

Food Assistance Resource Usage in Grinnell, Iowa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This goal of this project was to explore the potential barriers experienced by Grinnell residents when accessing food assistance resources. This project was completed by a student research group on behalf of Mid-Iowa Community Action Inc. (MICA) in Grinnell Iowa due to MICA's concern that Grinnell residents are not utilizing the food assistance resources in Grinnell to their fullest potential. Although Grinnell families may utilize resources beyond the city of Grinnell, due to time constraints, the researchers limited the scope of the project to just those to questioning that lie within Grinnell's city limits. Researchers identified the following as the primary food assistance resources for Grinnell residents: MICA, Food Recovery Network (FRN), Giving Gardens (Gardens), Community Meal, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (federal food stamps, or SNAP), Bountiful Baskets, Grinnell FoodShare, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). They then examined the following questions regarding these resources: (1) which food assistance resources in Grinnell are food insecure families utilizing, and which are they not utilizing? And, (2) why are food insecure individuals choosing to utilize certain resources and not others?

The methods for this project consisted of interviews, a focus group and questionnaires. The researchers conducted eleven 40-60 minute, face-to-face interviews with individuals involved with administering these food assistance organizations in Grinnell. Informants were identified through websites of community organizations and then contacted through email or by phone, regarding interviews and some were identified via snowball method. The researchers also conducted three 40-60 minute, face-to-face interviews with food insecure individuals living in Grinnell. These individuals were recruited for interviews at MICA, FRN food distribution, and suggestions from administrator key informants. One 60 minute focus group with three food insecure individuals was also conducted. Individuals for the focus group were recruited via flyers at MICA and through word of mouth. Finally, the researchers distributed 25 questionnaires to food-insecure individuals at MICA and FRN food distributions.

The researchers predicted the following factors would be significant barriers to food assistance utilizations in the community: feeling welcome, stigma, language, transportation, food preference, awareness, hours, and applications. The data collected concluded that feeling welcome, stigma, and language were not prohibitive barriers for the individuals surveyed. However, transportation, food preference, awareness, hours of operation, and application processes were found to be barriers for some. Of these, the primary two were food selection and awareness. Individuals commented that the food offered at Community Meal, MICA, and FRN can be limiting for reasons such as diabetes, gluten intolerance, and pallet. Individuals expressed a lack of knowledge about the existence of the resources in Grinnell, as well as a lack of understanding of the services offered.

In response to these two primary barriers, the researchers first recommend an increase in advertisement of all food assistance resources in Grinnell via word of mouth, churches, community presentation, and social media. Secondly, researchers recommend that efforts be made to increase the degree to which individuals can choose the types of food they wish to take from a given resource. For example, MICA could adjust their pantry to be a "choice food pantry," in which individuals are able to choose the items they want, as opposed to being handed a pre-packaged box of food items. Due to the interest expressed through interviews in such a pantry, the researchers recommend further study regarding what types of food the individuals in the community would like to eat. Finally, the researchers recommend more collaboration between the organizations to rectify misconceptions about food assistance resources in Grinnell.

BACKGROUND

This research project was conducted on behalf of Mid-Iowa Community Action Inc. (MICA), a non-profit organization that strives to serve individuals affected by poverty in Central Iowa. MICA serves communities by providing developmental programs ranging in focus from early childhood to health to family development. Their three main areas of work are family support programs, a food pantry, and crisis/emergency assistance. MICA's mission is: Helping People. Changing Lives. Building Communities.

This research project focused specifically on the area of food assistance within MICA's broad range of work. The food pantry at MICA includes both non-perishables, as well as fresh produce when available. In addition to the food pantry, MICA also makes weekly deliveries of fresh produce to Brookside Housing community and the Light Center at Grinnell Regional Medical Center. Currently, MICA experiences a great deal of pressure on their food resources due to the high number of families in need of assistance in the Grinnell community. In response to this strain, MICA frequently refers families to resources beyond their organization. However, MICA has no understanding of the degree to which clients are accessing these additional resources and thus their current director was interested in a study to determine the availability and use of other food resources in the town of Grinnell.

The research question that MICA's director and the research team from Professor Roper's Practicing Anthropology course agreed upon was composed of two parts. These two parts included: (1) Which food assistance resources in Grinnell are food insecure families utilizing and which are they not utilizing? and (2) Why are food insecure individuals choosing to utilize certain resources and not others? The research focused on the community of Grinnell, Iowa, therefore residents and food resources outside of the town were not investigated as part of the study. Because many families sometimes utilize food resources that are outside of Grinnell, these other resources were considered if a family mentioned them, but they were not actively investigated.

The client for this project was Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) and was represented by Danielle Wonderly, MICA Director (Grinnell Branch) and Lindsay Fujimoto MICA Grinnell Corps Fellow (Grinnell Branch). The principal investigator was Professor Jackson Montgomery Roper, who holds a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh and has conducted the Practicing Anthropology course, including similar student research projects, three previous semesters. The student researchers included Andie Semlow, Taz Grout and Sophie Neems who were enrolled in Professor Roper's course Practicing Anthropology during the Fall 2015 semester. The following information was collected for MICA to provide a starting point from which the organization can explore the ways that they can collaborate more efficiently with other food assistance resources in Grinnell to more effectively serve their clients.

The research team utilized the Poweshiek County Resource Guide located on the Drake Community Library website in order to identify the resources to be included in the questionnaires given to food-poor individuals. The resources selected included: MICA, the Food Recovery Network, (FRN), the Giving Gardens, Community Meal, Bountiful Baskets and Grinnell Food Share. Additionally, the researchers identified the Community Garden Plots, Christmas Share, the Grinnell High School Food Pantry and Tiger Packs during interviews with food assistance resource administrators. Although not each of these was included on the questionnaires given to food poor individuals, FRN is a national organization that works to redistribute leftover food to individuals in need of food in the community. In Grinnell, FRN holds distributions at both the First Presbyterian Church, as well as the Clubhouse during which volunteers serve leftover food from the Grinnell College Dining Hall, Grinnell Regional Medical Center, Pizza Ranch (Grinnell location), and Hy-vee (Grinnell location). The Giving Gardens is a network of community gardens that are located at various churches around the community, as well as at Grinnell Regional Medical Center. Volunteers

care for the garden, and all community members, regardless of whether or not they participate in garden work, are encouraged to pick food from these gardens for their personal use. Additionally, extra produce is collected by volunteers and taken to MICA for distribution. Community Meal is an open event held at Davis Elementary Tuesday evenings during which a hot meal is cooked and served by a different community organization each week. Bountiful Baskets and Grinnell Food Share are both food coops. Food coops are organizations that buy food in bulk and then distribute products to coop members at a lower price. Bountiful Baskets offers a selection of mainly fresh produce. Grinnell Food Share offers a menu of meals that are purchased once a month; this resource is highly used during Thanksgiving and Christmas time. There is a consistent client base of about 25 families purchasing \$18-\$100 worth of food. Bountiful Baskets is part of a larger national organization, and Grinnell Food Share is a local organization. Christmas Share is a program that provides local low-income families with large boxes of carefully selected gifts specific to each family, as well as non-perishable food items. Finally, Tiger Packs is a program that provides food to children whose parents identify at the beginning of the school year as being in need of food by placing packages of food in their backpacks during school on Fridays.

