

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

EVALUATING THE CHARITABLE FOOD SYSTEM IN YORK COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across York County, rates of poverty and associated symptoms have steadily risen over the past 10 years.¹ Food insecurity, like poverty, is a systemic issue that requires a change from the status quo. The complexity of food insecurity requires more than just partnerships, but rather true collaboration—and for organizations, funders, advocates and communities to cross boundaries, take risks and change their behavior to solve social problems. Collaborations depend on independent players agreeing to work together toward a common goal, a shared purpose. It is intentional and rigorous and is fueled by data.

The complexity of food insecurity requires true collaboration—for organizations, funders, advocates and communities to cross boundaries, take risks and change their behavior to solve social problems.

The “A Seat at the Table” project’s intent was just that, collaborative: engaging partners by learning together from evidenced-based data, around a common purpose, to achieve a shared goal—a hunger-free York County. What we know is that York County is home to more than 100 charitable food distribution programs, doing good work and helping neighbors.

However, even with these programs there are thousands of people struggling with hunger and food insecurity. The USDA defines food insecurity as the lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.²

With support from the Memorial Health Fund, The Food Trust was commissioned, as an independent reviewer, to evaluate the charitable food distribution system using an innovative mapping approach to identify areas of need, draw attention to challenges, highlight successes, and make a clear call for systemic change to move the needle on food insecurity in York County.

Specifically, this report seeks to answer these questions:

- What areas in York County are most affected by food insecurity?
- What gaps are there in its food distribution system?
- How can we better coordinate and expand services to ensure that people living with food insecurity in York County get the help they need?
- What can be done to assure access to healthy and nutritious food for those struggling with food insecurity?

Findings in this report are based on statistically significant estimates of food insecure populations, pounds of food needed per individual, pounds of food distributed, and data sources available at the sub-county level on household income, vehicle access, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) utilization, SNAP retailer locations and school meals participation.

These sources were supplemented with data from an agency survey that compiled information from charitable food providers on program type, site type and capacity, such as refrigeration and paid staff. This report presents analyses based on the most reliable data available; the sub-county level relies on five-year estimates. Findings presented in this report are intended for systems-level planning and should not be used to assess individual household needs or to determine eligibility for services.

Good work is being done in York County. We have much to be proud of. We have come a long way and we have a community invested. We also know that it is imperative that we improve in order to achieve systemic change, or the current state of hunger will continue to perpetuate.

The Food Trust utilized its mapping expertise to apply data visualization methods to the food distribution network in York County. This document includes the results of the findings. Multiple data sources were combined to examine ZIP code level data where pounds of food distributed by the two major food banks in the region (Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and York County Food Bank) are insufficient to meet the needs of food insecure individuals in that ZIP code. Data are presented visually, with maps of York County and York City. Analyses are also presented for food insecurity rates by ZIP code and percent of food needs met in each ZIP code. Barriers to food access, such as low vehicle access, lack of SNAP-authorized retailers, SNAP utilization, and free and reduced school meal utilization, were also studied and are visually presented.

During the course of this work, many observations were made that will impede progress if solutions are not achieved: historical disagreements negatively impacting the current charitable food environment; divides between the city and the county; competition; sacred programming that has not evolved to provide the services needed to those struggling with food insecurity today; food purchased retail as opposed to leveraging resources by sourcing food from the food banks; duplication of services; lack of coordination and communication; and, most harmful to the health and well-being of the County and its residents, the provision of low-quality, unhealthy convenience foods.

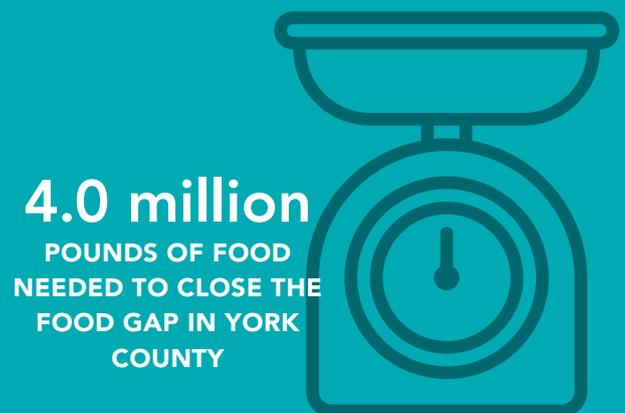
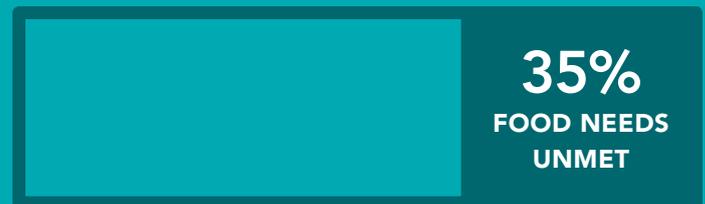
By identifying and describing areas of need in the local charitable food system, gaps in services, duplication of services and recommendations for improvements, it is our hope that this report will advance progress to more effectively serve those struggling with food insecurity. Recommendations are relevant for food distributors and providers, food systems advocates, community partners, funders and policymakers. Resources must be mobilized, boundaries crossed, behaviors changed and risks taken to address food insecurity. Cross-sector collaboration is needed to achieve a hunger-free York County.

1 Data provided by yorkcounts.org/poverty-children shows percent of children in poverty by school district for the years 2004, 2013 and 2015.
2 <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement.aspx>

The Overall Food Distribution Gap in York County

The meal gap, as defined by Feeding America ZIP code estimates, is 11.6 million pounds of food needed per year to reach 55,155 food insecure people in York County.

The York County charitable food system obtains its food from two main sources: the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank (CPFEB) and the York County Food Bank (YCFB). CPFEB, a member of Feeding America, distributes food in large quantities and is the single largest provider of charitable food in central Pennsylvania, including York County, to a network of more than 1000 partners and programs. YCFB distributes exclusively to a network of York County providers, some of which are partnered with YCFB alone, but many are partners with CPFEB, as well. Combined, these two providers account for most of the charitable food, approximately 7.6 million pounds, distributed to York County residents in need. This leaves a food distribution gap of 4.0 million pounds (35%) in York County each year.





BACKGROUND

In 2015, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank announced the Bold Goal to End Hunger; which states that, by 2025, the Food Bank will provide enough nutritious food to everyone struggling with hunger in each of the 27 counties we serve. With the adoption of the Bold Goal, the Food Bank was intentional about access (everyone struggling with hunger) and food quality (nutritious food).

York County is one of the highest-need counties in central Pennsylvania. There is a gap of approximately 4 million pounds of food needed by thousands of York County residents struggling with hunger.

In 2016, Gov. Tom Wolf released "Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger Free PA." This report identified strategies to close the meal gap with nutritious food, established goals, and charged the public and private sector with meeting the goals to end hunger by 2020 (see appendix for goals). These goals include establishing a food alliance in each county; increasing SNAP participation to 98% or higher; increasing free and reduced school meal participation to 30%; increasing school

breakfast participation to 60%; increase Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program redemption rates; making double SNAP bucks highly accessible at high-need farmers markets; streamlining access to food security information and benefits; and improving access to healthy and nutritious food.

In 2017, the Memorial Health Fund announced a request for proposals to address social and physical health issues in York County, an opportunity to address food insecurity with an innovative approach. Catholic Harvest Food Pantry, the York County Food Alliance, New Hope Ministries, York County Food Bank and Central Pennsylvania Food Bank as the backbone organization aligned together and formed a collaborative to approach the opportunity from a collective impact lens, recognizing that no single organization could achieve the goal of a hunger-free York County. The group committed to move beyond partnerships, take risks, change behavior and assume shared responsibility to embrace collaboration. With the ultimate goal of implementing strategies identified in the Governor's Blueprint, York County has become one of the first in the Commonwealth to evaluate the charitable food network at a sub-county level. We want to demonstrate that when stakeholders within a system agree to assume shared responsibility, we can advance our missions, we can leverage our impact and we can solve hunger.

