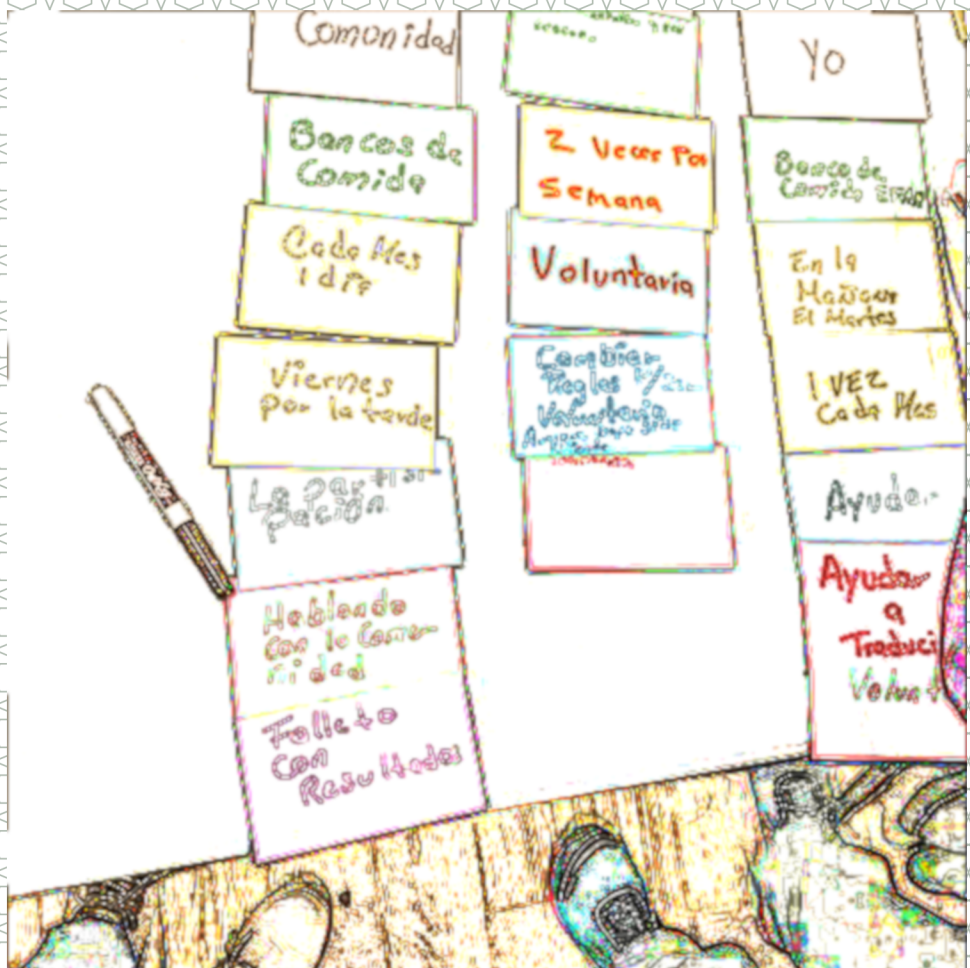


# A HAND AND A VOICE: PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

Boulder Food Rescue

Chris Schaeffbauer, PhD | Lindsey Loberg | Hayden Danský



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Glossary	6
I. Understanding participation	7
II. What can participation look like?	13
III. Principles of meaningful and effective participation	17
IV. How to become more participatory	20
Appendix	34
Acknowledgements	62

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## What is participation?

Participation, in the context of food access, refers to all of the ways that people who have experienced food insecurity can be involved in efforts to improve food access.

According to our research, reducing or eliminating barriers to participation will allow clients to develop co-ownership in improving food access, creating more effective programs, community outreach, feedback interpretation, and developing space for organizations to work towards better serving their communities.

*Participation, in the context of food access, refers to all of the ways that people who have experienced food insecurity can be involved in efforts to improve food access.*

## What participants want

People experiencing food insecurity want to work with organizations to improve food access in their communities. However, there are many systemic, organizational, emotional, and resource barriers blocking them from participating.

All communities and individuals are unique, and organizations should continuously engage with their communities and participants to determine what is important in the situation. However, in our research, themes emerged as research participants communicated ideal ways that they hoped to participate in improving food access.



## What can we do?

- ✓ **Determine barriers to participation within your organization.** Every organization has barriers to full participation.

Common barriers include

- \* Policies or norms that prevent or discourage volunteering or other forms of participation.
- \* Unclear or nonexistent feedback systems.
- \* Language, technology, transportation, and time commitment barriers.
- \* Lack of transparency leading to the belief that participation was useless or detrimental.
- \* Feelings of shame, or the fear of seeming ungrateful when providing constructive feedback.

- ✓ **Engage a diverse population.** Systemic oppression excludes the voices of those who have the most difficulty with food access. Expend resources to allow participants voice, influence, and power. Create an organization that alleviates this oppression.

- \* Learn how participants interact with your organization and how you can better serve their needs.
- \* Create space for participants to communicate how they would like your organization and programs to move forward and to be actively involved in those programs as contributors, influencers, and decision makers.

- ✓ **Maintain a process.** As you move towards creating a participatory organization, create a process to keep your organization accountable and to achieve its goals.

- \* **Assess the present situation.** Identify current participatory opportunities and gaps.
- \* **Create measures of success.** Determine metrics, outputs, and deliverables to support continual evaluation of efforts to increase participation.
- \* **Provocations.** Delve into the current state of participation and imagine what participation could look like in your organization and programs. What do ideal future scenarios, systems, and structures look like?
- \* **Experiment.** Moving towards becoming a participatory organization is a continuous, iterative process with many avenues and possibilities, including:

- \* **Changing existing programs.** Implement systems of feedback and volunteerism.
- \* **Developing new programs.** Allow participants to drive the construction and direction of new programs.
- \* **Participatory decision making.** Participants are more informed on the needs and experiences of the community and are necessary for effective decision making.
- \* **Informing financial decisions.** Participants from our research expressed interest in assisting organizations to make more effective financial decisions.
- \* **Participatory policy.** Assess policies to determine barriers to participation and work with participants to ensure access.
- \* **Participation as a priority.** Change mission, values, and vision statement and strategic plans to prioritize participation. Create these with participants' input and approval.

