatives; partner agency satisfaction with MANNA customer service as measured through annual agency survey; percentage of partner agencies certified in ServSafe Manager course; percentage of agencies with increased distribution of fresh produce and total pound over previous year.

#### **4. Children & Client Services:**

Strengthen direct service programs, including FNS (food stamp) outreach and MANNA Packs for Kids, to provide year-round access to food for children and families.

**Rationale:** MANNA has prioritized the needs of children and families. Food and Nutrition Services (food stamps) has proved to be one of the most effective means for addressing family food insecurity, especially in rural areas. Programs that target at-risk children to provide food for weekends and summer breaks fill a critical gap that exists when school lunches are not available.

**Approach:**

*FNS Outreach*---MANNA will build on the early success of the MANNA Food HelpLine to identify and assist people eligible for food stamps, in addition to direct in-person outreach.

*Childhood Hunger programs*---MANNA Packs and a summer packs program will continue to address the needs of children living in food insecure households. In addition, MANNA will continue to explore new approaches to address the need.

**Measurement:** Completed FNS applications, recertifications, and Food HelpLine referrals; Increase in the number of eligible households able to obtain food stamps; percentage of children in the free lunch program that receives MANNA Packs or summer packs; both programs will document whether they have achieved an equitable distribution of services by county. Children served and MANNA Packs bags and pounds distributed by county.

#### **5. Advocacy:**

Position the MANNA network as a leader in the community-wide discussion of hunger in WNC, with an action agenda to address it.

**Rationale:** On the topic of food insecurity, the general public often lacks an awareness of the problem and/or holds a sense of denial that it exists. The first critical step to address food insecurity is to educate the public, especially decision-makers, on the extent of need in our region and the negative impact it has on the well-being of our community. The second step is to inspire people to respond and direct their energy towards constructive actions that will have meaningful impact.

**Approach:** Define the role MANNA will play to influence public policy and leverage government resources to alleviate food insecurity, including active participation in coalitions with compatible goals. Design a series of audience-specific presentations on hunger to educate the community and provide a “call to action”. Develop a comprehensive communications plan that includes the media, social networking, and other creative avenues to increase public awareness of the issues and how to engage in addressing them.

**Measurement:** Increase in number of people engaged in advocacy outreach or other action-oriented responses as a result of MANNA presentations, social media alerts, or email campaigns; number of presentations by type of audience; number of active presenters.

## 6. Information Technology:

Improve and strengthen our infrastructure to create more effective and sustainable delivery of our core services.

**Rationale:** Much of MANNA’s existing information technology has been a combination of older systems pieced together. However, with the increased demands on all aspects of the organization, the IT infrastructure is near its capacity. New technologies will increase effectiveness and efficiency and provide stability for the future.

**Approach:** Convene focus group of IT experts and system users to help MANNA assess the needs for the future; conduct internal focus groups to ensure staff needs are incorporated into the plan; solicit RFPs from partners that have been identified as solution providers; choose provider and implement plan as outlined.

**Measurement:** Decrease in connectivity issues experienced by users of network; ease of access to pertinent data to measure performance of organization; more timely and accurate reporting across all areas of operation; room for growth in IT network that keeps pace with growth of organization; development and tracking of efficiency measures and metrics.

## 7. Resources:

Expand and diversify our financial and human resources.

**Rationale:** A more diverse source of funds and human capital creates greater stability for the organization and its future.

**Approach:** Conduct assessment of staff development needs and design and implement a plan to respond; develop a succession plan for senior staff positions; conduct in-depth analysis of current donor base and identify areas that need to be strengthened; create a plan to diversify revenue streams, including demographics as well as geographic concentrations. Identify and leverage relationships with volunteers at every level to improve our core abilities, broaden our support network and influence decision makers.

**Measurement:** Number of training and development opportunities attended by staff; results of staff satisfaction survey; staff retention metrics; productivity metrics developed and tracked; calculate and track percentage increase in revenue categories in ratio with what is needed to keep up with organization's growth; percentage of donors or dollars by population for each county.