According to Feeding America, 55,155 individuals in York County are food insecure. Approximately 11.6 million pounds of food are needed to meet their needs each year. With the many providers of charitable food in York County, approximately 7.6 million pounds of food are distributed. This leaves a gap of approximately 4 million pounds of food needed by thousands of York County residents struggling with hunger. York County is one of the highest-need counties in central Pennsylvania. How could there be such significant food gaps and such a large population of food insecure residents when the county is home to numerous charitable food providers? What were we missing? How can we improve delivery systems, programs and services for the benefit of those in need?

The collaborative group identified a multi-pronged approach in their proposal to address food insecurity:

- Foremost, a third-party evaluator was needed to conduct an environmental scan of the charitable food system; identify areas of the county with the largest food distribution gap; and develop recommendations for systemwide strategies to enhance nutritious food distribution, expand capacity, identify duplication of services, and leverage state and federal nutrition programs. We had to understand what the current climate was in our county, and we wanted an objective evaluator to assist with this process.
- While the county is being studied and recommendations made, we also wanted to start some innovative work now. Resources were allocated to implement best practices, as identified by Feeding America. These initial investments will begin to assist those struggling with hunger and demonstrate the positive benefit that can be achieved when best practices are carried out.
- Upon completion of the report and receipt of recommendations, the remaining funding will be leveraged to implement foundational work identified as a result of the study.

This report presents practical, user-friendly information and, through data-driven mapping, clearly identifies areas of need and opportunities to eliminate gaps, leverage funding, avoid duplication of services and ultimately close the meal gap with nutritious food.

3 ZIP codes 17011 and 17055 were removed from Feeding America data because >90% of these ZIP code areas are in Cumberland County. Feeding America data did not include food insecurity estimates for ZIP codes 17311 or 17318 because of small population numbers. Neither CPFEB nor YCFB reported food distribution in these ZIP codes.

4 The Feeding America 2015 PRAN model estimated “demand” for emergency food using average number of meals (converted to pounds) that each food insecure individual needs but is unable to purchase. This model yielded an estimate of approximately 210 pounds of food needed per food insecure person per year.

METHODOLOGY

DATA SOURCES

The Food Trust utilized multiple data sets from multiple data sources to produce this report. Data sources included Feeding America, American Community Survey (ACS), Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, York County Food Bank and United States Department of Agriculture. Data sources were collated at the York County ZIP code level.³

Each ZIP code was evaluated for food insecurity rates determined by Feeding America estimates, number of food insecure individuals, pounds of food needed per food insecure person per year⁴ pounds distributed by Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and York County Food Bank, and the “food gap,” i.e., pounds of food needed in each ZIP code. Detailed and reliable food quality data was unavailable from YCFB at the time of data collection. Steps have been taken to ensure the reliability of food data received from YCFB for future study. CPFEB uses Foods to Encourage (F2E) as a yearly metric for agencies and has an overall F2E distribution in York County of 59.4%.

In addition, a survey was distributed to charitable food providers in CPFEB and YCFB’s network to ascertain provider information, including site name, location, program type, site type, cold food storage capacity (i.e., refrigeration) and paid staff. With the ultimate goal of closing the meal gap, provider data was combined with ZIP code level analyses to identify areas of greatest need, inform strategies to increase efficiency and rebalance food distribution toward underserved areas.

On the following page, Table 1 outlines details on data elements, data sources, methodology and limitations. Appendix Table 1 provides additional details on data sources and variables used.

Table 1. Data Sources, Methodology and Limitations

DATA	DATA SOURCES & METHODOLOGY	LIMITATIONS
<p>Food Insecurity Rates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding America provided food insecurity rates by ZIP code, estimated based on population, unemployment, poverty, % Black, % Hispanic, % home ownership and median income (ACS 5- year estimates 2011–2015). • Rates were converted to estimated # of food insecure individuals, using ZIP code population numbers (ACS 2016). • Food pounds needed per ZIP code calculated using a Feeding America multiplier (4 lbs. food needed per food insecure person per week). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Feeding America York County food insecurity rate was based on Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment data from 2015; ZIP code level food insecurity rates were based on ACS 5-year estimates 2011–2015. • Therefore, ZIP code level data predict a higher number of food insecure individuals (55,155) than the overall York County rate of 10.5% in 2017 (46,300). • We focus on ZIP code level food insecurity rates since a goal of our analyses were to focus on needs in smaller geographies in York County.
<p>Pounds Distributed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPFEB and YCFB provided estimates of food distributed to York County-based program sites in calendar year 2017. • Pounds data includes pounds of food distributed via state and federal programs, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ZIP code data are not available for individual clients who receive food. • Analyses assume that food pounds are distributed and received in the program ZIP code. • Some program sites do not report data on other food sources to Food Banks. • Pounds of food distributed data may not count unreported donations and privately sourced food. • Community level programs not in either Food Bank network were not included in analysis.
<p>Food Provider Site Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collected through the partner agency survey, which was sent to YCFB and CPFEB partners electronically and via USPS with extensive follow-up. • Food Trust staff provided additional outreach to gather detailed information of providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all providers responded to the survey. • Additional outreach to gather information from unresponsive programs should be conducted. • Due to the nature of charitable food programs, ongoing confirmation of current responses should be completed.
<p>Mapping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data were mapped by ZIP code to show areas of need in two tiers: 1) Areas of Greatest Need (RED): ZIP codes where food insecurity is higher than the York County rate AND pounds distributed are less than pounds needed. 2) Additional Areas of Need (YELLOW): ZIP codes where food insecurity is lower than the York County rate, BUT pounds distributed are less than pounds needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps are for data visualization purposes only. Pockets of need exist outside areas highlighted in these maps. • Maps are intended for systems-level planning only and are not intended to be used to deny individual services or assess individual household needs. • Maps examine gaps in pounds of food distributed and do not assess food quality in the charitable food system. • Comprehensive and consistent data on food quality was not available during the data collection period.

MAPPING

Table 2. Map 1 Categories and Descriptions

MAP 1 CATEGORY (COLOR)	DESCRIPTION
High Food Insecurity and Low Food Distribution (RED)	"Areas of Greatest Need": These ZIP codes have higher than average need and currently receive less than 75% of estimated pounds needed.
Low Food Insecurity and Low Food Distribution (YELLOW)	"Areas of Elevated Need": These ZIP codes have lower than average need and currently receive less than 75% of estimated pounds needed.
High Food Insecurity and High Food Distribution (BLUE)	"Areas of Greatest Distribution": These ZIP codes have higher than average need and currently receive more than 75% of estimated pounds needed.
Low Food Insecurity and High Food Distribution (GREEN)	"Areas of Potential Partnership": These ZIP codes have lower than average need and currently receive more than 75% of estimated pounds needed.

Visualizations were created using ArcMap version 10.6. Maps were generated to reflect food gap areas, food insecurity and food distribution reported by CPF and YCFB at the ZIP code level.

Map 1: Areas of Greatest Need, by ZIP Code

Each ZIP code was classified into one of 4 categories shown in Table 2. Areas of need were determined based on whether food insecurity was above or below the York County average of 10.5% and if distribution from the CPF and YCFB covered more or less than 75% of projected needs. Map 1 combines the subsequent food insecurity and food distribution maps to show the food gap for each ZIP code.