This study also considered two federal resources. The first of these is Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly referred to as Food Stamps. Grinnell residents apply for SNAP through the Department of Human Services, whose nearest office is located in Newton. The second was Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC is a federal assistance program that provides items such as diapers, formula, and food to pregnant women and families who have young children. Grinnell residents apply for WIC through the MICA office.

METHODS

Research Population

The research population for this project consisted of two different groups. The first of these populations was food insecure individuals in Grinnell who utilize or have utilized food assistance resources. The researchers drew samples from this population using various methods, due to the lack of access to sample frame from which to select a random sample. First, they performed intercepts in the MICA office and at FRN distributions at First Presbyterian Church to find food insecure individuals. During these intercepts people were invited to either fill out a questionnaire or participate in an interview. They also used the snowball method once they secured a few food insecure individuals for interviews by asking these individuals if they knew of any other food insecure individuals who would be willing to participate in an interview, but nobody provided any names. Finally, they gathered a sample for a focus group by voluntary participation, using a flyer including the incentive of a \$10 Grinnell Bucks certificate for the first ten participants. Through these three different methods (questionnaires, in-person interviews, and a focus group) the researchers were able to get a sample of the food insecure population in Grinnell.

The second research population considered in this project consisted of the individuals who work with, or have worked with, community organizations that support food insecure individuals in Grinnell (from henceforth to be referred to as food assistance resource administrators). Researchers drew a sample, as well as contact information, for this population through the Poweshiek County Resource Guide. They then contacted staff of food assistance organizations to set up interviews and proceed to conduct interviews with those individuals who responded to our request, although researchers were not able to reach one organization, Bountiful Baskets. Through these primary interviews, researchers also used snowball sampling in order to identify others who may be cultural experts yet may not be publicly apparent. Finally, one food assistance resource administrator

identified herself by contacting the researchers after learning about the project through information provided on a promotional flier for the focus group.

Researchers received IRB approval from Grinnell College on November second, at which point they began their research process, using the following methods described below.

Specific Methods Used

Semi-Structured Interview

Researchers scheduled semi-structured interviews with key informants from food assistance organizations in Grinnell and with food insecure individuals. The interviews were shaped by an interview guide (see Appendices 2 and 3), although researchers allowed the subject to talk freely about the topics he/she found relevant. Researchers conducted a total of thirteen interviews with food assistance organization informants. These individuals were asked about their views on problems within the organization, their perceptions of barriers that the client might experience in utilizing the resource, and any other information on the food assistance system in Grinnell as a whole. Researchers also conducted three interviews with food insecure individuals. These individuals were asked about their experiences utilizing the various food assistance resources available, whether they had heard of other resources that they do not currently utilize, and reasons why they do not utilize some resources. It would have been preferable to interview more food insecure individuals, however, due to the chosen method of securing interviews through office intercepts, some difficulties were encountered in solidifying interviews with many of the people who had initially expressed interest in participating. Despite this lack of food insecure individuals, the research team feels that the combination of those who were interviewed, along with the focus group, and the questionnaires, provided a fairly accurate understanding of this population's opinions and experiences.

Questionnaire

Researchers developed a questionnaire that was given to individuals during intercepts at the MICA office and FRN distributions (see Appendix 1). Some questionnaires were administered orally due to reading and visual limitations of the subjects. The questionnaire was directed at Grinnell community members ages of 18 and above that have used food assistance resources. The questionnaire asked subjects about their familiarity with the eight food assistance resources (MICA, SNAP, WIC, Community Meal, FRN, Giving Gardens, Bountiful Baskets, and Grinnell Food Share) that were identified using the Poweshiek County Resource Guide and potential issues that they might experience utilizing each. The questionnaire also contained three open-ended questions about other resources not listed that the subject uses, further information about resources, and any other comments that subjects may have wished to share with the researchers.

Focus Groups

Researchers conducted one focus group to gather general opinions of the food insecure population in Grinnell. Unfortunately, only three subjects attended the focus group, but researchers were still able to gain details regarding their perspectives that were not possible to gather through the questionnaires. The focus group was run by researchers Andrea Semlow and Tasman Grout on November 18th at the Drake Public Library located in the city of Grinnell. Participants were questioned about their familiarity with food assistance resources in Grinnell and their opinions about and experiences with each.

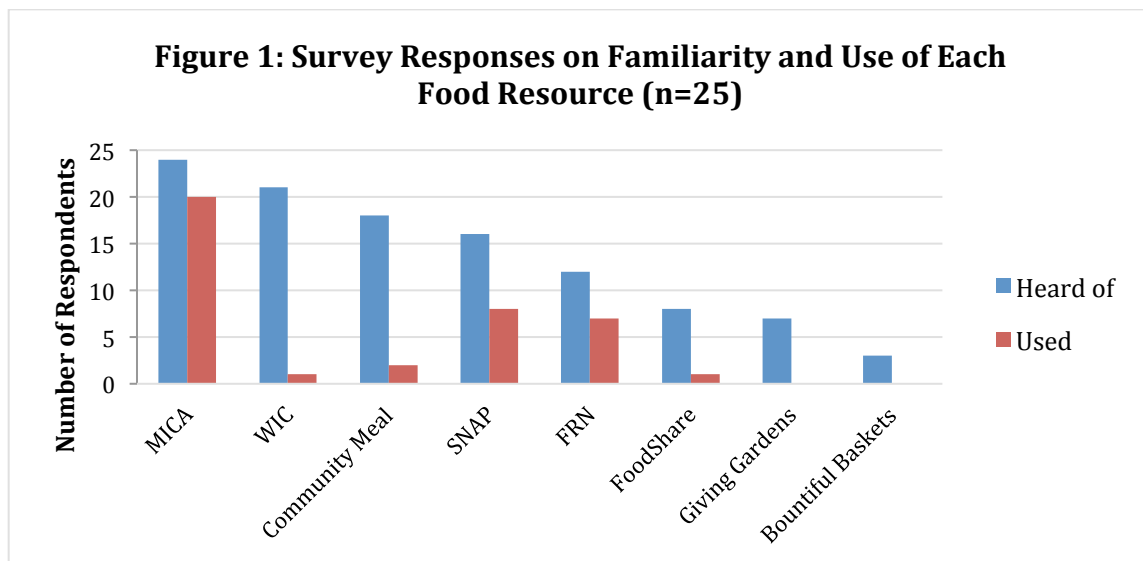
Participant Observation

Researchers conducted participant observation at the MICA office, FRN distributions at the First Presbyterian Church, and Community Meal. They were present in each of these locations and observed the activity as well as talked with individuals in attendance. In some instances, participant observation included very informal interviews, in which they discussed food resources with individuals. They took notes on the experience in field notebooks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness

Researchers found awareness was the main barrier for most of the food assistance organizations surveyed. There were two forms of awareness lacking in the community: either individuals had never heard of the organization or they were unaware of the services and capacities of the food assistance organization in Grinnell. The data from the questionnaires showed that less than half of the population surveyed had heard of FRN, Bountiful Baskets, Giving Gardens, and Grinnell FoodShare (See Figure 1).