## Conclusion

Organizations that improve and expand participatory opportunities will better serve their communities. Programming is more useful and affirming when strengthened by the power and advice of participants, who are the experts in food access. Our research shows that when someone has a negative experience using a service, they are unlikely to go back to that program or to use other programs. Therefore, we all have an interest in making changes within our organizations to support participatory, community-driven programs. People are more likely to use programs, increase their access to food, and tell other people that the program is worthwhile.

# GLOSSARY

**Clients:** People who are accessing services but do not currently participate in any other way. It could be either because they do not want to or do not have the opportunity.

“Client” is the traditional language for many nonprofits and refers specifically to the situation in which someone who receives services does not have the opportunity to participate in other ways. We believe it contains a connotation that there is no way to participate or create effective change within a program.

**People who use the program:** Similar to a client, a person who accesses services. In this research, “people who use the program” may or may not engage in participatory efforts, and readers can determine this through context. We believe this phrase mitigates the connotation associated with “clients”, that the person using the program does not participate, or that opportunities or participation are not available.

**Research participants:** People who actively participated in the research that BFR conducted leading up to the publication of this framework. Some of the research participants are also participants at BFR, whereas others are people who self-identified as having a hard time accessing food but do not receive food from BFR directly.

**People who participate / people who engage in participatory opportunities:** These are clients who are also engaging in participatory opportunities - offering feedback, contributing directly to a program’s operation (volunteering), making decisions about the program, etc.

**BFR participants:** Anyone who uses Boulder Food Rescue’s programs. This is the term Boulder Food Rescue (BFR) uses to refer to the people who use BFR’s programs. It includes people who use the program and people who have engaged in participatory opportunities.

# I. UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION

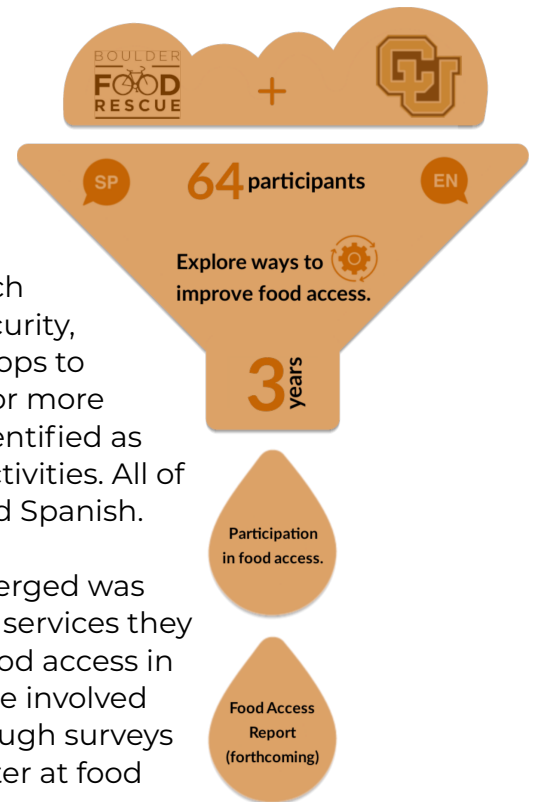
## A. Background

Boulder Food Rescue (BFR), in partnership with other community organizations, has been conducting community-based participatory research to explore ways to improve food access in the Boulder community. Originally started as a partnership between BFR and the University of Colorado Boulder, this project includes three years of research across multiple research activities, each subsequent activity building upon learning from the previous activities.

The research activities we conducted include diary research and interviews with individuals who experience food insecurity, participatory data analysis workshops, and design workshops to envision ways of improving food access (see [Appendix A](#) for more details about the research). In total, 64 people who self-identified as food insecure participated across the different research activities. All of the research activities were conducted in both English and Spanish.

Across our research, one of the strongest themes that emerged was that people feel they had little voice or involvement in the services they used. They have a deep desire to be active in improving food access in the community for themselves and others. They want to be involved in a variety of ways, ranging from providing feedback through surveys to sorting food for quality and volunteering as an interpreter at food pantries.

Based on these findings, we became more intensely focused on the topic of participation in food access programs throughout our research. This document provides an overview of what participation means and the various forms it can take. It also provides a framework for how organizations can become more participatory and inclusive of the people they aim to serve. The contents of this document are based on the findings from our research related to participation, our experiences conducting participatory research, and ongoing conversations with community partners.



## B. What is participation?

Participation, in the context of food access, refers to all of the ways that people who have experienced food insecurity can be involved in efforts to improve food access. There is no singular ideal form of participation. Instead, there is a diversity of ways people envision themselves participating in efforts to improve food access. For example, people involved in our research wanted to participate by talking to other people to raise awareness of resources, filling out an on-site survey, texting feedback to the food pantry they use, and working with their neighbors to organize a needs assessment around food access.

*Participation should not be viewed simply as an activity. Instead, it is a process by which people develop co-ownership of efforts to improve food access.*

Given peoples' unique experiences and life situations, there is a need to offer a range of opportunities for participation. A range allows people with different skills and experiences to use their greatest abilities. Doing so also allows people to participate regardless of any limitations in their lives.

A common conception of participation is that it must be linked to an organization like a food pantry or a governmental agency (e.g., a survey that is being administered by a governmental agency, a workshop hosted by an advocacy group, or a program offered by the food pantry to help as an interpreter). However, participation can be organized and led by people who are affected by food insecurity. For instance, folks might organize a gathering to cook meals for everyone in their neighborhood. Or an individual could talk to their friends and other parents about the food access resources that are available. In these cases, they are participating in improving food access in their community, without working directly through an organization. That does not mean that an organization might not collaborate with these efforts. However, the work is being owned and led by people who are affected by food insecurity.

There is an essential aspect of participation that relates to ownership. Participation should not be viewed merely as an activity. Instead, it is a process by which people develop co-ownership of efforts to improve food access. For example, say a person who uses a food pantry proposes an idea for a new program to make food more easily accessible. They have ownership in that program, through that idea, even if they are not involved in its ongoing development or operation. A primary goal of developing opportunities for participation should be to distribute ownership broadly to as many people as possible.



## C. Why is participation important?

### **For Programs**

Participation is essential because it allows for better informed, more effective programs. When people who use a program<sup>1</sup> are involved in programs through combinations of effective feedback systems, on-the-ground volunteerism, and positions of decision-making and influence, they will directly impact the way programs function. Meaningful participation can contribute to higher quality services, more efficient resource use, a greater understanding of needs, increased program use from a broader range of clients<sup>2</sup> and ultimately, improved food access.