Map 2: Food Insecurity Rate, by ZIP Code

This map demonstrates food insecurity rates by ZIP code. The 2017 York County food insecurity rate of 10.5% is used as a median, with areas shown in orange and red that have food insecurity higher than 10.5%. While 10.5% is the county rate, York County ZIP code food insecurity rates can be as low as 6% and as high 27.4%. This range was split into thirds and is visualized on a scale of yellow, orange and red. Map 2 shows percentage of the population in each area that is food insecure but does not consider current charitable food programs efforts and the potential for duplications of services.

Map 3: Percent of Food Needs Met, by ZIP Code

Map 3 depicts percent of food needs met for each ZIP code by calculating pounds distributed in each ZIP code divided by the estimated pounds needed in each ZIP code. Areas in red, orange and yellow have 75% or less of estimated food needs met.

Map 3 gives a visualization of the areas that CPF and YCFB's resources are being delivered to and the amount of food that is still needed in each area. While Map 2 and 3 are informative on their own, it is through the overlaying that we can have a statistically significant visualization of the charitable food network in York County. Areas shaded in green have greater than 100% of food needs met. This can be explained through the necessity of using 5-year estimates at the sub-county level for analysis. Additionally, a substantial portion of the green shaded area is home to large programs that distribute beyond the surrounding ZIP code. To further visualize the complexity of food insecurity, additional potential food access barriers and resources were analyzed and mapped by ZIP code. A brief explanation of this analysis follows:

Map 4: Areas with Low Vehicle Access, by ZIP code

This map highlights areas with potential transportation barriers, using percent of households with no access to a vehicle. The overall York County rate of 4.9% of households with no vehicle access is used as a median. Yellow shaded areas are ZIP codes where 5% or more of households have no access to a vehicle. While the median is 5%, the rates can be as high as 28.4% in urban areas. Vehicle access in urban areas is certainly a barrier to accessing substantial amounts of nutritious foods and is a priority for future study, but there are current programs to assist public transportation dependent individuals with getting to the grocery store and efforts have been made to ensure pantries in York City are within walking distance of a public transportation stop. Suburban and rural areas with higher than average rates of low vehicle access have significantly fewer public transportation options.

Map 5: SNAP Gap, by ZIP Code

Map 5 shows utilization of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). “Utilization” was calculated at the ZIP code level as the number of families enrolled in SNAP divided by the estimated number of families eligible for SNAP (number of families living below 150% of the federal poverty level from ACS 5-year estimates). The area shaded in green shows greater than 100% utilization. Like Map 3, this can be explained through the necessity of using 5-year estimates at the sub-county level for analysis. Additionally, the SNAP income guidelines for Pennsylvania are higher than the national standard and income guidelines for seniors are higher than those under 65, this creates a small number of areas with over 100% utilization.

Map 6: ZIP Codes with No SNAP Retailers

Map 6 shows ZIP codes in York County that have no SNAP-authorized retailers identified in the 2017 USDA SNAP food retailer locator. Residents living in rural areas with no SNAP

retailers could potentially have a more than 20-minute drive to the nearest SNAP retailer. This alone would be a tremendous food access barrier, but analysis has shown several ZIP codes with overlapping barriers to accessing the charitable food network. This creates a compounded issue for residents in the area and can lead to pockets of extreme poverty.

Map 7: Priority Schools for Free and Reduced Meals Program Outreach

Map 7 combines Map 1 with locations of schools that could be the focus of potential outreach efforts to promote participation in free and reduced school meals. Using the Pennsylvania Department of Education 2017–2018 School Year Building Data Report, York County schools were identified if free and reduced lunch enrollment was less than 50% and greater than 20% of families in the school ZIP code lived below 185% of the federal poverty level. Increased participation in school breakfast and lunch programs have been shown to positively affect students’ mental and physical well-being.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research has numerous limitations as the charitable food system is disconnected (for data sources and limitations, see Table 1). Data points prepared for maps, food insecurity and food distribution data were combined at the ZIP code level with program data from the partner agency survey. Distribution sites were aggregated by area of need category and by county region. These data points are provided in Appendix Tables 2 through 11.

Data sources, methodology, map visualizations and tables synthesized in this report represent an innovative approach to identify localized areas of need and to develop data-driven approaches for system-wide solutions. However, the disconnected nature of the charitable food system was realized during this project and has presented this research with numerous limitations (see Table 1). Food insecurity rates and numbers of food insecure individuals are based on estimates from Feeding America models. Estimates are routinely used when direct measurement is impossible, but this is still important to note. Feeding America food insecurity models utilize data related to several factors. One key factor, unemployment, uses a different data source for county level and sub-county level data. The York County food insecurity rate of 10.5% was based on one year of Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment data from 2015, while sub-county ZIP code level food insecurity estimates were based on ACS 5-year 2011–2015 estimates. Therefore, when aggregated across the entire county, ZIP code level data predicted a higher number of food insecure individuals (55,155) when compared with the number from the overall York County rate of 10.5% in 2017 (46,300). Since the aim of our project was to focus on needs in smaller geographies in York County, we used food insecurity rates at the ZIP code level.