One of the biggest issues in the data was the discrepancy between what resource administrators called organizations and what food-insecure individuals called organizations. Two examples of this include the Food Recovery Network, which food-insecure individuals often referred to as “First Presbyterian,” the name of the church location where the food is normally distributed, and Community Meal, which food-insecure individuals termed the meal at “Davis” or “Davis Elementary.” Researchers believe this discrepancy in terminology may be creating a disconnect when organizations are advertising their services. Although, more than half of the survey population has heard of MICA, SNAP, WIC, and Community Meal, there is still a gap in the awareness of these resources (See Figure 1).

The Giving Gardens and Bountiful Baskets were the two organizations with the lowest level of awareness by the community. Almost every food-insecure individual interviewed had no awareness of the existence of these resources. Some key informants not directly involved in Giving Garden were unaware of the resources provided by Giving Gardens or Bountiful Baskets as well.

One key informant believed Bountiful Baskets was “a sort of gift basket business for holidays,” and only one key informant knew Bountiful Baskets would accept food stamps if asked. Giving Gardens had very little presence in the community and of the key informants who had heard of the organization, none had directly used the gardens. Also, Grinnell FoodShare offers one package of food a year using the Campbell fund donation to allow families to get started with the program while allowing them to put money aside. Sometimes, individuals are not aware that there are other options available to them.

There were many misconceptions about the services the organizations provide to the community. For example, our focus group was not aware that they are supposed to take food directly from the Giving Gardens and instead view this as stealing. There are also misconceptions about FRN, mainly that it does not have enough food, that the food only comes from the college, and that all the food is spicy. One key informant stated, “I didn’t think there was enough food at the Food Recovery Network to recommend it to my clients.” FRN has previously only had food from the college; however, now they are collecting food from Hy-Vee, Pizza Ranch, Grinnell Regional Medical Center, and are soon adding Frontier. Many food-insecure individuals are unaware of this change. Also, the food was described as “too spicy” by 3 of our food-insecure informants. The researchers learned the term “too spicy” actual refers the use of spices like garlic and oregano that are not generally preferred by the midwestern pallet. Also, two key informants mentioned that some people may not know that FRN no longer requires a voucher application to receive food.

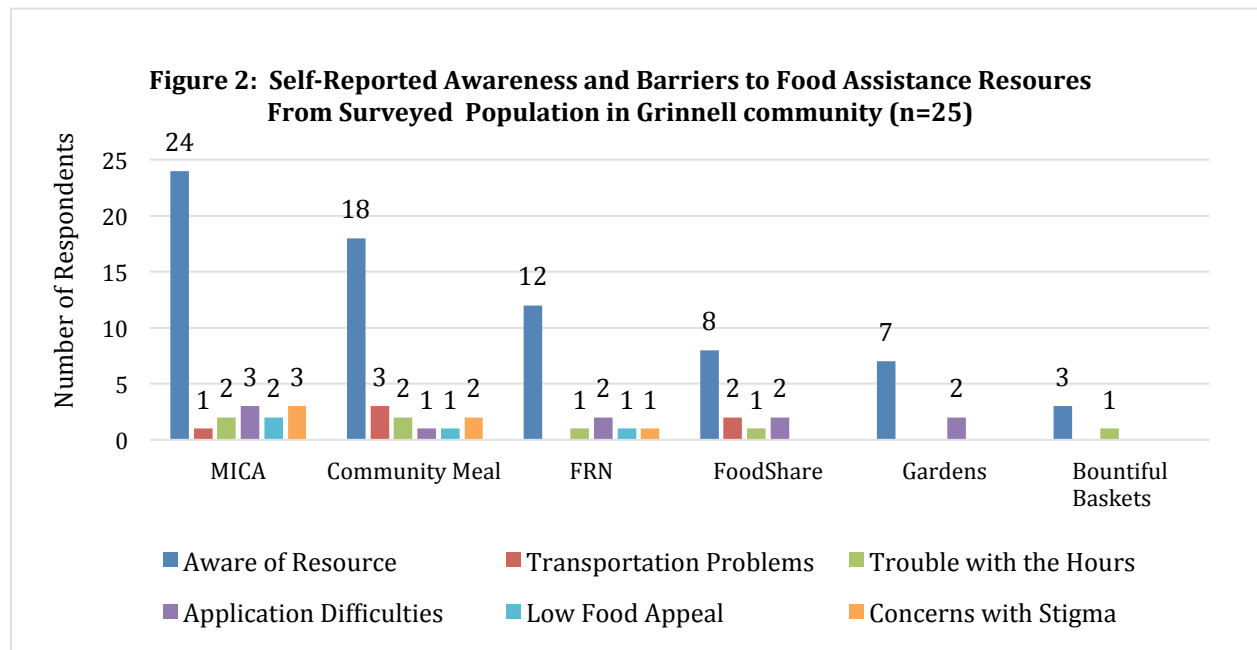
There is also a disconnect between the current methods of awareness and advertising utilized by food assistance organizations and methods of awareness utilized by food-insecure individuals. The focus group, two key informant interviews, and one food-insecure interview stated most food-insecure individuals find out about and communicate about food organizations through word of mouth. One key informant, one food secure informant, and researchers’ personal experiences in the project found Facebook as a great way to get the word out about things in the Grinnell community. One particularly useful social media group was “Hey Grinnell, did you know…” on Facebook. One of the current methods for advertising Grinnell FoodShare and other organizations is putting brochures in the food boxes at MICA. One food-insecure informant said she had never seen a brochure in the MICA boxes and she has been receiving food from MICA for 6 years.

Overall, four administrators and four food insecure informants specifically stated awareness as a prohibitive barrier for food assistance resources in Grinnell. One informant stated, “friends know more than MICA” and another stated the main problem was “[people] don’t know it [food assistance organization] exists and they don’t know they can get a deal if they can’t afford it.” These and similar statements have led us to conclude lack of awareness is the most prohibitive barriers for individuals utilizing resources other than MICA.