When people who use a program contribute as influencers (i.e., decision-makers, financial-contributors, organizers), they bring with them their experiences as someone who has experienced food insecurity and someone who uses the program. They have a perspective that can be lacking amongst any program staff and leadership who have not experienced food insecurity. This perspective will lead the program in directions that align with the lived experiences of clients, creating programs that are more likely to meet the client's needs, reduce barriers, and feel affirming.

***Participation is essential because it allows for better informed, more effective programs.***

When people who use a program contribute directly through on-the-ground volunteerism and through interacting with others who are experiencing food insecurity (e.g., presenting about resources at community events, or conducting intake sessions), they can communicate more effectively with other people who use the program. They have shared experiences and are better positioned to empathize with them.

When people who experience food insecurity help collect, interpret, and implement feedback for a program, they bring their lived experiences to leverage that feedback effectively. These perspectives address biases and limitations that the program staff may have, which can lead them to interpret feedback incorrectly and take the wrong action. Directly involving clients in program development, as opposed to just collecting their feedback, cuts out the step of analysis and interpretation. Direct

---

<sup>1</sup> In this document, we use the term “people who use a program” to refer to people who use programs and may or may not be involved in participatory efforts. Readers can determine through context whether this group is participating or not participating.

<sup>2</sup> In this document we use the word “client” to refer to people who use the program but are not participating in its operation or direction.

involvement ensures that programs align with the needs of people who use the program and reduces the time to create change.

### ***For People Who Experience Food Insecurity***

According to our research, people generally feel a lack of power, influence, and control when seeking and accessing resources in systems that are not participatory. People express gratitude for available resources, but also feel that their needs are not effectively understood or addressed by organizations or programs.

*People generally feel a lack of power, influence, and control when seeking and accessing resources in systems that are not participatory.*

Research participants<sup>3</sup> identified being motivated by “giving back” and identify not wanting to be a “taker.” They also identified an interest in opportunities to meet and interact with other people, and to use food as a tool to build community.

Not all people who experience food insecurity use programs to access food. However, the people that do use programs are motivated to contribute because they want to improve programs and use the expertise they have gained from navigating food access systems to improve food access in their communities, for themselves, and others.

### ***For the Community***

Communities that have greater participation of people who are affected by issues are more resilient and have community members who feel a greater sense of belonging. Regardless of how someone participates (e.g., a group with shared experiences, an organization, or on their own), they are creating a healthier community. Both in terms of physical health, as well as social and emotional health.

## **D. What makes participation difficult?**

Research participants shared several things that make participation difficult for them. Although they want to be more involved, these barriers are things that disrupt this desire. Thus, when considering how to become participatory, it is essential to address barriers clients currently face in order to ensure opportunities for participation are readily accessible.

The following is a list of barriers that participants identified during our research:

---

<sup>3</sup> People who participated in the research project that led to the creation of this framework.

- ✿ **Unsure about whom to share feedback with.** People commonly reported not knowing whom to talk to when they had an issue or feedback, which became a common point of frustration. In one example, a research participant shared an experience where she saw some items at the food pantry were expired, but did not know whom to tell, and so did not bring attention to the issue.
- ✿ **Lack of information about how to get involved and what opportunities exist.** We heard research participants express a desire to be involved in improving food programs and for giving back, but not having any idea what opportunities are available to do so.
- ✿ **Unable to volunteer if using a program.** A major frustration for research participants was that they could not volunteer with programs they were using. Further contributing to this frustration was the fact that nobody could understand why such a policy existed.
- ✿ **Not wanting to appear unappreciative.** Research participants were concerned they might seem unappreciative of the services they used if providing critical feedback or reported issues. They overwhelmingly felt appreciative of what they did have and did not want to suggest otherwise.
- ✿ **Unpredictability of their lives.** Many research participants cited their own busy lives and unpredictable availability as barriers to participating. This was especially true for activities that required a commitment or more than a few minutes.
- ✿ **Transportation challenges.** Transportation can be a barrier to participation because many participatory opportunities take place on-site or at locations that are not convenient. In particular, research participants mentioned not having a car, and an unreliable and difficult to use bus system as transportation barriers.
- ✿ **People not listening.** When research participants provided feedback or participated in the past, they sometimes found that program and government staff appeared not to take action based on their input. This perceived lack of consideration for their input discouraged people from participating again.
- ✿ **Lack of transparency about what happens to their input.** Similar to the previous point, research participants did not know what organizations did with their feedback when they provided it. For example, they mentioned telling organization staff about issues in person or through surveys, but not knowing what happened after that. If there was no explicit action or communications from their input, they felt ignored.

## E. Accountability and stakeholderhood

In participatory programs, an organization is ultimately accountable to the people who use its programs. One distinction between programs that are participatory and programs that are not participatory is in the way in which the organization holds itself accountable and engages the people who use its programs as stakeholders. It is useful to think of stakeholders in two major categories: (1) those that are affected by the management and allocation of resources and (2) those that control the management and allocation of resources.

*In participatory systems, people who use programs act in their own interests from a position of power, influence, and control.*

Non-participatory programs primarily conceptualize people who use the program as stakeholders who are affected by the way the organization manages its resources. In this line of thought, organizations have an obligation to provide a resource for clients, which is informed by the organization's understanding of what clients want, need, and what resources are available.

Participatory programs consider and engage people who use the program as both (1) stakeholders affected by the control and allocation of resources and (2) stakeholders that control and manage the allocation of resources. Participatory programs accomplish this by allowing clients legitimate positions of control, decision-making, and power in the program and the organization. Their contributions to the program are considered as important as those from volunteers, financial donors, and board members (and they certainly act as volunteers, financial donors, or board members, and could contribute in any combination of these ways).

In participatory systems, people who use programs act in their own interests from a position of power, influence, and control. They can directly represent and advocate for their own needs or the needs of their community. The organization is not merely accountable to them because of a moral or charitable obligation, but because they actually possess power, control, and influence over the program, and the resources that make it happen.

## II. WHAT CAN PARTICIPATION LOOK LIKE?

As mentioned previously, participation can take a diversity of forms. This includes commonly used activities like filling out a survey, writing down thoughts on feedback cards, or participating in brief interviews about their experience of accessing food. It also includes a nearly endless list of activities like participating in workshops to brainstorm solutions, serving on the board for a program, sorting food as a volunteer before it is provided to clients, acting as an interpreter at a food pantry, talking to friends and neighbors to raise awareness of food access resources, and much more. [Appendix B](#) provides a list of participatory activities research participants identified as activities they would like to engage in.