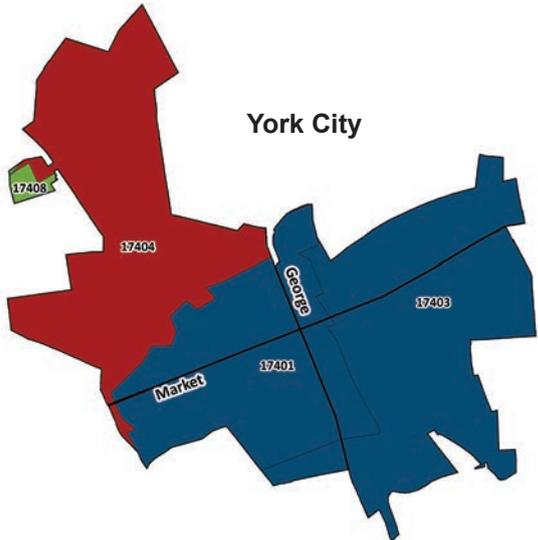
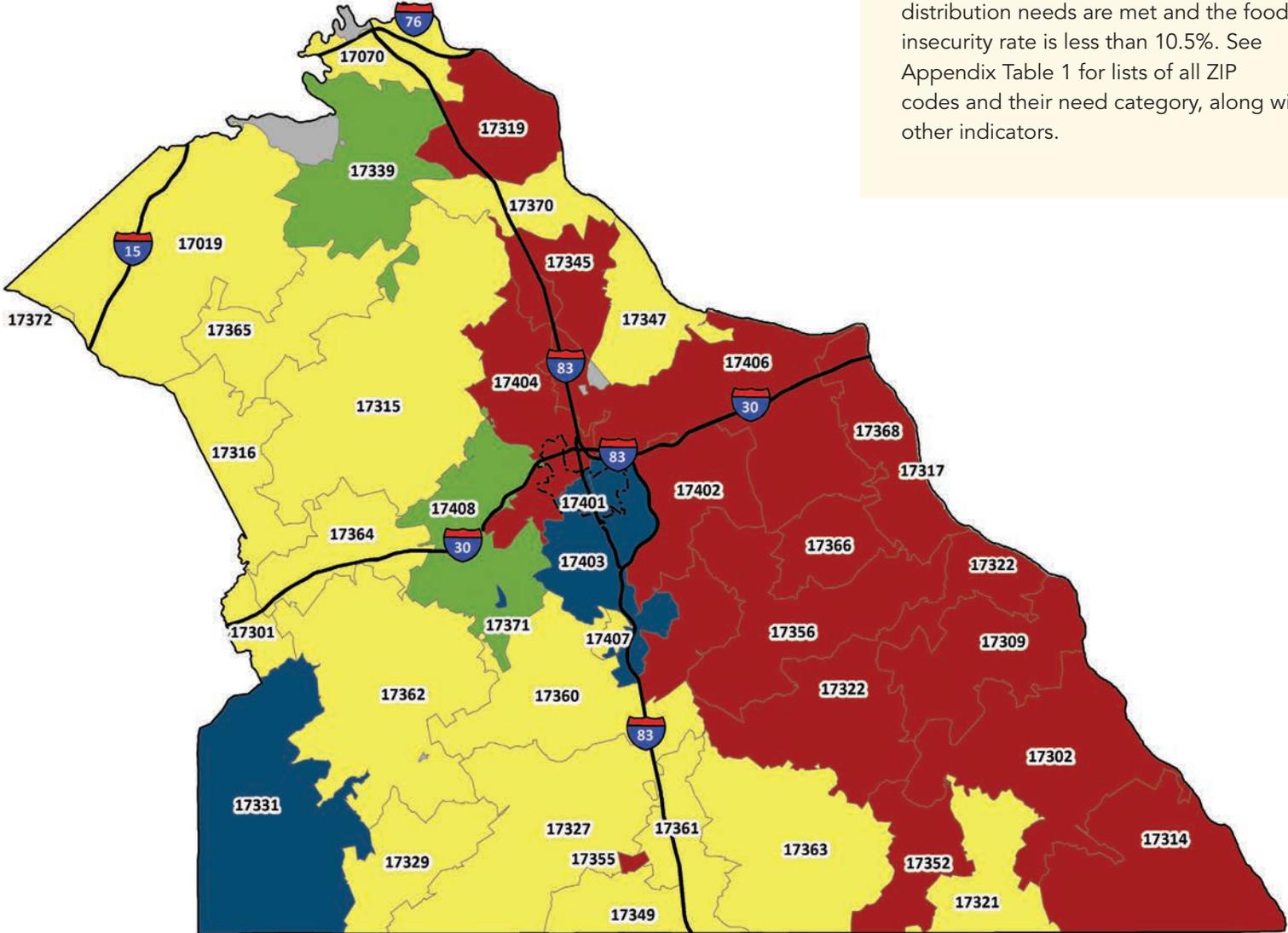
Additionally, these analyses assumed that food pounds were provided to clients in the immediate ZIP code of the program. Pounds of food distributed may not include donations that some programs may have privately sourced, and these data do not include food distributed by community level programs that are not in either Food Bank network. We recognize challenges in providing healthy, fresh foods in the charitable food system, but were unable to ascertain consistent and reliable data on food quality. Therefore, data sets utilized in this report are for pounds of food only, and do not assess or consider the quality of food distributed. CPFEB Foods to Encourage (F2E) information is available and listed in the appendix. Prior to this project YCFB did not maintain complete data on types of food distributed.

Finally, it is important to note that maps were used in these analyses for data visualization purposes only. Substantial need still exists outside areas highlighted in the following maps. While this report presents analyses based on the most reliable data available, these sources are estimates. Findings presented in this report are intended for systems-level planning and should not be used to estimate or determine “street-level” need or distribution.

MAP 1:

*Areas of Greatest Need,
by ZIP Code (with inset of York City)*

The map below shows ZIP codes in red where less than 75% of food distribution needs are met and food insecurity is higher than the overall York County rate of 10.5%. ZIP codes in yellow are areas where less than 75% of food distribution needs are met and the food insecurity rate is less than 10.5%. See Appendix Table 1 for lists of all ZIP codes and their need category, along with other indicators.



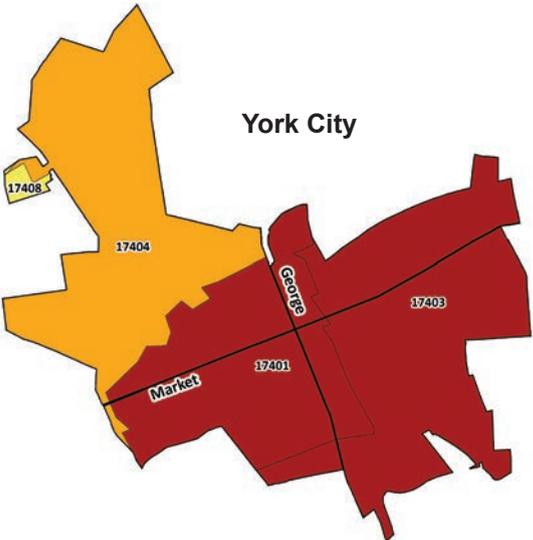
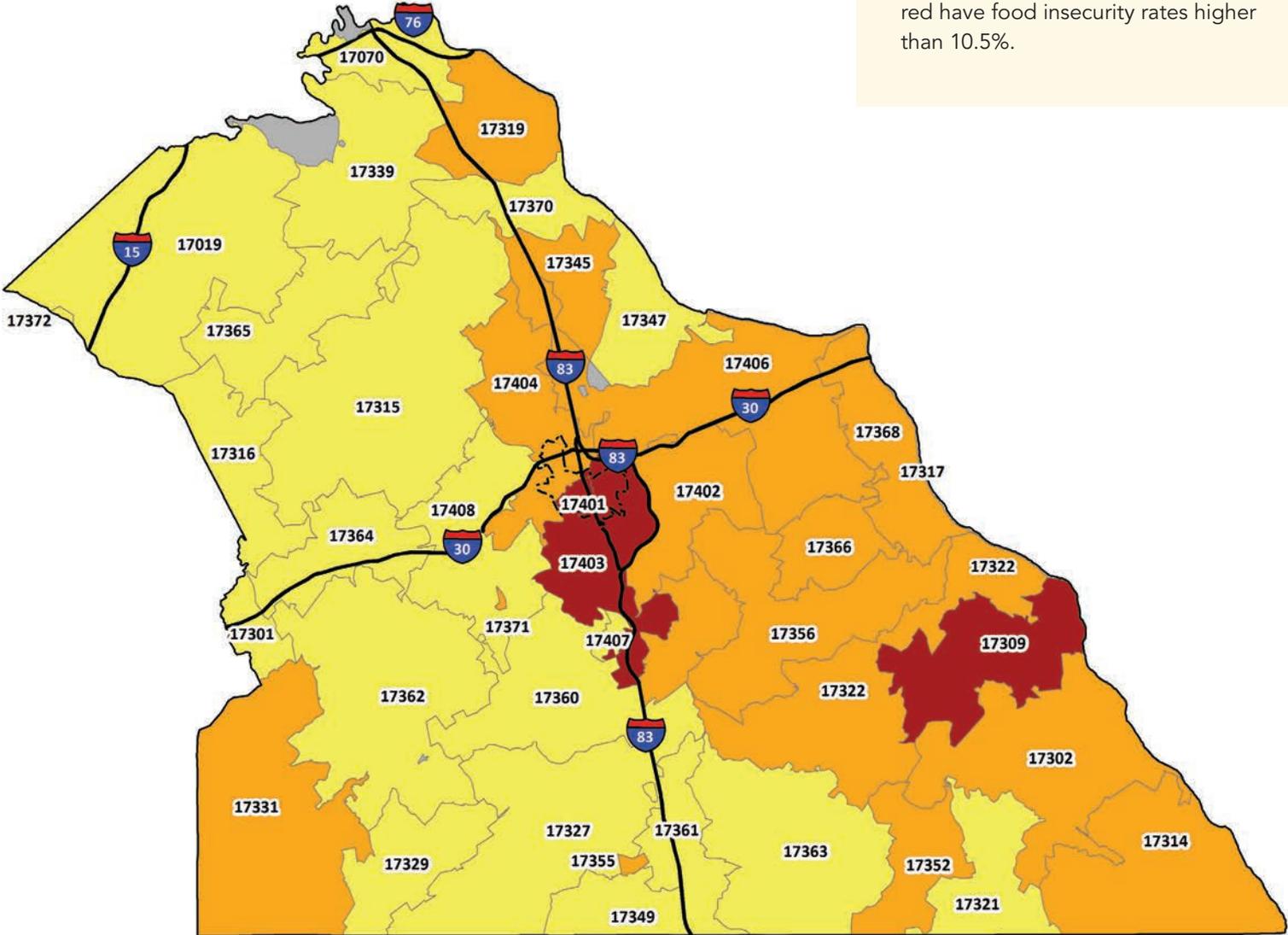
Areas of Greatest Need, by ZIP Code