Transportation

Transportation is one of the more significant barriers to accessing food assistance resources for Grinnell residents. Although it was not an issue for all individuals interviewed, of those who were aware of a particular resource the questionnaire showed transportation was a barrier for 1 of 24 for MICA (4.1%), 3 of 18 for Community Meal (16.7%), and 2 of 8 for Food Share (25%) (see Figure 2). Although transportation was not listed as a significant barrier for FRN, the researchers believe that this may be due to a response bias due to the fact that of the twelve individuals who marked that they had heard of FRN, six of them were administered at FRN distribution. Thus it is very possible that there are individuals who were not represented in this sample who do find transportation to be a barrier to accessing FRN. (A similar bias likely affected the remaining interviews done at MICA.) This hypothesis was supported by one food insecure interviewee, who discussed the challenges she faced in accessing FRN due to her lack of both a car and a bike.

Despite living within walking distance of some of the resources, she was not interested in walking to these locations. She discussed her desire that the food be packaged and delivered to the homes of those in need. Her comments demonstrate the way in which transportation is a larger issue than simply the location of food assistance resources. Despite the arguably convenient location of this resource, at least in terms of distance, she reported that her lack of a car or bike limited her use of FRN.



Beyond simply having access to a bike or a car, the cost of gas also poses a threat to affordable transportation. A food assistance resource administrator discussed her view that individuals would be more likely to spend money on gas if they needed to travel to doctors appointments in Iowa City or to work, as opposed to places that are closer in town. Another food assistance resource administrator noted that some individuals carpool to cope with transportation barriers. For example, while volunteering at a food assistance resource, she assisted two individuals who had stopped at this particular resource on a trip around town to collect assistance from a few different organizations.

Finally, transportation was not seen as issue for all of the food resources. For example, one food assistance resource administrator discussed how Tiger Packs is structured in a way that eliminates all potential transportation issues on the part of the individuals utilizing the resource because the food is placed directly into the backpacks of the children utilizing the resource.

Hours of Operation

Overall, the hours of operation of most Grinnell food resource organizations were not identified as a major barrier for the individuals surveyed. One food insecure informant specifically mentioned, “[MICA’s] timing doesn’t bother me”. Also, only two of the 25 respondents (8% of the individuals surveyed) that had heard of MICA reported MICA had inconvenient hours (See Figure 2). One food assistance resource administrator stated that the hours of MICA specifically “are really

good” and that she has not heard complaints from food insecure individuals that would suggest otherwise. If the hours are inconvenient for an individual, she shared that people work to find a way around this problem by sending family members or friends (with the proper paperwork giving them permission) to pick up food for them.

The hours of operation for FRN did appear to be a barrier for some. One of 12 individuals surveyed who had heard of the Food Recovery Network found the hours to be an issue. The researchers believe that this may be due to the fact that those who work during the day are not able to attend the lunch-hour distribution time during which FRN is open. The researchers also noted, during participant observation, that it takes a long time for each individual to get through the food line at FRN, which could contribute to an individual’s inability to attend the distribution during a short lunch break from work.

To continue, of 18 individuals who had heard of Community Meal, 2 reported the Tuesday time slot to be inconvenient (see Figure 2). However, neither food assistance resource administrators nor food-insecure individuals mentioned the hours of Community Meal as a barrier. One of 8 persons aware of FoodShare, and 1 of 3 aware of Bountiful Baskets also found the hours inconvenient.

Finally, it is important to note that the data collected regarding hours of operation is biased due to the fact that the food insecure individuals who were included in the questionnaire data were those recruited in the MICA office and during FRN distribution. Thus, individuals who found either the hours of FRN or MICA inconvenient would not be at the locations where the questionnaires were administered. Thus, if the researchers had recruited food-insecure informants from other locations in the community, there may have been different results. Future research could access these individuals through another sampling method.

Application Processes

Overall, applications to use resources did not appear to be a prohibitive barrier to Grinnell community members when accessing food assistance resources. However, many individuals found the federally funded programs, SNAP and WIC, inconvenient. Some of the resources included in this survey have explicit applications, which the researchers defined as paperwork required in order to utilize a particular service. These resources include: SNAP, WIC, Bountiful Baskets, Imagine Grinnell Community Garden Plots, MICA, and Grinnell Food Share. The federal programs (WIC and SNAP), require a thorough application that the surveyed food-insecure individuals mentioned as being a nuisance. The remaining resources included in this study that require an application (Bountiful Baskets, Imagine Grinnell Community Garden Plots, MICA, and Grinnell Food Share) simply ask the client to sign a form for the purposes of creating a record of each client. In regards to these resources, the questionnaire asked informants if they understood these applications. For the remaining resources that were not identified as having explicit applications, the questionnaire asked if the informant knew how to get involved with that particular resource (See appendix 1).

The data showed SNAP, MICA and WIC as the highest number of individuals mentioning the application process as a barrier, with 3-4 people reporting that they do not understand the application process. This information was confirmed by the focus group, during which all participants agreed that the applications and the regular recertification for federal and state assistance programs are problematic due to great deal of time they take to complete. Similar to the focus group, all three food-insecure interview subjects expressed annoyance with the applications for these federal and state issued programs. However, despite the effort required to complete federal applications for programs, the applications do not appear to be prohibitive to people. MICA and SNAP, two of the three resources with a high reported frequency of problems with their applications, are also the two most utilized resources, according to survey data, showing that people

have been able to figure out the applications and successfully utilize the resource (Figure 2). As one informant from MICA explained, the applications seem like a lot of work but when someone actually does them they are not that hard. MICA offers help to people with filling out the application forms and faxing forms to the appropriate locations, but they do not complete forms for clients as they want the applications to serve as a learning process for those individuals who must complete them. Overall, our findings show that these organizations are doing a good job of assisting people in applying to federal programs when necessary, and the reported programs that people experienced seem to be due to insufficient knowledge of the resource.

The survey data shows that the majority of people who reported that they do not understand an application for local resources have either never heard of this resource or have never used it. This indicates that confusion may be simply due to a lack of information. There were a total of sixteen responses of “true” to the questions “I don’t understand the application” or “I don’t know how to get involved.” Of these sixteen responses, only one respondent had actually utilized the resource. The other fifteen people who said that they do not understand an application or how to get involved had either never used, or never heard of, that particular resource. This suggests that, for those who had actually utilized the resources about which they were questioned, the applications or means to get involved was not overly complicated.

Finally, a volunteer at FRN reported a significant increase in attendance since the organization decided to stop requiring vouchers, suggesting that a simplification in the steps required to get involved acted to increase the number of users. This case illustrates the tradeoff between effort required and benefits received: when a significant amount of effort was required to pick up the vouchers, people decided that it was not worth it to receive one meal. On the other hand, people report using programs such as SNAP despite the complexity of their applications. The researchers hypothesize that this difference is due to a simple cost-benefit analysis: when people feel that the amount of effort required for the application outweighs the benefits, the amount of food that they will receive, they simply will decide not to apply. Therefore, programs that give a substantial amount of food are worth the complex application, whereas one meal a week may not be worth the effort to get involved for some individuals.