Participation can take a few minutes, like the time it would take to write down some thoughts on a feedback card or can involve hours as part of ongoing volunteering at the food pantry or a multi-session brainstorming workshop. Participation can take place at a wide range of places: people can text feedback or fill out an online survey at home, help sort a food delivery at a local community center, or serve as an interpreter at the food pantry.

*Regardless of organizational involvement, there are people who are actively involved in supporting the health and well being of their communities everyday.*

A *participatory opportunity* refers to a specific situation where people affected by food insecurity can contribute, in some way, towards improving food access. This means an activity and the context surrounding it (i.e., the place, period of time, and people involved). For example, volunteering every week at a food delivery site to sort and unpack food represents a participatory opportunity.

Some participatory opportunities are created by organizations, while others are genuinely grassroots - organized and led by people who are affected by food insecurity. For example, someone who talks to their neighbors and hands out flyers listing resources has created their own participatory opportunity where they are helping educate others and raise awareness. Organizations may want to consider providing resources and additional support that make it easier for people to participate in these ways. Regardless of organizational involvement, some people are actively involved in supporting the health and well being of their communities every day.

## A. Ensuring a diversity of participatory opportunities

When we talk about a diversity of forms of participation, there are a variety of dimensions around which participation can vary. For example, participation can take place at different **locations**. Some activities might require people to come into an office or a food pantry. Other opportunities might allow people to engage from anywhere they want - even their home.

By considering the different ways participatory opportunities can vary, organizations can ensure there is an array of ways people can participate. This helps to meet the distinct needs of different people. In the case of **location**, people have varying abilities to get to different locations. For some people, it may be convenient to come to the food pantry to participate in an effort to improve services. For other people, this is very difficult, and going to their local community center or staying at their home makes it easier for them to participate. Because of that, having opportunities that take place across a range of locations broadens the pool of people who can participate and increases the level of participation people can have.

Other significant dimensions to consider when working towards creating a diversity of opportunities for participation include:

- ✦ **Commitment.** The level of commitment required of someone to engage in the participatory opportunity. Ranging from little to no commitment, where people can participate once or whenever they would like, to long-term commitment, where people need to commit to being involved for an extended period.
- ✦ **Domains of engagement.** The different areas inside and outside of programs that people can participate in. The domains include program creation, program improvement, financial (e.g., fund-raising, budget decisions), governance (i.e., involvement in organizational decision making), community and governmental policymaking, and hands-on contribution (e.g., stocking/sorting food at the pantry, acting as an interpreter).
- ✦ **Activity type.** The types of activities that are involved in a participatory opportunity, which are, in essence, what people are actually doing when participating. Activity types include thinking (e.g., brainstorming ways to improve food access), decision making, writing (e.g., writing a letter to city council), physical (e.g., preparing a meal, stocking food), socializing (i.e., engaging with other people who experience food insecurity), and verbal communication (e.g., participating in an interview about challenges with food access programs).

- ‡ **Accessibility.** How accessible a participatory opportunity is to different people. Certain opportunities are readily accessible for everyone, while other opportunities are targeted to a specific subset of people. It is important to have a mix of broadly accessible opportunities and opportunities that target a specific set of people (e.g., a series of workshops conducted in one specific language to reach a group that often gets excluded from participation). When thinking about any participatory opportunity, it is important to consider what barriers exist that prevent people from participating.
- ‡ **Reciprocity.** The level to which participatory opportunities give back to the people who are involved. Reciprocity describes what people get out of engaging in a given participatory opportunity. Some ways people participate can provide them an emotional benefit in that it makes them feel good about themselves for giving back. Other forms of participation might provide a direct, financial benefit to a participant through earning wages or a gratuity.

[Appendix C](#) provides a more comprehensive list of different dimensions around which participation varies. It also provides examples of how to apply these dimensions when evaluating existing offerings or when developing new opportunities.

## B. Scenarios

During our research, we worked with people who have experienced food insecurity to develop scenarios describing ideal ways they would like to participate in improving food access. The scenarios were constructed in workshops, with individual cards that were made up of actors, goals, actions, and in some cases, locations, tools, and time. They showcase the diversity of forms participation can take.

Given that these scenarios are the articulation of ideal ways people want to be involved, they can serve as a starting point for organizations, and the community more broadly, in thinking about ways to become more participatory. The scenarios are organized in topics below based on the topic or type of activity. The full list of scenarios can be seen in [Appendix E](#).

### ***Raising awareness of resources and healthy behaviors among peers***

I would...

- ‡ share information about transportation resources frequently, via word of mouth, in order to raise awareness about the resources that are available.
- ‡ make phone calls to different people to let people who might be eligible to use resources know about the food access resources in the community.

### ***Sharing and discussing ideas with peers around food access***

I would...

- ✦ like to share ideas and information about communal cooking and food storage. Myself and others could discuss opportunities to improve communal cooking and food storage for people who need it.
- ✦ share recipes at the food pantry to improve the quality of food for people. This would improve the quality of food for people because they would have ideas about how to use ingredients and prepare new foods.
- ✦ periodically share my story of how to shop with benefits with the WIC staff, at the grocery store, so others can understand how to make shopping easier.

### ***Providing feedback and communicating with programs about food access***

I would...

- ✦ like to fill out surveys, send text messages, or make phone calls to provide feedback.
- ✦ get together during the weekends at the food pantry and share a meal/snacks to create new programs and help decide how programs should spend their money, to improve services in the food pantries.
- ✦ write down thoughts and ideas on feedback cards at the food pantry to improve the services and the quality of food available.

### ***Taking action directly involved with food access***

I would...

- ✦ volunteer in my housing site or neighborhood once or twice per week to dispose of trash and keep my community clean when BFR brings food.
- ✦ like to volunteer at the food pantry every week, for example, every Tuesday morning, to volunteer as a translator or interpreter.
- ✦ volunteer every few months at the food pantry.

### ***Taking action addressing structural factors affecting food access***

I would...

- ✦ work to raise wages.
- ✦ like to ensure resources being provided at my children's schools and in the community, in general, are in my native language. Someone in my family could help to do this.