- High Food Insecurity & Low Food Distribution
- Low Food Insecurity & Low Food Distribution
- High Food Insecurity & High Food Distribution
- Low Food Insecurity & High Food Distribution
- York City
- No Data

MAP 2:

Food Insecurity Rate, by ZIP Code (with inset of York City)

The map below shows food insecurity rates by ZIP code. Zip code level food insecurity rates range between a low of 6% and high of 27.4%. The 2017 York County food insecurity rate of 10.5% is used as a median; areas in orange and red have food insecurity rates higher than 10.5%.



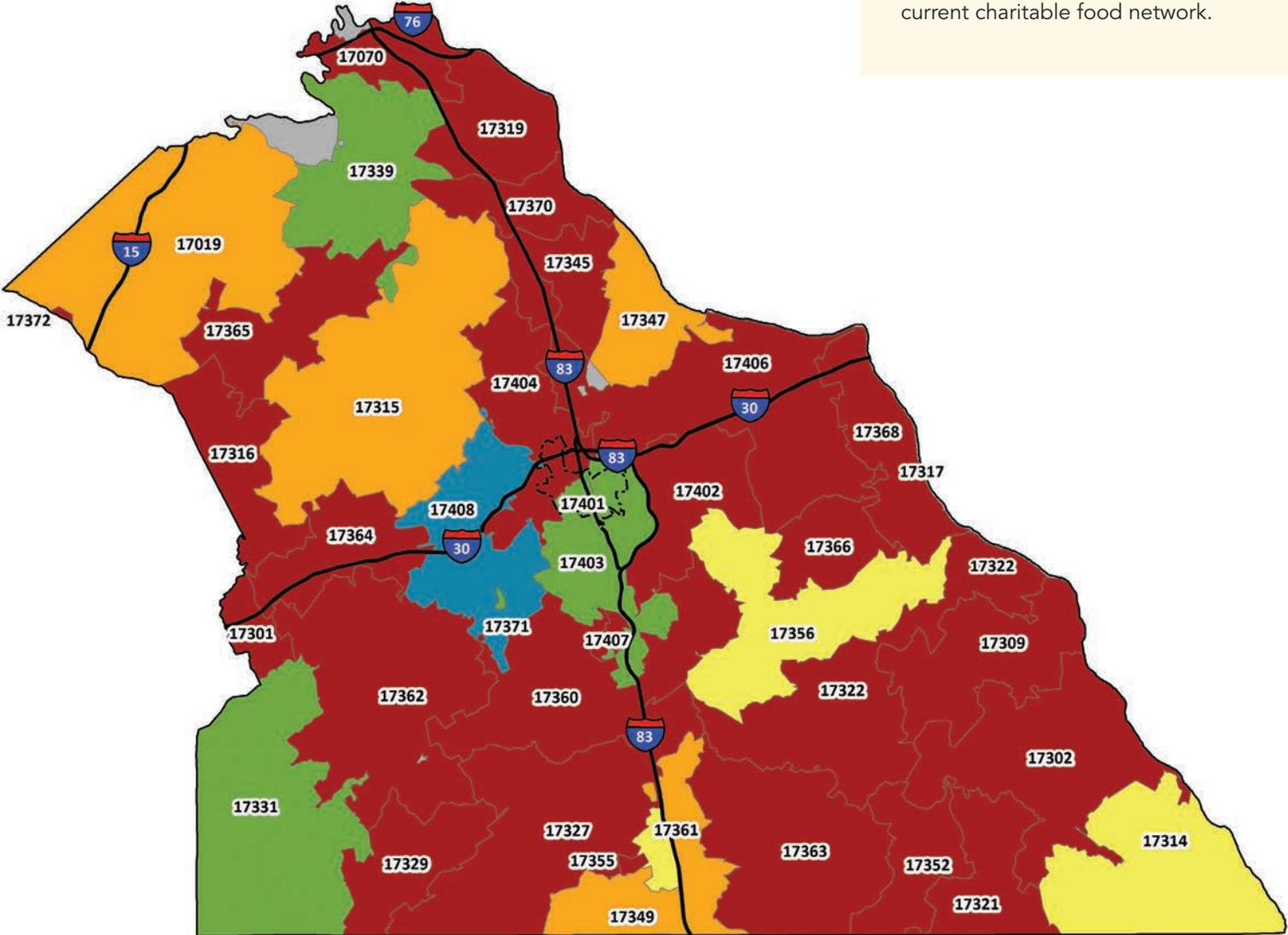
Food Insecurity Rate

- 6% to <10.5%
- 10.5% to <15%
- 15% to 27%
- York City
- No Data

MAP 3:

Percent of Food Needs Met, by ZIP Code (with inset of York City)

The map below shows the percent of food needs met by ZIP code, calculated as pounds distributed in each ZIP code divided by pounds needed in each ZIP code. ZIP codes in red represent 25% or less of the estimated need met by the current charitable food network.



