

# ALASKA



## FOOD COALITION

**September 2013**

“Information is just bits of data. Knowledge is putting them together.”

- Ram Dass

### **How to Tell Your Story Using Data**

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How do we educate people on the issue of food security in Alaska? How do we share the good work that our agencies are doing? How do we move potential donors to contribute to the fight against hunger? We usually do this through one of two ways – stories and numbers. While stories put a face to the issue and often share the experiences of individuals, numbers (data) provide an overarching view and the scope of the issue. Data can be of use in grant writing and reporting, soliciting donations and educating the public. This whitepaper will focus on hunger and food security data - where to find it and how to use it.

#### **External Resources**

There are a number of well-respected national studies that examine the rate of food insecurity in the United States. In addition to national data, these studies often have a state-specific component.

#### [Hunger in America Study](http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/hunger-study-2010.aspx)

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Conducted every four years by Feeding America, Hunger in America is the largest study of domestic hunger. The study is extremely detailed, drawing on data from numerous Feeding America network partners, and from nearly 64,000 clients nationwide. It gives us excellent state level data, and in some instances, detailed regional data, as well.

#### [Household Food Security in the United States](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx)

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This study is produced annually by the USDA Economic Research Service, and seeks to track the number of U.S. households that are food insecure. This report presents statistics from the survey covering households' food security, food expenditures, and use of food and nutrition assistance programs. A few state-specific numbers are available in the report.

#### [Map the Meal Gap](http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx)

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Feeding America first published the Map the Meal Gap in 2011, with the intention of learning more about hunger at the local level. Now updated annually, this study produces interactive maps which detail both the overall food insecurity rates and the child food insecurity rates for the national, state and county/borough levels. In addition to this information, the report also shows population percentages for each income band (100%, 135% and 185% of the Federal Poverty Level), which determine eligibility thresholds for nutrition programs.

## Food Hardship Report

[http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/food\\_hardship\\_report\\_mar2011.pdf](http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/food_hardship_report_mar2011.pdf)

This study, produced by the Food Research Action Coalition (FRAC), examines the food hardship rate at the national, regional, state, and congressional district level, as well as for the 100 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Since Alaska has only one state-wide congressional district, and we aren't home to any of the largest MSAs, we only have state-level data available to us. However, FRAC's creation of a food hardship rate (as opposed to a food insecurity rate, or other measure) provides another distinct way of looking at the problem of hunger.

## American Community Survey

<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

The U.S. Census Bureau annually releases survey data about poverty, income, health insurance, housing, employment, and much more. Information can be used to show the extent of need in our state or community; the American Community Survey best provides this micro-level data.

## **Internal Resources**

In addition to these great external resources, agencies often already have a wealth of information that they can draw from. With a little creativity, data that agencies readily have, such as number of pounds distributed or number of individuals served, can be presented in new ways. Agencies may consider some of the following ways of presenting internal data:

### Agency Efficiency

- Percentage of funds spent on program costs vs. administration
- My agency provides "x" pounds of food for a dollar
  - *Lbs. of food distributed/\$ you spent = Lbs./Dollar*
- My agency provides "x" meals to the community for a dollar
  - *Lbs. per \$ (see above)/1.20 lbs. = Meals/Dollar*
- My agency spends "\$x" to get one pound of food
  - *If \$1 = 100 cents; and your agency provides "x" lbs./Dollar, then 100/"x" = Cents/Lb.*

### Information about Donors

- Number of food donors
- Number of financial donors
- If a donor gives us \$1, we can turn it into "\$x" worth of food at retail prices
  - *If the current value of 1 lb. of donated food = \$1.60; and your agency provides "x" Lbs./Dollar, then "x" multiplied by \$1.60 = your agency's retail equivalent per donated dollar*

### Information about Volunteers

- Number of volunteers contributing time (number of FTE hours & total hours)
- Volunteers contribute the equivalent of "x" staff members at my agency

- *If 1 FTE = 2080 hours/year; and your total number of hours contributed by volunteers last year was “x,” then “x”/2080 = your equivalent number of staff members contributed by volunteers*
  - *Volunteers contribute “\$x” worth of labor to my agency every year*
    - *If the 2011 Federal Value of one hour = \$21.79; and your total number of hours contributed by volunteers last year was “x,” then “x” multiplied by \$21.79 = the amount of donated labor your agency received*
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Gina Clark, Director of Public Policy for Food Lifeline in Washington, provided the “Internal Resources” recommendations and calculations. A copy of her PowerPoint presentation, which was presented at the Washington Food Coalition 2012 Conference, can be found at <http://www.wafoodcoalition.org/resources>.

*Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available online:*

<http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml>

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