Food preference

Food preference, or distaste for the food offered at a particular resource, was one common issue that individuals reported on surveys, during interviews and during the focus group. For example, one member of the focus group discussed the fact that if she went to a particular resource once and did not like the food, she would not return. Despite the reports of dissatisfaction with food options, similar to the issue of applications, food preference appeared to be a significant issue but not a prohibitive barrier for most. People expressed distaste for the food at three different resources including MICA, FRN, and Community Meal. The researchers presume that this is due to the fact that these are the three organizations that do not give individuals a great deal of choice in what foods they are able to take. For example, MICA is only able to offer the food that they have in their food boxes; the food offered at FRN depends on what they receive from their donors; and community meal serves a meal each week with only two options, vegetarian or meat.

One food-insecure individual shared his opinion that the food offered at many of the food assistance resources, such as MICA and Community Meal, is too heavy in carbs. As an individual who has dealt with issues of obesity in his past, he wished that the food assistance programs offered more items that he classified as “healthy,” including brown rice, as opposed to white rice, as well as more fresh fruits and vegetables. He said that he sometimes gives away one half to three fourths of the food given to him by the MICA food pantry because they are things that he does not want to eat

due to these health concerns. He was not the only individual who expressed discontent with the food offered at MICA. For example, while one of the researchers was observing at MICA, an individual came in to pick up a food box from the pantry. Upon receiving the food and looking through what was included, this individual expressed frustration about the amount of items that contained gluten that were in her box, due to gluten intolerance. Similar to this woman who experiences challenges with gluten intolerance, a food assistance resource administrator shared that individuals who are diabetic have to return some foods like syrup and jelly. These comments demonstrate the way in which the food resources in Grinnell do not always cater to the different health needs of their clients.

Beyond taste and health concerns, some people's food preferences stem from their inability to prepare certain food items. For example, one food resource administrator mentioned the way in which homeless individuals and those living temporarily in a hotel would not be able to use the food given to them by MICA because they do not have any way to prepare it. Similarly, one informant from FRN acknowledged that although their food is prepared, it is still necessary to have a microwave in one's home in order to eat the food warmed, or defrosted if individuals choose to freeze their food in order to make it last longer. In response to these barriers, Tiger Packs specifically attempts to address this need. They have found that oftentimes the children who receive these packages of food do not have parents around to prepare food for them when they are hungry. Therefore, Tiger Packs attempts to distribute food items that require little preparation.

To continue, the respondent wishing for healthier food noted above discussed the fact that he was raised to eat in a way the classified as "healthier" and so he did not always feel as if he could find things that he liked at these resources. This shows the way individuals' upbringing and culture can influence the types of food they would like to eat. Based on his comments, it is plausible to think that elderly people, to whom the need for food assistance is new, may not utilize the resources available to them for similar reasons. This presents an area for further study.

On the part of the food resource administrators, there were varied opinions regarding food preference. One administrator, for example, expressed her opinion that if people are hungry they will eat the food that is offered to them despite their preferences. However, another food resource administrator noted that "food preferences don't disappear when you are poor."

Feeling Welcome

The individuals surveyed and interviewed for this project felt welcome at all of the resources that they were asked about. For example, when asked about feeling welcome at the First Presbyterian Church during FRN distribution, one respondent noted that he "always" feels welcome. His response was similarly enthusiastic when asked about feeling welcome at Community Meal. Another interviewee stated, "Yes, everyone is very nice." In addition to the interview responses, none of the twenty-five survey respondents reported feeling unwelcome in any of the locations of food resources investigated in Grinnell. It is important to note that the two federal programs, SNAP and WIC, were not applicable to this question because they do not have an office and thus do not require an individual to physically go to any one location to obtain food assistance. In sum, the researchers found that individuals report feeling welcome at the food assistance resources and thus this does not present a barrier to accessing food for Grinnell residents.

Language

From the sample utilized for this data collection, language did not appear to be a barrier that prevents individuals from utilizing food assistance resources in Grinnell. One of the food administrators discussed the way in which she does not observe very much diversity in the food assistance resources in Grinnell. She mentioned that there are some individuals whom she identifies

as Latino who come in, but in general, those using the resource in Grinnell are, in her language, not very “diverse.” The researchers took this to mean not very linguistically diverse. She also discussed the way in which individuals who do come in with language barriers are able to utilize an over the phone translation service while using the resources offered at this organization. Although an over-the-phone service may not be the most effective method of interpretation, this administrator felt that it was sufficient for this organization’s needs. It is, however, important to note that there could be individuals in Grinnell who do not feel comfortable speaking English whom this sample did not access.

Stigma

This study found that stigma associated with accepting food assistance is prevalent in the Grinnell community. However, the study also found that the individuals who feel this stigma have needs that are too great to allow stigma to prevent them from accessing these resources. As one food insecure informant explained, she feels stigma when she accesses certain food assistance resources, but she needs the food so she goes anyway. Administrators expressed similar sentiments about stigmas in the community, saying that they were certainly present but were not strong enough to stop people from accessing the resources they need.

One significant factor that contributes to feelings of embarrassment about using food assistance is a change in income. Members of the focus group and an informant from MICA all mentioned the difficulty of accepting a change in income, which causes a need for assistance, when before one was self-sufficient. For example, when some individuals retire, their social security benefits are not enough to cover all of their needs forcing them to accept assistance to survive. One focus group participant explained that she used to own a house and consider herself very successful, however, later in life she had to transition to an income level at which she needed assistance to obtain food and found this change very difficult to accept. Certain organizations in Grinnell also have specific stigmas attached. For example, one food insecure informant made a comment about how people gossip about those who attend FRN, and believes that people who go to FRN are obese and take a lot of food.

Organizations in Grinnell make an effort to combat stigmas or feelings of embarrassment that people may experience when utilizing these resources. MICA has a policy of confidentiality so that staff in public will not acknowledge clients unless the client initiates interaction. Community meal purposely does not make their donation box a focal point at the meal so that guests do not feel pressure to donate or embarrassment when they are not able. Despite this attempt, one focus group participant explained that it is embarrassing when she is not able to put money in the donation box when everyone else in the line around her is clearly donating. Tiger Packs also tries to avoid stigma for those receiving assistance by slipping food into the children’s backpacks so that none of their peers will be aware which children are getting food. Finally, one informant presumed that a recent drop in numbers of individuals using the High School was due to stigma in the High School associated with accepting food assistance from the school pantry.