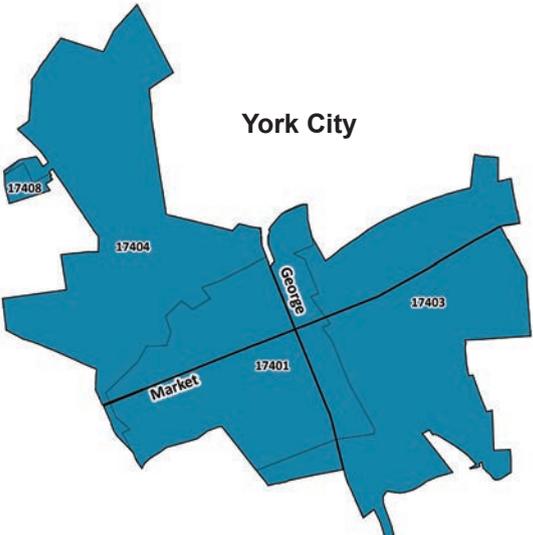
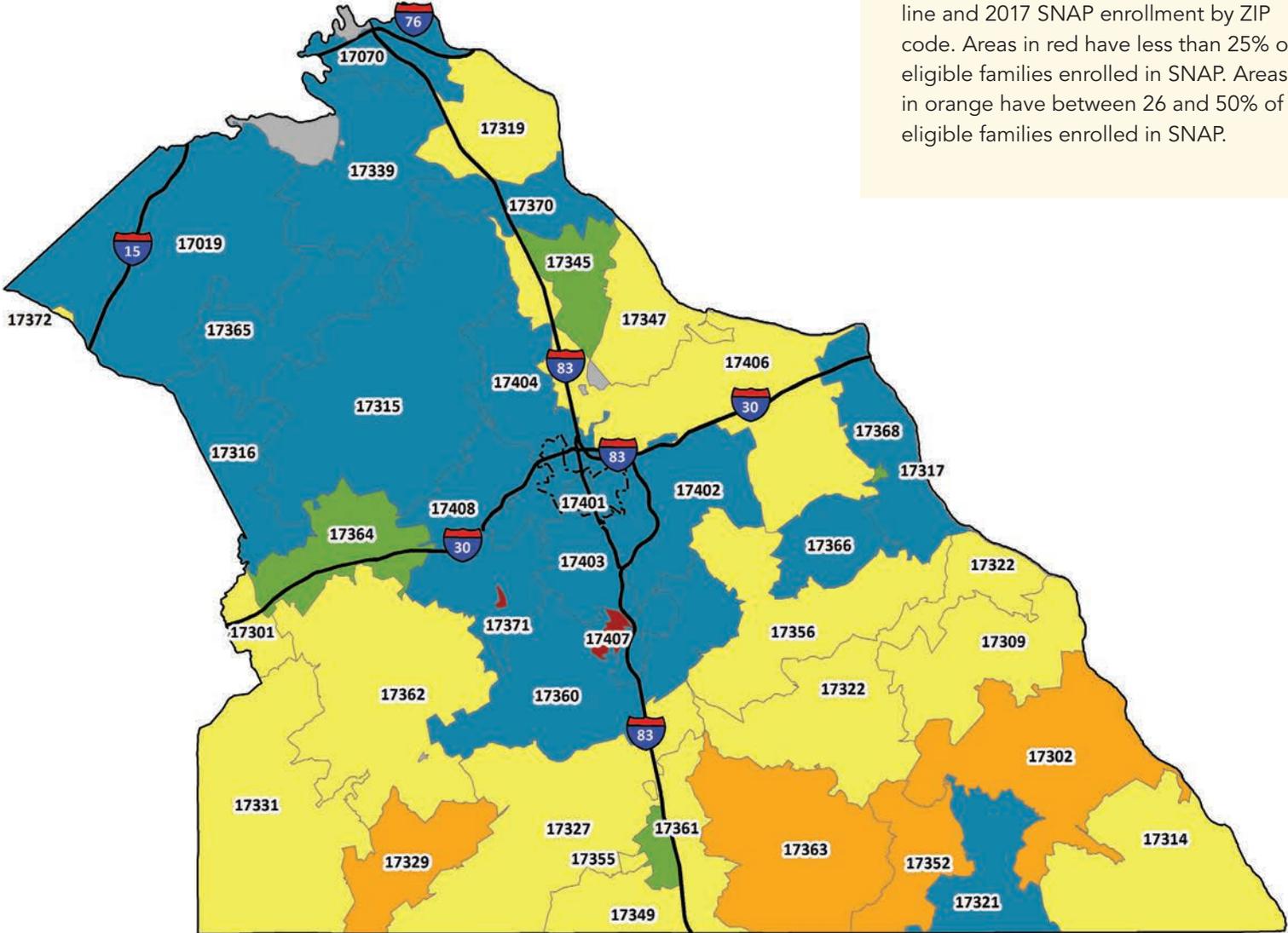
% of Food Needs Being Met

- 0% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- 76% to 100%
- > 100%
- York City
- No Data

MAP 5:

SNAP Gap, by ZIP Code
(with inset of York City)

The map below shows geographic gaps in utilization of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP. The gap was determined by comparison of the number of families in each ZIP code living below 150% of the federal poverty line and 2017 SNAP enrollment by ZIP code. Areas in red have less than 25% of eligible families enrolled in SNAP. Areas in orange have between 26 and 50% of eligible families enrolled in SNAP.



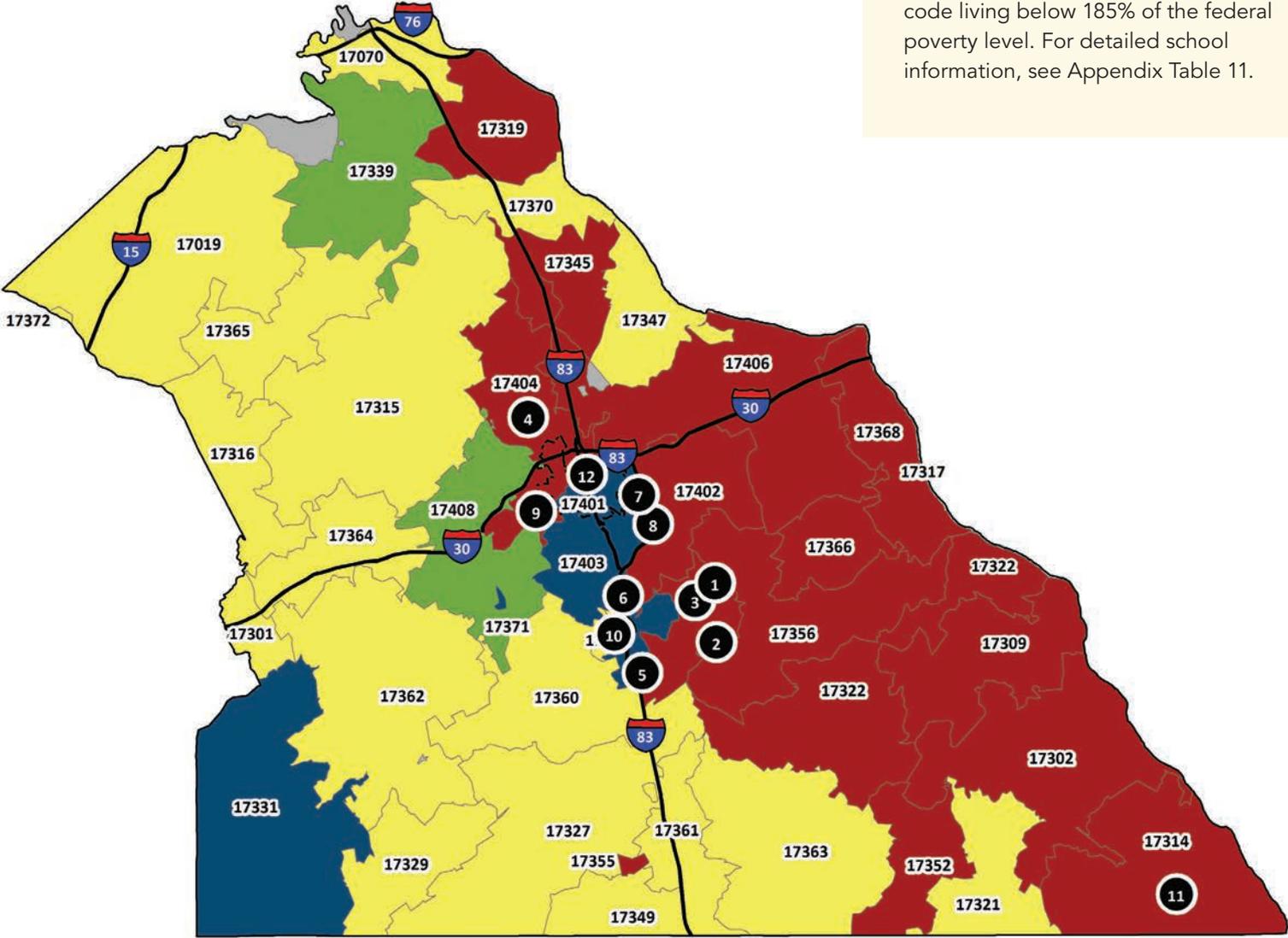
SNAP Utilization

- 19% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- 76% to 100%
- 101% to 130%
- York City
- No Data

MAP 7:

Priority Schools for Free and Reduced Meals Program Outreach (with Areas of Need)

The map below identifies 12 schools for priority outreach. Identified priority schools have less than 50% free and reduced lunch enrollment and greater than 20% of families in the school ZIP code living below 185% of the federal poverty level. For detailed school information, see Appendix Table 11.