### III. PRINCIPLES OF MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Principles are the fundamental ideas that guide the way people, groups, and organizations act. We propose the following principles as a guide for how people and organizations can act in a way that leads to meaningful, inclusive, and effective participation. The principles were gathered from our research, conversations with people, and ongoing participatory efforts.

**Participatory organizations encourage participation at every level within the organization.** In order to be guided by the people an organization serves, participants should be engaged in participatory opportunities at every level - as on-the-ground volunteers, thought leaders, decision-makers, and experts.

**Leverage existing assets of the community.** All communities are full of assets, knowledge, resources, and expertise. A person or group of people experiencing a social problem (like poverty or food insecurity) knows the problem most intimately, knows their own needs most directly, and knows how their needs can best be met. People using resources know the resources already available and know the gaps and barriers associated with those resources. They know what would work best for people, particularly for people who lack access to the same resources or who encounter the same systems of oppression (poverty, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and ageism) in a similar way.

**Make participation accessible.** Communities hold the assets, knowledge, and expertise to more effectively design and implement programs to address their own resource limitations. Organizations currently institutionalize participation opportunities in a way that might not meet people's needs. Needs people may be experiencing like poverty, food insecurity, or living on the losing end of systems of oppression, particularly because of the stress, anxiety, and lack of resources, security, and predictability associated with living in poverty.

Because of this, organizations need to offer accommodations for making participation more accessible and flexible. Such as offering things so people can realistically show up to participate (food, accessible spaces, childcare, food transportation, compensation or appreciation for their time), a variety of time commitments using a variety of locations and a variety of tools.

Organizations can also offer people training and professional development opportunities for people who participate in new ways. Organizations can offer training or access to training for people who want to organize or lead programs, represent the organization publicly, or raise funds. They can also offer training to

people who are already participating, like volunteers and board members, to make spaces more welcoming for people who use programs.

**Increase ownership through participation.** The central objective for participation efforts should ultimately be transferring power, control, and influence to the people who use the program. The role of organizations is to facilitate meaningful participation opportunities and connect communities and individuals to resources according to the community or individual's understanding of their own needs. In order to do this, organizations might have to cede power, control, and influence to those people.

**Meaningful systems of participation are built on relationships with people.** Healthy relationships are built on mutual trust and respect. Organizations can demonstrate trust by allowing people autonomy, responsibility, and positions of power, control, and influence. Organizations can demonstrate respect by responding to feedback, understanding and responding to barriers as identified by recipients, by showing up consistently, and by offering support as it is requested (and not offering support when it is not requested). The way programs are designed and implemented communicates trust or distrust, and respect or disrespect to clients. Think about ways to ensure participation does not feel transactional but instead focuses on the relationships between everyone involved.

**Provide intrinsic value for people who participate.** Participatory opportunities are designed around the needs, goals, values, and assets of the clients, as determined by those clients themselves. Participating should provide value to the people involved, and be meaningful to them personally, in addition to having some external benefit, such as improving food services, or an incentive. Program participant involvement is necessary for the success of the program because the program is designed around them and their input.

**Engage a diverse population.** Systemic oppression, particularly racism, classism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, cissexism, and ageism, result in poverty and food insecurity, disproportionately affecting people who do not embody white, straight, cisgender men, youthful (but not too youthful) identities, or who possess minds or bodies that do not meet cultural norms of ability and stability. Because of this, and because communities indeed know their own needs the best, it is advantageous for organizations to engage a diverse population in participation and expend resources to make participation accessible for people who are disproportionately affected by systemic oppression.

To do this, organizations need to find out what barriers to participation are for communities that are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, and work to ameliorate those barriers. This requests organizations to effectively outreach and build relationships with different communities to elicit participation. One effective tactic towards outreach and relationship building is to engage people who already

connect other people to resources or organize services that are needed in the community. For example, at Boulder Food Rescue, we have initiated relationships with people who coordinate the garden space at their housing facility, organize snow removal services in their community, and planned carsharing groups to lead food distribution programs and conduct outreach, or to connect us to people who might want to take on those roles.

**Successful participation requires a long-term commitment from the people who are implementing participatory programs.** Although at first, something might not seem to be working or drawing a significant level of involvement, it takes time for people to adopt new programs. People need to learn about new initiatives, develop an intention around participating, figure out a way that they can be involved, and then activate their resources to begin to participate. For each person, this could take quite a while. Given that, programs need to commit to implementing participatory programs for an extended period.

**Experiment to uncover what works and what doesn't.** It is not always clear what participatory structures will work in each setting and with a specific group of people. Although conducting research and having conversations with people helps to narrow the options, you never know what will work until you try it.

**Think community-wide, not program-specific.** Although it is easier to focus on creating participatory opportunities for existing clients, organizations should think beyond people who currently have a relationship with their organization (either as current or previous clients or through some other interaction). Other people are affected by food insecurity or who could benefit from the program. Being inclusive with opportunities will help organizations better serve the community as a whole.

**Be transparent with the people who engage with participatory efforts.** People who engage with food access resources should know how and why decisions are made, how they can participate and provide input, and whom they can talk to about their concerns. There should be many ways that people can learn about these things so that everyone has visibility into what is going on.

## IV. HOW TO BECOME MORE PARTICIPATORY

Becoming more participatory is an ongoing process that does not happen overnight. It is an iterative process that requires constant experimentation and partnership with the community. In this section, we describe core practices of participatory organizations: iteration, experimentation, and building trust. We also highlight specific ways that organizations can become more participatory, which include changing existing programs, creating new programs, altering the way they make decisions, shifting where they invest their money, and changing policies. Finally, we provide a step by step process, which serves as a guide for organizations who are interested in becoming more participatory.

### A. Practices

Practices of participatory organizations are the things that organizations do that support them in creating participatory opportunities and spaces. For starters, active engagement with the principles listed in the previous section will lead organizations down a path towards being more participatory. Also, a commitment to *constant iteration* on processes, programs, funding, and policies helps organizations be responsive to program participants and look critically at their practices.

*Experimentation* allows organizations to try new things and think outside the box, without being attached to what they think already works. Lastly, organizations need a *partnership with the community*, including both the people the organization hopes to serve and the broader community.