Interestingly, a few informants mentioned an opposing factor to stigma: socializing. One informant from MICA believes that some clients enjoy coming into the office because it gives them the opportunity to leave their homes to socialize. Similarly, one food insecure interview subject added that some people attend lunches at the Senior Center because they enjoy socializing at these events, although he personally did not feel this need. This shows that for some community members associations with organizations offering food assistance are not seen as embarrassing, but instead as a positive opportunity social interactions.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researchers have identified a few of the limitations of this study. First, due to the selected methods of sampling, the study did not gather information directly from the individuals who do not use either MICA or FRN because these are the locations at which researchers intercepted potential informants. Given more time, the snowball interviewing method would prove beneficial in accessing this sector of the Grinnell Population. Secondly, the sample was limited. The interviewees all spoke English and no individual seemed to have a problem with the language of the questionnaire. Thus, the researchers presume that all those interviewed and surveyed were English speakers. Additionally, questionnaires were administered only at two locations, a method that produced biases such as the fact that seven of the twenty-five surveyed had used FRN, but six of those seven were surveyed during an FRN distribution period. Third, upon interviewing food insecure individuals, the researchers learned that those who utilize resources refer to resources by different names than those who administer them. For example, what administrators refer to as “SNAP” is referred to by food resource utilizers as “food stamps”, but researchers only used the term SNAP on the questionnaires. Unfortunately, the researchers did not learn this until it was already too late to change the questionnaire forms. Finally, although the questionnaire did ask individuals if they had heard of WIC and if they used WIC, it neglected to ask if people were eligible to use this program. This contributes to the way in which the data is skewed; many individuals had heard of WIC but were not utilizing it, likely due to the fact that they were not eligible (See Figure 1). To conclude, these limitations suggest ample areas where further research would be beneficial to increasing knowledge regarding the usage of food assistance resource in Grinnell. Of these potential projects, the research team feels as if a study inclusive of individuals who, due to barriers, do not use food assistance resources at all (if such a population exists) would be the most informative about the changes that could be made to the resources in Grinnell.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, transportation, hours of operation, application, food preference, and stigma were found to be problematic, but not prohibitive in the utilization of some, or all, resources in Grinnell. Feeling welcome at organizations and language barriers were not found to be issues. Due to the fact that this report was commissioned by MICA, recommendations specific to other organizations lie beyond the scope of this project. Thus, this study will not provide recommendations for the issues of application and hours of operation, as these were only identified as being problematic for a few of the resources studied. Instead, the researchers suggest that these particular issues be addressed by those organizations that experience them. In terms of making recommendations for MICA and the general network of food assistance resources, the researchers are aware that many of these organizations experience limited funding and given the current situation it is not likely that major changes can be made to fix some of the issues identified. However, the following recommendations will describe the variety of smaller and less resource intensive solutions that the researchers see as possibilities for positive change in the network of food assistance resources in Grinnell.

The most significant problem identified by the researchers and affecting all organizations is lack of awareness. This problem is twofold. First, of the sample population, many individuals have simply not heard of the variety of resources available in the community. Second, even if individuals have heard of an organization, they often do not fully understand the services offered or how to utilize them. Although this barrier was identified in multiple organizations, the researchers feel that increasing awareness is especially essential for organizations such as FRN and the Giving Gardens, both of which experience an overabundance of food due to the lack of individuals utilizing the services they offer.

The first piece in addressing this barrier is an increase in advertising, not through the traditional method of brochures and printed material, but instead through word-of-mouth communication. Through interviews, the researchers found that individuals do not always read the informational material given to them by MICA or other organizations, but they do respond well to recommendations from their friends and religious leaders. Thus, the researchers envision that this type of advertisement would occur through leaders at religious organizations and other influential community members, community presentations by the food assistance resources themselves, and face-to-face discussions between MICA staff and their clients during formal meetings, home visits, and casual office interactions. Beyond face-to-face advertisement, awareness through social media sites was also mentioned as a powerful tool for information sharing during interviews. Thus, the researchers suggest that food assistance resources in town should increase their presence on sites such as the Facebook group “hey Grinnell, did you know?” Due to the high activity on this site, a simple post could greatly boost awareness of resources in Grinnell.

Although not all individuals pay attention to the promotional materials, the researchers do recommend a reevaluation of the current materials in order to increase awareness of resources and address possible misconceptions held about particular resources for those who do choose utilize such materials. First, the researchers recommend a simple update of the Poweshiek County Resource Guide, as some of the contact information included in the guide is no longer correct. Additionally, the terms used to refer to particular resources in these promotional materials should be consolidated. For example, if the community generally refers to Community Meal as “the meal down at Davis,” then researchers recommend that resource guide reflect this colloquial language usage so as to avoid confusion. Beyond the Poweshiek County Resource Guide, the researchers recommend that a brief and simple brochure be made that includes only information on the food assistance resources available in town. Then, much in the same way that the researchers believe that information should be disseminated through face-to-face communication, they also recommend that this simple brochure should be distributed personally. For example, when a client enters the MICA office, a MICA staff person could hand them one of these informational brochures and then give a brief explanation of the inside. One key informant interviewed for the project also expressed interest in creating a space to provide resources at Community Meal, demonstrating that there is potential for this type of increased advertisement within the community. Thus, these brochures could also be placed in locations such as FRN distribution sites and Community Meal.

In addition to awareness, the research team also found that food preference was a prevalent barrier for individuals. This issue necessitates changes that the researchers acknowledge are not always feasible considering limited funding and other resources on the part of the organizations. However, one potential solution to the problem of food preference at MICA is to transform the pantry into what is referred to as a “choice pantry.” A choice pantry is one in which clients are able to “shop” for the items they receive and thus have more agency in selecting the food they take home with them. Although this would require a significant reorganization of the current system in place in the food pantry, the researchers found overwhelming support that the current system wastes a significant amount of food due to individuals discarding particular food items due to dietary restraints, as well as personal preferences.

Finally, the researchers recommend that a food coalition be started as a way in which to connect the multiplicity of food assistance resources in Grinnell so that they may determine how to better address the food insecurity of the community as a whole. The researchers imagine that this coalition would take form as a monthly meeting of representatives from each of the food assistance resources in Grinnell during which individuals could discuss their efforts and gain feedback and advice from others in the group. Informants from multiple organizations in Grinnell expressed interest in creating such a coalition. The researchers believe that by creating a space in which the

administrators of these resources are able to gain a better understanding of the food assistance resources available in Grinnell, they will be more equipped to disseminate this information to those in the community who would be appreciative of such information and thus increase the awareness and use of these resources. Additionally, issues such as transportation and stigma that were found to be issues that exist within the community at large could be addressed during a meeting such as this so that all resources could be active in collaborate in developing solutions. It may also be beneficial to bring issues such as these to an even broader coalition of resources in Grinnell that work to assist a similar population with challenges beyond food, such as housing and healthcare in order to gain their opinions on solving these broader community-based issues. Despite the challenges present in the Grinnell community, there is a general sentiment in town that organizations are doing well in addressing these issues, as one informant stated, “everyone is doing the best that they can despite the little money that they have.”