- # Priority Schools for Outreach
- Areas of Greatest Need, by ZIP Code
 - High Food Insecurity & Low Food Distribution
 - Low Food Insecurity & Low Food Distribution
 - High Food Insecurity & High Food Distribution
 - Low Food Insecurity & High Food Distribution
 - York City
 - No Data



RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthy Food Infrastructure

FINDING

Areas of the County lack charitable food services and providers to meet the food insecurity needs of its residents. Other areas have numerous providers meeting or exceeding the distribution needs. In addition, the quality and quantity of food distributed varies greatly among providers (from nutritious foods to convenience foods) and inherently contributes to inequitable access for clients.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Charitable Food Providers must:

- Encourage collaboration and pooling of resources, partnerships and consolidation to avoid duplication and leverage resources.
- Increase distribution of fresh, healthy and more nutritious foods (Foods to Encourage).
- Discourage new sites in areas where need is met or exceeded.
- Focus investment efforts on areas of greatest need (red) and high need (yellow) to implement strategies to close the meal gap.
- Consistently align with best practice models to meet the needs of clients (extended hours, including weekends), provide more nutritious foods (increase Foods to Encourage ratios, lower convenience foods), client choice, and source food from regional and county food banks, not retail.

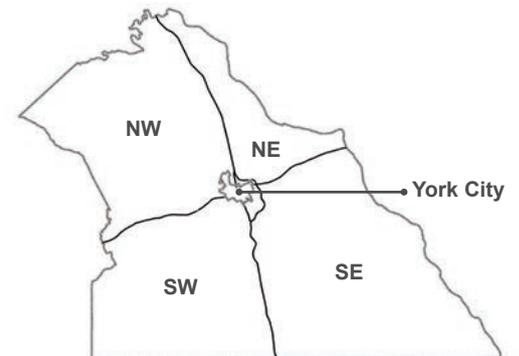
FINDING

The County is a mix of urban, rural and suburban areas, all home to those facing food insecurity. In addition, transportation and logistics can be an additional barrier for those struggling with hunger.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Charitable Food Providers must:

- Establish and invest in geographic hubs (NW, NE, SW, SE and the City of York). These will be large providers with substantial capacity and infrastructure. Capacity will be determined based on staffing, funding, sourcing efficiencies and communications abilities. Hubs will be responsible to redistribute food from larger food banks, store food (perishable and non), and leverage their resources to support countywide efforts.
- Ensure coordination of services/distributions to providers in areas of need so that all areas of the County are being served to meet the needs.
- Facilitate alternative distribution models (e.g., mobile pantries, pop-up markets and school pantries) to maximize efficiency as an alternative to brick and mortar sites.
- Implement a countywide communication strategy to share, redistribute and rebalance food distributions.



FINDING

Areas in York County have closed or exceeded the food (meal) gap with existing food distribution coverage. Qualitative observations indicate that some providers distribute large quantities of products with low or no nutritional value and small or no quantities of nutritious foods.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Charitable Food Providers must:

- Maintain effective distribution channels.
- Encourage collaboration, sharing of best practices, resources, strategic planning, training and strengthening relationships.
- Insist that food sourcing is focused on quality and nutritious foods. Emphasize Foods to Encourage.
- Source food from the Food Banks, not retail.
- Develop a best practices tool kit for providers.



FINDING

Areas in York County lack transportation resources (defined as no access to a vehicle). This is a substantial barrier to food access. This issue quickly becomes compounded in rural areas with a combination of low or no access to public transportation, low vehicle access, no charitable food providers and no SNAP retailers.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Charitable Food Providers must:

- Expand or develop high-quality best practice providers to better serve these areas.
- As an alternative, develop and implement alternative distribution models (e.g., pop-up pantries, mobile pantries and school pantries).
- Communicate and coordinate with other local nonprofits to streamline access to services.
- Investigate the potential for improved distribution points near transit routes.

Healthy Food Access & Sustainability

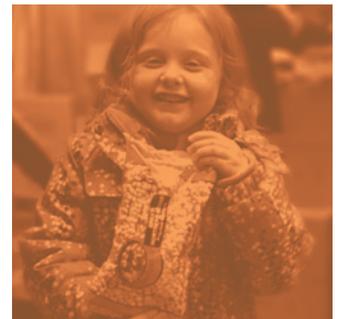
FINDING

York County Charitable Food Providers are primarily serviced by two Food Banks: York County Food Bank and Central Pennsylvania Food Bank.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Local and Regional Food Banks must:

- Foster a partnership that leverages each food bank's strengths to serve the community.
- Collaborate to meet the needs of food insecure residents of York County and avoid duplication of services.
- Establish a communication structure to effectively regulate the flow of food, ensure that accurate data are collected and reported, and maintain compliance with regulations and food safety requirements.
- Develop and maintain a robust application process to prevent duplication of services.
- Encourage York County Food Bank as a redistribution hub (new location).
- Evaluate existing partners for efficiency and efficacy.
- Leverage YCFB's strong reputation, rich history and current facilities to consolidate and expand food assistance services using best practices (foods to encourage, client choice, extended hours, etc.).
- Leverage CPFEB's strengths to provide formalized and ongoing training and support to promote fiscal efficiencies, safety and compliance with the distribution of food and encourage the utilization of other community resources for programming and nutrition education.



FINDING

Several areas in York County lack SNAP retailers. SNAP and other federal nutrition programs are vital to closing the meal gap. Advocacy for strong federal programs is essential to making the income of families stretch to meet their needs.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The York Community must:

- Increase advocacy efforts by engaging Food Alliances to focus efforts on advocacy and policy positions that support people in need as part of their efforts.
- Explore incentives, like SNAP bucks, to encourage clients to use their benefits to purchase more nutritious foods and visit markets.
- Educate and encourage farmers and market vendors to accept SNAP.
- Explore efforts to encourage existing retailers to become SNAP-authorized, particularly in areas of greatest need.



FINDING

Community needs shift over time. Providers and program resources must respond, adapt and adjust accordingly to these changing needs to address the meal gap.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The York Community must:

- Support the evolution of Backpack programs to serve as a short-term intervention, emergency or crisis resource for the child.
- Increase partnerships between schools and food providers to decrease reliance on Backpack programs and develop systems to feed the whole family.
- Transition Backpacks to emergency and crisis distributions through the implementation of school pantries, mobile pantries and/or provider/school partnerships.
- Engage with schools in areas of high need and no charitable food providers to partner around feeding children and their families (e.g., school pantries, pop-up pantries, mobile distributions).
- Support and develop a robust and sustainable system for collecting accurate and timely data (pounds distributed, hours of operation, staffing, and contact information) as well as monitoring food insecurity rates and trends.
- Encourage common reporting systems to streamline and increase reliability of data.
- Maintain a central repository of information or food finder so those struggling with hunger can easily access services.
- Streamline groups/alliances/projects to address the needs of food insecure residents in York County with specific strategies to end hunger.

FINDING

Access and utilization of state and federal nutrition assistance programs is critical to closing the meal gap in York County. There are areas of the County where SNAP and free and reduced meals program utilization is low.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Charitable Food Providers must:

- Identify service gaps and focus outreach efforts on areas where utilization is lower than average.
- Develop and implement a robust screening and referral program so that charitable food providers are encouraging participation and enrolling clients in SNAP, WIC, school meal programs.
- Encourage a train the trainer model to conduct onsite eligibility screenings and applications for other available programs.
- Analyze state and federal nutrition programs not included in this report in order to identify gaps, duplication and areas of need (e.g., CACFP, SFSP, CSFP, TEFAP, SFPP).
- Develop partnerships and raise awareness through increased outreach and education with schools to leverage Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).
- Increase outreach to schools where utilization of free and reduced meals is lower than 50% but more than 20% of families in the school ZIP code live below 185% of poverty.
- Encourage implementation of alternative breakfast models at school so more children participate.