#### **Iteration**

An iterative process is defined as a “process of learning and development that involves cyclical inquiry, enabling multiple opportunities for people to revisit ideas and critically reflect on their implication.”<sup>4</sup>

In order to be effective, it is important to ideate about a participatory process, implement this process in our programs, and then get feedback about the program itself. Once feedback is received, it is necessary to not only make changes to the program directly but also to discuss this feedback with the people who are a part of it. Often, following up about how changes were made does not happen, and the process will come to a halt. Once the feedback is implemented into a program, the process starts over. The new changes are implemented, and feedback is gathered again. This process will continue until an ideal outcome is achieved.

---

<sup>4</sup> Helen Timperley, Aaron Wilson, Heather Barrar, and Irene Fung. "[Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration \[BES\]](#)"(PDF). [OECD](#). p. 238. Retrieved 4 April 2013.

## **Experimentation**

Experimentation is the process of trying something new and taking risks. When organizations begin to become participatory, there may be new initiatives set forth that were unexpected. If an organization decides to include the voices of people who use the program in design of a program, the program may shift to better suit the needs of those people but will be new to the staff and volunteers who have become accustomed to old processes. The organization will need to experiment to see if the new process works and adjust as necessary.

For example, one food pantry in Denver, outside of our research, decided to stop limiting the amount of food that food-pantry users take with them. They found that once they tried this new way of giving their clients choice in food access, individuals using the pantry began to take *less* food than they used to take and needed. Our research confirms that individuals will not take food if they perceive that someone else needs it more than them. The experiment of this food pantry led to more client choice but less access as a whole. After they examined this change, they decided to create a list that explains the amount of food that would feed a family (of the size of each client's family) for one week, to serve as a resource. This enabled the users to continue to have a choice in how much they could take, but also were given a guide to support them in taking enough.

## **Trust**

Trust is a mutual exchange, and in the participatory system, communicating that the organization trusts clients is at least as important as working towards a relationship where clients trust the organization. Efforts to build trust are likely to fail if people don't see and feel that trust is mutual. Trust, or the lack of trust, is communicated through interactions, practices, and policies.

Ways organizations communicate *trust*

- ✱ Creating and implementing meaningful, thoughtful, relevant programs and participatory opportunities.
- ✱ Allowing people freedom, choice, and control in the systems they use.
- ✱ Knowing, acknowledging, and calling upon the assets, experiences, and skills of individuals and communities
- ✱ Actively sharing and relinquishing power with people who use its programs.

Ways organizations communicate *distrust*

- ✱ Requiring that volunteers accompany and advise clients as they use a service.
- ✱ Implementing restrictions or rules that:
  - ✱ appear unnecessary or are unclear in origin.
  - ✱ address problems that could be addressed through relationship building, conversation, agreements, or other strategies

- \* implicate or affect everyone or the entire system, when an issue is with a limited number of individuals.
- \* limit resources or services, especially when it is not absolutely necessary to do so.

It is true that distrust can be communicated by practices or policies that serve a function, originate from good intentions, or rise from practical barriers and limits of the organization. Distrust also stems from personal and systemic biases that inhibit trust. It is important for organizations, and the people working in them, to not allow their own intentions, challenges, and biases to prevent them from acknowledging the impacts of their organization's practices and policies on the mutual trust relationship.

Trust can be improved with significant work, challenging communication, changing resource allocation, honesty, and diligence. The changes necessary to improve trust will often be met with difficulty, pain, and reluctance, but effective investments in a mutual trust relationship increase participation, and improve both services and the reputation of the organization amongst the people who use it.

## B. Ways to become more participatory

In reviewing the forms of participation envisioned through our research, we identified actions organizations could take. These are not specific changes, but instead, are the general means by which organizations become more participatory. They include making changes to existing programs, developing new programs, changing decision-making structures, adjusting how money is spent, and changing policies.

### ***Changing existing programs***

Given that resources are often limited and change is slow, one way that organizations could become more participatory is to change the way that their existing programs run to be more inclusive. This could include implementing systems of feedback or allowing people to volunteer in the programs they use. Changing an existing program by allowing volunteerism, ideas, or feedback to exist within the current structure could be the simplest and most effective way that organizations can change in a timely manner. It would use fewer resources, and likely, organizations would gain resources from the community of people wanting to get involved.

### ***New programs and initiatives***

Organizations could implement new programs that are participatory by including clients in the development of the program. The likely result would be a program

contingent on participation and including the voices of people participating every step of the way.

One way that we have seen this work is by allowing people to drive the programs that they are a part of. Boulder Food Rescue participants<sup>5</sup> run their own no-cost grocery programs, by volunteering to receive the food, sort the food, call neighbors, and clean up the food. This not only allows people to have an active hand in giving back but makes the program more effective by utilizing the volunteer resources in a community and cutting down on hierarchical structures between those serving and those being served.

### ***Governance changes (how decisions are made)***

Nonprofits often consist of a governing board or staff team who make decisions that are not representative of the community they serve. Although these governing boards and staff teams are well-intentioned, they carry their own biases that may not line up with the needs of the community. The way that many people on boards or staff are affected by systems such as racism, classism, or patriarchy, may not be representative of people who experience food insecurity. People who experience food insecurity are affected by those systems. These systems and biases influence decisions in determining things such as where to allocate resources, how to run programs, how to interact with clients, and so on.

By allowing client voice in governance, not only will the nonprofit benefit from having a more diverse perspective on the decisions that they are trying to make, they will be utilizing the expertise of people who they are trying to serve, which means they will be more informed about the needs and experience of their community and will become more effective in what they do.

### ***Financial changes (where the organization invests money)***

Similar to making decisions without voice from the community that the nonprofit is trying to serve, investing money in programs without this voice, could end up being a waste of resources that could be more effectively used. If program participant voice is included in decisions about financial resources, they will likely reflect the change needed for a nonprofit to serve their community effectively.

Research participants expressed interest in supporting organizations to make better financial decisions, specifically around how food pantries could improve their services. Organizations could allow clients to determine which foods could be

---

<sup>5</sup> At Boulder Food Rescue, “participants” is the term we use for the people who use programs. This includes people who contribute participatory efforts and people who use the program and do not contribute participatory efforts. A more commonly used term in Human Services is “clients,” which we use elsewhere in this document when we are referring generally about people who use food access programs.

bought, how many resources to put into programs, and what resources need to be available to support food access.