APPENDECIES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

1. Please respond to the following statements:
 - a. Mid Iowa Community Action (MICA)

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of MICA			
I have used MICA in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at MICA, or false if you have not			

It is hard to get to MICA			
MICA's hours are inconvenient for me			
I don't understand the application process to use MICA			
I don't like the food at MICA			
I don't feel welcome at MICA			
The staff at MICA don't speak my preferred language			
I worry people will judge me if I use MICA			

Please list any others problems that you experience using MICA:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

b. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of SNAP			
I have used SNAP in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at SNAP, or false if you have not			
I don't understand the application process to use SNAP			
I am unable to use SNAP at the places I shop			
I am unhappy with what I can purchase with SNAP			
I worry people will judge me if I use SNAP			

Please list any other problems that you experience using SNAP:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

c. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of WIC			
I have used WIC in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at WIC, or false if you have not			

I don't understand the application process to use WIC			
I don't need the items that WIC offers			
I worry people will judge me if I use WIC			

Please list any other problems that you experience using WIC:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

d. Food Recovery Network (FRN)/ First Presbyterian Church

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of FRN			
I have used FRN in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at FRN, or false if you have not			
It is hard to get to FRN food distribution sites			
FRN's hours are inconvenient for me			
I don't know how to get involved with FRN			
I don't like the food at FRN			
I don't feel welcome at FRN			
The volunteers at FRN don't speak my preferred language			
I worry people will judge me if I use FRN			

Please list any other problems that you experience using FRN:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

e. Community Meal

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of Community Meal			
I have used Community Meal in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've			

experienced this at Community Meal, or false if you have not			
It is hard to get to Community Meal			
Community Meal's hours are inconvenient for me			
I don't know how to get involved in Community Meal			
I don't like the food at Community Meal			
I don't feel welcome at Community Meal			
The volunteers at Community Meal don't speak my preferred language			
I worry people will judge me if I go to Community Meal			

Please list any other problems that you experience using Community Meal:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

f. Imagine Grinnell Community Garden Plots

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of the Imagine Grinnell Garden Plots			
I have used a garden plot in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at Imagine Grinnell, or false if you have not			
It is hard to get to the garden plots			
I don't understand the application process to use the garden			
I don't like the food at the garden			
I don't feel welcome at the garden			
I don't feel welcome at the Imagine Grinnell Office			
The staff at Imagine Grinnell don't speak my preferred language			
I worry people will judge me if I use Imagine Grinnell			
The garden plots are too expensive			

Please list any other problems that you experience using the Imagine Grinnell Garden plots:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

g. Bountiful Baskets food co-op

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of Bountiful Baskets			
I have used Bountiful Baskets in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at Bountiful Baskets, or false if you have not			
It is hard to get to Bountiful Baskets			
Bountiful Baskets' hours are inconvenient for me			
I don't understand the application process to be in Bountiful Baskets			
I don't like the food at Bountiful Baskets			
I don't feel welcome at Bountiful Baskets			
The staff at Bountiful Baskets don't speak my preferred language			
I worry people will judge me if I use Bountiful Baskets			
Bountiful Baskets is too expensive			

Please list any other problems that you experience using Bountiful Baskets:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

h. Grinnell Food SHARE

	True	False	I don't know
I have heard of Grinnell Food Share			
I have used Grinnell Food Share in the past 6 months			
Below are potential difficulties, please check true if you've experienced this at Grinnell Food SHARE, or false if you have not			
It is hard to get to Grinnell Food Share			
Grinnell Food Share's hours are inconvenient for me			
I don't understand the application process to use Grinnell Food Share			
I don't like the food at Grinnell Food Share			

I don't feel welcome at Grinnell Food Share			
The staff at Grinnell Food Share don't speak my preferred language			
I worry people would judge me if used Grinnell Food Share			
Grinnell Food Share is too expensive			

Please list any other problems that you experience using Grinnell Food Share:

If you answered yes to any of the above difficulties, please place a star next to the one that is most problematic

- 1. Do you use any other food assistance resources that were not listed above? If so, please explain and describe any associated problems with the resource.**
- 2. Do you have any suggestions to improve the food assistance resources in Grinnell?**
- 3. Do you have any additional comments?**

Appendix 2: Food-poor Interview Guide

1. Introductions

- a. Researchers introduce themselves
 - i. We are not asking for your name/information
- b. Researchers introduce the project
 - i. Read and sign informed consent

ii. If you finish this project you will get to enter your contact information into a drawing for the chance to receive \$10 in Grinnell Bucks

Demographics

- i. Age
- ii. Judge Sex - if confused ask: Male/Female/Other

2. Open ended questions

- a. Could you tell me a little bit about what food assistance programs you use and why you use them?
- b. Could you tell me a little bit about what food assistance programs you do not use and why you don't use them?

2. Current food assistance program usage

- a. How many adults and how many children currently depend upon you for food?
- b. Are you currently using food assistance resources in Grinnell?
- c. Could you please list the food assistance resources that you know of and say if you have used them in the past year or not.
- d. Are there any other food assistance programs in or around Grinnell that you have used in the past year that we didn't ask you about?
- e. How often do you use this food assistance program?

For each resource they list, ask the following questions:

- a. When did you start using this resource?
- b. How frequently do you use this resource?
- c. How did you find out about this resource?

d. If anything, what do you like about this resource? Please list your reasons.

e. If anything, what do you not like about this resource? Please list your reasons.

- f. Do you think there are ways to improve this resource?
 - i. Prod, if necessary, about their ideas
3. Of the resources that you listed, you didn't say...

MICA

- WIC
- SNAP
- Community Meal
- Church Meals
- Food Recovery Network
- Bountiful Baskets

We are interested in learning about why you don't use these resources.

I am going to list some of the possible reasons. Could you please answer yes or no if this is a barrier that you have experienced to prevent you from using a resource, and if the answer is yes and you are willing, could you elaborate on why?

- i. Awareness that this resource was available
- ii. Scheduling and the hours this resource was open
- iii. Ability to get Transportation/convenience of location
- iv. Confusing application process
- v. Lack of appealing food choices
- vi. Not feeling welcome
- vii. language barriers
- viii. Stereotypes about this organizations and they type of people who use it
 - 1. What stereotypes?
- ix. Is there anything else?

6. Collaboration

- a. What do you think about the way in which the food assistance programs could work together?
 - i. What are some ways you think they are working well together? (Possible examples/Prods: Timing is accessible for people who use more than one resource, resources adequately advertise each other etc.)
 - ii. What are the ways you think these resources could better work together

7. Closing

- a. Is there anything else that you think I should know about food assistance resources in Grinnell?
- b. Do you have any questions for me about our interview or my research project?
- c. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me.
- d. Would you like to enter into our drawing?
 - i. If yes, give them a slip of paper and advise them to write their contact information on it (excluding their name)
 - e. Give them our contact information

Appendix 3: Administrator Interview Guide

1. Introductions

- a. Researchers introduce themselves

- b. Researchers introduce the project
 - i. Read and sign informed consent

Demographics

- i. Age
- ii. Judge Sex - if confused ask: Male/Female/Other

Employment

- a. What is your position at _____ (food organization)
- b. How long have you worked at _____(food organization)
- c. Can you give a brief description of your job responsibilities?
- d. (If not previously mentioned) Do you interact with food insecure clients?
- e. How often are you present at the food organization and during what hours do you work?