FINDING

York County has a food distribution gap of approximately 4 million pounds and more than 55,000 residents struggling with food insecurity.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Funders and Policymakers must:

- Endorse the Governor's Blueprint to End Hunger and this report.
- Prioritize new funding, outreach, investments and partnerships that can be mobilized to areas of greatest need.
- Encourage Charitable Food Providers to collaborate, pool resources, consolidate and partner to avoid duplication of services.
- Ensure that Charitable Food Providers utilize their resources as efficiently as possible when purchasing food. The cost efficiency that regional and local food banks can provide should be leveraged and viewed as a priority by funders and policymakers.
- Evaluate state and federal dollar disbursements to ensure the needs of clients are being met as effectively as possible, distribution of nutritious food is valued, and resources are leveraged to ensure equitable food access.
- Prioritize programs that align with best practice models including but not limited to client choice, nutritious offerings, varied, and evening or weekend hours.



CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this report was to identify and assess Charitable Food Providers (CFPs) and distributions in York County, PA. The findings in this report provide evidence-based analyses for the community to engage, mobilize and impact systemic change in food distribution and services provided to those struggling with food insecurity. In addition, the report provides foundational information to achieve the strategies and goals highlighted in the Governor's Seat at the Table, A Blueprint for a Hunger Free PA.

This report provides an overview of charitable food distribution, identifying gaps, areas of greatest needs and areas where needs are met.

This report provides an overview of charitable food distribution, identifying gaps, areas of greatest needs and areas where needs are met. The report relies on the quality of the data collected. A substantial finding is that consistent, timely and streamlined data was a challenge to obtain. York County does not house a central repository of information about CFPs. Not uncommon, as many organizations have evolved organically, are dependent solely on volunteers or do not have the technology in place to maintain complete records. While many limitations are noted in the data, during this report action steps have been taken with numerous providers to improve their data collection methods.

Analyses were conducted at the ZIP code level and recommendations were developed based on the analyses. ZIP codes with the largest food shortages are 17404, 17402, 17406, 17313 and 17319 (see Appendix Table 2). Among these five ZIP codes, 17404 and 17402 are home to numerous providers, including several that handle larger quantities of food that could increase capacity to receive and distribute additional pounds to the areas with shortages. ZIP codes 17406 and 17313 only have two small-scale providers, and ZIP code 17319 has no food distribution providers. Among the 41 York County ZIP codes, 16 were categorized as areas of greatest need (red), six of these 16 areas had no community food providers present: 17309, 17317, 17319, 17322, 17352 and 17355. These areas should be prioritized in planning and outreach efforts. Other (red) areas of greatest need are: 17302, 17314, 17345, 17356, 17366 and 17368. These areas could also be prioritized so extra resources and program planning can be focused there.

Further, some areas of the County have successful food distribution coverage in the areas where food insecurity is very high (blue areas). Effective distribution channels should be maintained in these high food insecurity areas. Agency leaders (blue) should partner with providers (red and yellow) to collaborate and share resources, best practices, training and planning.

In addition, the report highlighted areas where lack of transportation could be a barrier to food access. Areas with no food providers, low vehicle access and high need have significant barriers. CFPs, the community, funders and policy makers should make considerable effort to confront and work to decrease access and transportation barriers.

The report also touched on utilization of federal nutrition assistance programs. Access to and utilization of federal nutrition assistance programs is critical to supporting household food security. Food Banks and charitable food providers alone cannot close the meal gap in York County. Recommendations include supporting efforts to encourage participation. To achieve the goal providers must go beyond just distributing food by offering information and referrals to clients about applying for state and federal assistance programs such as SNAP, WIC, and school meals. Relationships should be intentionally fostered by SNAP outreach/education to ensure those receiving charitable food assistance are also receiving benefits as a priority. SNAP utilization in ZIP codes 17302 and 17352 (red) and 17329, 17363, 17407 (yellow) is less than half of what is expected (Appendix Table 2). Outreach efforts can be prioritized at food distribution sites in ZIP codes 17302 and 17363. There are currently no food distribution providers in ZIPs 17352, 17329 or 17407, so there are general service gaps in these areas.

Another option to explore is partnerships between existing CFPs and nearby schools, especially in red and yellow areas. Increased communication, partnership, school pantries and mobile distributions could significantly impact the meal gap. Analyses of all schools in York County identified schools where enrollment in free and reduced lunch is exceptionally low. Suggested schools for early outreach efforts are shown in Map 7 and listed in Appendix Table 11. Among all York County schools in the Pennsylvania Department of Education 2017–18 School Year Building Data Report, these 12 schools were identified for priority outreach because student enrollment in free and reduced lunch was less than 50% and more than 20% of families in the school ZIP lived below 185% of the federal poverty level. Especially in areas not covered by other charitable food providers, schools are an important setting to ensure children and their families have access to food. Appendix Table 12 lists all York County schools by ZIP code and category of need so that partnerships can be considered. Recommendations also touched upon Backpack programs, and evolving them as a short-term intervention. Backpacks are high effort, high cost, and studies indicate that if the child is hungry, the family is, as well. School pantries or partnerships with food providers and schools when a pantry is not an option should be developed.

Recommendations were developed based on findings from the needs analyses. These system wide strategies will expand capacity and enhance food distribution to reach more people struggling with food insecurity. ZIP codes 17302, 17309, 17313, 17314, 17317, 17319, 17322, 17345, 17352, 17355, 17356, 17366, 17368, 17402, 17404 and 17406 are areas of greatest need. Mobilization, partnerships and collaborations, food rebalancing and investments could significantly impact the overall County food gap.

Food Banks and charitable food providers alone cannot close the meal gap in York County.

As comprehensive as this report is, the quality and type of food distributed was not deeply reviewed due to incomplete data. It is imperative that CFPs prioritize the study of and investment in providing nutritious foods to those struggling with food insecurity. In addition, further analyses of charitable food programs serving the homeless, youth, seniors, and veterans should be considered and aligned with this report. These targeted populations are vulnerable to food insecurity and ensuring programs for these populations is efficient, effective and high quality is paramount. Congregant meal sites were also not analyzed in depth and should be considered as part of CFPs in York County.

This comprehensive sub-county analysis of York County CFPs will allow for evidence-based, data-driven planning and strategic investment with the ultimate goal of closing the meal gap. Through the collaboration and study of CFPs, York County is ahead of other counties across the state. Many organizations are doing good work and that must be celebrated. Improvements to the system and systemic change can be accomplished through partnership, collaboration and investment. Strategies and recommendations suggested in this report are relevant for charitable food providers and distributors, food system advocates, community partners, funders and policymakers. By identifying and describing areas of need, it is our hope that this report will advance progress to more effectively fight hunger in York County and serve as an evidenced-based template for the Commonwealth.



Serving 27 counties, Central Pennsylvania Food Bank is the largest non-profit food distribution organization in central Pennsylvania. The Food Bank solicits, inventories and distributes food and other donated products to more than 1,000 partner agencies and programs (food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, etc.) directly serving people struggling with hunger. The Food Bank distributes nearly 50 million pounds of food and grocery products annually.



This grant program seeks to transform the way our community addresses compelling health issues, funding programs that improve the complete physical, mental and social well-being of the residents of York and its surrounding communities.



The Food Trust is a nationally recognized nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. With headquarters in Philadelphia, The Food Trust partners with communities, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers in the city and across the country to develop a comprehensive approach that combines nutrition education and greater availability of affordable, healthy food.



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