Another important financial consideration is who is paid to do the work in an organization. Volunteers are important and indispensable to most basic needs organizations. However, doing the work is most sustainable for the people who are getting paid to do it. Whether or not current or former clients are present in the organization as paid employees communicate that participation is a priority. It is necessary to modify hiring practices in ways that can make employment more accessible for clients, such as conducting targeted outreach to clients, and eliminating unnecessary qualification requirements, resumes, and cover letters.

### ***Policy changes***

Some organizations have policies that prevent people from participating in ways that they wish. For example, when organizations have policies that prevent people who use their services from volunteering with that organization or in a program they use. Another example of a policy that limits participation is when a board of directors have a “give or get” policy. A “give or get” policy says that board members have to either give a certain amount of money or fundraise that same amount of money. For example, a nonprofits may say that to sit on their board, board members have to give or fundraise \$500. “Give or get” fundraising policies inspire commitments to fundraising for boards, but limit who is able to sit on that board based on their ability to commit or be connected to financial resources.

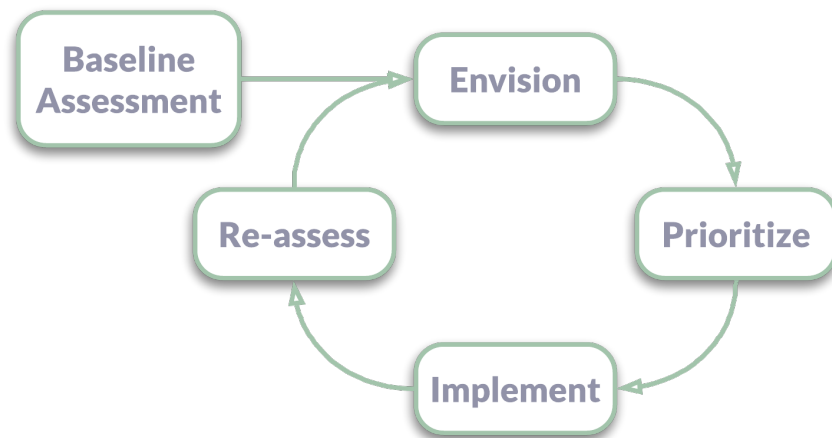
Organizations must examine their policies for how they limit participation. An in-depth assessment of these policies, why they exist, and what function they serve, will enable organizations to choose whether or not they want to continue enforcing them. An organization does not necessarily need to change all of their policies to become more participatory, but an assessment can help organizations see where they are preventing participation and why. For example, perhaps an organization finds it necessary to have a “give or get” policy for its board to encourage fundraising as a primary goal. Instead of altogether abolishing this policy, perhaps they could allow each board member to choose their own meaningful fundraising goals, or allow some board members to be exempt and contribute to other components of the board.



## C. Process for becoming more participatory

The prospect of making changes within a team, organization, or community, in order to become more participatory, can appear daunting. To help groups through the journey, we provide a series of steps that guide groups from baseline assessment and ideation through implementation and evaluation. Developing participatory practices is an ongoing, never-ending process, and this guide aims to serve as a starting point for that.

Different groups will begin at different places with participation. Although we believe that starting from the beginning, with a baseline assessment, is important, groups should feel free to customize this process and engage at whatever stages they feel is appropriate based on their current situation.



### **step 1** *Baseline assessment*

The first step is to understand the current landscape of participatory opportunities within your organization and potentially, within the broader community. The baseline assessment helps identify gaps in the current opportunities for participation.

**Examine baseline opportunities.** Organizations can start by taking an inventory of what participatory opportunities currently exist. This can be done through group brainstorming, workshops, staff and stakeholder interviews, and interviews with people who engage with their services. This effort should not rely on the staff or leadership of an organization alone. It should include all the various stakeholders of the organization and prioritize participation from clients.

When organizations reflect critically on their existing opportunities, it helps to have some *provocations*, which are questions to prompt reflection and discussion. These can be used during group conversations, interviews, or personal reflection. Below are some examples; however, organizations should feel free to imagine their own provocations.

*Critiquing provocations* help determine the current state of things. They examine current practices, norms, or values of the program or organization. Critiques are not limited to criticisms; they can also affirm what is going right and point to where growth has already happened.

- \* What participation opportunities exist currently?
- \* How do we use feedback?
- \* Why do we ask for feedback?
- \* How do our relationships with people who use the program function?
- \* How do we practice relationship building?
- \* What are our policies around volunteering, participation, and feedback?
- \* Are we allowing for participation on all levels of our organization?
- \* Why are the current policies around participation in place?
- \* What are barriers to participation?

*Assessing provocations* help determine goals, objectives, and available resources. They evaluate why things are the way they are, what clients want, what kind of support the organization could provide, and to what end.

- \* What are participants saying about the programs they use?
- \* What are the assets in the community?
- \* How do people want to be involved?
- \* How do we address the barriers that exist?

**Baseline evaluation and measures.** In the beginning, it is helpful to get a baseline of how an organization is doing around being participatory. This will also reveal opportunities to increase participation. As new programs are developed and on a regular basis (e.g., semi-annually, annually), it's useful to assess how well those programs are meeting the needs of the community and how they impact people's experiences accessing food.

To support the continual evaluation of efforts to increase participation, there is a need for *measures* that convey information about how well organizations or programs are performing at providing meaningful opportunities for participation. Measures, in this case, refer to metrics, outputs, or deliverables.

Different types of measures can be used to evaluate how well a person, program, organization, or community is doing at providing meaningful opportunities for participation in improving food access. We have identified five different types of measures that are relevant to food access participation. These include:

- ✦ **Observed participation.** Measures aimed at summarizing the extent to which participation is taking place and the level of participation taking place. For example, participation rate (i.e., what proportion of clients engage in participatory programs) and participation retention (i.e., to what extent do people return to participate again after having done so).
- ✦ **Perceptions and beliefs around participation.** These measures evaluate the perceptions of participation from clients, including their perceived level of access to participatory efforts and their satisfaction with their level of participation.
- ✦ **Perceptions and beliefs around organizations.** These measures relate to how clients, and people who could be clients but do not use services, feel about different organizations/programs. We expect improved participation to increase the level of positive sentiment that clients feel towards organizations. This would manifest in improvements in measures such as trust and perceived organizational transparency.
- ✦ **Food access.** Along with measures focused on participation itself, we believe that participation will lead to improved services and, ultimately, improved food access. Effective participation should have a positive impact on food access-related measures, such as the perceived quality of food, resource awareness, and food insecurity.
- ✦ **Organizational.** Measures related to the involvement of leadership, staff, and volunteers in participatory activities, their perceived efficacy in engaging with people who participate in those activities<sup>6</sup>, and their beliefs about their relationships with people who participate. For example, the proportion of staff who engage with program participants in a participatory form.

