



# Person-Centered Tips for Food Systems Strategies and Activities

**This resource and tip sheet is designed to support person-centered approaches for Food Systems strategies and activities.**

Use **person-first language** when discussing individuals with varying levels of accessibility needs or socioeconomic status (ODR, 2006; Northwestern 2019). This lets others know that you are acknowledging the whole person without labeling or making assumptions. Examples include:

- People experiencing homelessness *instead of* homeless people
- Communities with access to fewer resources *instead of* disadvantaged communities
- People experiencing food insecurity *instead of* the hungry or needy people
- Person with disabilities *instead of* disabled/handicapped person
- Individuals with larger bodies *instead of* obese or overweight individuals

Consider how **community and individual adverse experiences** shape how an individual or family chooses and obtains their food. Being aware of these experiences can help you better understand your community and their food environment (David, 2017; Krist, 2020). Here are concepts to consider:

- Some examples of community adverse experiences and traumas that negatively impact the food system include: historical trauma, natural disasters, loss or lack of jobs, substandard wages, and poor water and air quality.
- When PSE efforts support healthy food retail, avoid making assumptions about where and how people obtain their food. Some may go to a local food pantry or dollar store for their food instead of a supermarket; others may not have a farmers' market nearby or know what it is like to shop at one.
- There is a stigma around seeking out and/or receiving emergency food or charitable food aid. While there may be food resources available, the associated stigma or other personal beliefs may still be a barrier for individuals and families to receiving assistance.
- Gardening can be an effective way to cut down on food costs over time, increase produce intake, and encourage self-efficacy and resilience. When offering gardening recommendations, understanding the community members' situations can help provide the most appropriate assistance or resources on topics such as home gardens, container gardening, and recycled/affordable materials like seed libraries.

Using a **trauma-informed** lens when doing food systems policy work can help your efforts stay community focused and engaged (Markworth, 2020). Examples can be, but are not limited to, the following:

- Advocate for a client choice model at food banks.
  - A client choice model allows for food bank participants to select what foods they would like to receive in their food packages based on the options available at the location. This allows participants to express their *voice and choice*.
- Suggest ways to streamline the SNAP benefit application process.
- Participate in or provide opportunities for community members to share their lived experiences as they relate to policies.
- Partner or collaborate with organizations involved in mutual aid and community-based work.
  - Mutual aid networks and projects are created by communities for communities and driven by *collaboration and mutuality*. Examples of mutual aid projects include volunteer groups delivering groceries to the homebound, stocking community pantries and refrigerators, and some neighborhood watch programs.
- Connect farmers or local growers with schools or other community organizations.
- Convene or support coalition meetings and gatherings using trauma-informed best practices such as: establishing group norms and agreements, providing breaks and opportunities for participants to take care of their needs, clearly communicating expectations and being transparent about meeting purposes to respect each other's time and efforts, and providing translation and interpretation services and materials as necessary.

## Sources and Suggested Readings:

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