Services Provided

- a. Can you please list and describe the services this organization provides to food insecure clients?
- b. Do you offer assistance with programs signups? (WIC, SNAP)
- c. If you refer clients to other food assistance resources: please list which one's you refer them to and why?
- d. Do you collaborate with any other food assistance programs in or outside of Grinnell?
- i. If so, please list which ones and how?

Client population

- a. How many clients would you estimate that your organization has?
- b. Do all clients access resources on a regular basis or more sporadically?
- c. What is the average age of your clients?
- d. Is there a large range ages?
- e. Do entire families come to access this resource, or is there usually just one representative?
- f. What percentage of your clients would you estimate are low income?
 - i. Do you request income info
 - ii. Do you verify their income?

Satisfaction/Access

- a. Are you satisfied with the services your food organizations provides? Why or why not?
- b. Do you think your clients are satisfied with the services your organization provides? Why or why not?
- c. Do you think your clients face any challenges accessing your resources?

i.Awareness

- ii.Scheduling challenges/unable to access the resource during their open hours
- iii.Challenges finding transportation/inconvenient location
- iv.Confusing application process

j.Social Barriers?

- i.Stigma/Stereotypes associated with this resource

k.Cultural barriers:

- i.Food preferences
- ii.Language barriers

d. If yes to any of the above, what are ways that these barriers could be alleviated?

e. Are you aware of any other resources that your clients access outside of Grinnell?

Other resources:

- a. What other food assistance resources are you aware of in Grinnell?
- b. If you refer clients to other food assistance resources: please list which one's you refer

- them to and why?
- c. What do you see as these programs' strengths?
 - d. What do you see as these programs' weaknesses?
 - e. Do you collaborate with any other food assistance programs in or outside of Grinnell?
- If so, please list which ones and how?

Closing

- a. Is there anything else that you think I should know about food assistance resources in Grinnell?
- b. Do you have any questions for me about our interview or my research project?
- c. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me.
- e. Give them our contact information

Appendix 4: Informed Consent (Individuals who have utilized or are utilizing food assistance resources)

Informed Consent Form

(Individuals who have utilized or are utilizing food assistance resources)

Research Project Title: Food Resources in Grinnell

Investigators: Andie Semlow, Taz Grout, Sophie Neems and Monty Roper

Hello!

Introduction:

My name is _____ and I am a student at Grinnell College doing a research project on behalf of MICA. I, along with my research team, am interested in learning about how Grinnell residents make use of the food resources in and around the town of Grinnell. It is our hope that the information we gather through our interviews will be used by MICA and others to better serve people in Grinnell who use food resources. Additionally, we may publish this research beyond Grinnell College.

Description of Procedures:

If you are willing, I will be asking you questions about your use of food resources in Grinnell, both including those offered at MICA and those offered in other areas of the community. I will also ask about the reasons why you use certain resources over others. This interview will take approximately 25 minutes.

Risks and Benefits:

We do not think that this interview poses any significant risks to you as a participant. However, there is the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable discussing the sensitive topic of food insecurity.

However, this interview does present some benefits. We hope the information that you provide will be used to improve the food services offered in Grinnell as well as improve collaboration between resources in Grinnell so food assistance organizations can better serve the community.

Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important to us. For this reason, I will not write your name at any point in my notes or in the reports on my research findings such as my paper or presentation. This form that you are signing will never be connected with the information you provide to me in this interview. At the end

of the semester, all of our data will be passed to Professor Monty Roper who will maintain them in a secure location.

Participant Rights:

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. Please feel free to answer my questions with as much or as little detail as you would like and if any of the questions feel too personal, you do not have to answer them. If at any point you would like to stop the interview please just tell me.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the research at this point, please feel free to ask. If you have questions after our interview, you are welcome to contact me or any of my research assistants at grouttas@grinnell.edu, semLOWAN@grinnell.edu or neemssop@grinnell.edu. If you would rather talk with someone aside from myself, you can contact my research advisor Professor Monty Roper at roperjm@grinnell.edu. He also has the contact information for the Board that oversees all research projects at my college.

Participant Signature:

By signing this form you acknowledge that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview, that you have had enough time to read this document and that that your questions have been answered satisfactorily.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)

Investigator's Statement:

By signing this form, I assure that, to the best of my knowledge, the study participant has had enough time to read this document and all of their questions have been sufficiently answered. I am of the opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits and procedures involved with this research.

Investigator's Name (Printed): _____

(Signature of investigator obtaining informed consent)

(Date)

Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form (Individuals who work with or have worked with community organizations to support the food-poor)

Informed Consent Form

(Individuals who work with or have worked with community organizations to support the food-poor)

Research Project Title: Food Resources in Grinnell

Investigators: Andie Semlow, Taz Grout, Sophie Neems and Monty Roper

Introduction:

My name is _____ and I am a student at Grinnell College doing a research project on behalf of MICA. I, along with my research team, am interested in learning about how Grinnell residents make use of the food resources in and around the town of Grinnell. It is our hope that the information we gather through our interviews will be used by MICA and others to better serve people in Grinnell who use food resources. Additionally, we may publish this research beyond Grinnell College.

Description of Procedures:

If you are willing, I will first ask you questions about your role as ___[job]___ at ___[company]___ and your involvement and opinions about the administration of food resources to Grinnell residents. I will then ask you about your perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the general food resource network in Grinnell. This interview will take approximately 25 minutes.

Risks and Benefits:

We just want to make you aware of the fact that highlighting the weaknesses of food resources and/or organizations in town may have negative repercussions. However, we hope that by talking about the ways in which these resources can more effective, we can help these organizations to better serve the Grinnell community.

Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important to us. For this reason, I will not write your name at any point in my notes or in the reports on my research findings such as my paper or presentation. This form that you are signing will never be connected with the information you provide to me in this interview. At the end of the semester, all data will be passed to Professor Monty Roper who will maintain them in a secure location.

Participant Rights:

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. Please feel free to answer my questions with as much or as little detail as you would like and if any of the questions feel too personal, you do not have to answer them. If at any point you would like to stop the interview please just tell me.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the research at this point, please feel free to ask. If you have questions after our interview, you are welcome to contact me or any of my research assistants at grouttas@grinnell.edu, semLOWAN@grinnell.edu or neemssop@grinnell.edu. If you would rather talk with someone aside from myself, you can contact my research advisor Professor Monty Roper at roperjm@grinnell.edu. He also has the contact information for the Board that oversees all research projects at my college.

Participant Signature:

By signing this form you acknowledge that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this interview, that you have had enough time to read this document and that that your questions have been answered satisfactorily.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)

Investigator's Statement:

By signing this form, I assure that, to the best of my knowledge, the study participant has had enough time to read this document and all of their questions have been answered sufficiently. I am of the opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits and procedures involved with this research.

Investigator's Name (Printed): _____

(Signature of investigator obtaining informed consent)

(Date)

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