[Appendix E](#) describes these different types of measures in more detail. The measures are based primarily on the findings of our research around what people want out of participatory opportunities.

---

<sup>6</sup> Clients engaging in participatory activities.

## step 2

### **Envision**

After conducting a baseline assessment of participatory opportunities, the next step is to envision ways for the organization to become more participatory. The most effective methods for envisioning are group activities that involve a diverse range of stakeholders, with strong representation from people whom the organization serves. For example, the organization could host workshops where different stakeholders get together to brainstorm solutions to specific problems identified during the assessment stage.

To guide the envisioning process, the team can use various provocations to help imagine ideal future scenarios, systems, and structures. Examples of **envisioning provocations** include:

- ✦ How might we be more participatory?
- ✦ What does participation look like?
- ✦ How can we transfer power, control, and influence to clients?
- ✦ How do we eliminate or decrease participation barriers?
- ✦ What would we want our relationship with people who use the program to be like?
- ✦ Are there other ways to meet the needs of the organization without limiting participation?

## step 3

### **Prioritization**

Prioritization is the process of making decisions about what is important, communicating these decisions, and then implementing those priorities across different aspects and activities of the organization. Prioritization acknowledges that we cannot do everything, or at least that we cannot do everything well. It necessitates that we decide precisely what we want to achieve and how we are going to achieve it.

**Participation as a priority.** It is helpful to think about where resources are held, who holds power, how changes happen, and who is invested in becoming more participatory. In a participatory system, the investment must come from resource holders and resource users.

For highly participatory organizations, participation is itself, a priority. Participatory values are implemented through the programs and projects that the organization prioritizes, and the people that the organization prioritizes to do work, get paid and provide input.

**Prioritization as a negotiation of resources.** In general, prioritization is important because organizations always have limited resources. Attention is one limited resource, and organizations that assign priority to a limited number of objectives and programs tend to be more successful at achieving their objectives than organizations that assign a small amount of focus to an overwhelming number of objectives and programs.

In addition to the resource of attention, organizations also have limited human, financial, and material resources. Priority is, in many ways, a negotiation of resources, and communication of importance through the allocation of resources.

**How the organization prioritizes participation.** For most organizations wanting to become more participatory and wondering where to start, resources and power are likely held and distributed in a top-down model. In this model, a board of directors or director-level staff make decisions, control resources, and direct other staff who manage still other staff who carry out program activities with or for the people who use the program.

Because this top-down model controls direction, decision, and resources, participation should be prioritized by the leadership of organizations. Participation should also guide personnel decisions (board appointments and hiring), evaluation (indicators of success), and allocation of funds (where you put the money).

To start, organizations could change their mission, principles, and vision statements and strategic plans to prioritize participation. In a participatory system, these items are created along with clients, at least with input and/or approval. Organizations could also implement programs that clients want and want to participate in, and to eliminate programs that they do not want or do not want to participate in.

For many reasons, an organization may not be in a position to become more participatory, either because leadership is not ready to share power with people who use programs, or because they do not have the resources to make a significant shift. For example, being in the middle of a budget cycle might prevent significant change, or the existing Board of Directors or director-level staff may not be supportive of changes to become more participatory. Other resources that may not be available are energy, focus, and time of staff. In these cases, program staff can begin to make small changes to become more participatory and make room for more meaningful systems change in the future.

At the program level, staff can always start with building or strengthening relationships of mutual respect and trust with clients. Mutual relationships of trust between clients and an organization are critical components of the participatory organization. Program staff can build on their relationships with clients by

advocating for changing policies and practices that communicate a lack of respect or trust. Advocating to change existing policies on, for example, limits on the types and amounts of food a client can take, restrictions on clients volunteering, and requirements to accompany clients while they use a service, can be steps towards a more mutual trust relationship. Although this work may take much time, when the mutual trust relationship is built, program staff can take more steps listed below.

All organizational and programmatic changes require input and participation from people the organization serves.



## LEADERSHIP

### What do they do?

In traditional service organizations, leadership is comprised of a board of directors and director-level staff. They make high level decisions, control the flow of resources, and direct other staff.

### Where can they start to become more participatory?

- ✦ Be willing to share and even give up power and control.
- ✦ Direct staff, monetary, and material resources to prioritize participation.
- ✦ Direct staff to find out what clients want from programs and how they want to be involved.
- ✦ Prioritize relationship building and communications of respect and trust.
- ✦ Change mission, values, vision statements and bylaws to prioritize participation. (This happens with client input!)
- ✦ Reimagine what is possible and important. Reallocate resources towards participatory efforts. Does the organization really not have the time, money, or other resources for participation, or can those resources be reallocated from other priorities? What space is created when you allow clients to be more meaningfully involved?
- ✦ Make human resources decisions that value participation. Especially, hire clients.
- ✦ Be open to changes to the established way of doing things to accommodate participation.



## PROGRAM STAFF

### What do they do?

Work directly with programs and the clients who use them. They take action and make decisions that result in the implementation of the program.

### Where can they start to become more participatory?

- \* Build relationships, respect, and trust with and for clients.
- \* Learn what participants want from the programs they use and how they want to be involved.
- \* Create volunteer opportunities.
- \* Learn the skills and experiences of individuals and communities that can be valuable to the organization.
- \* Create leadership opportunities.
- \* Advocate for program participant desires, needs, and representation to those in positions of leadership.
- \* Create meaningful and responsive systems of feedback.
- \* Respond to feedback whenever possible, even if you cannot make a change that a participant requests.
- \* Make participation opportunities inviting and accessible.
- \* Be open to changes to the established way of doing things to accommodate participation.
- \* Be willing to share and even give up power and control.

step

4

### **Implementation - Where do we start?**

The [prioritization section](#) helps think through the best approach and where within the organization to put time and focus. However, there can still be a lot of questions, ideas, and side-tracks to linger around, so we find that moving through this process is most helpful. Feel free to use this list as a guide, in which we have used Boulder Food Rescue as an example to understand this process.

1. Evaluate existing participation opportunities.
  - \* See [Appendix C](#) for an example of Boulder Food Rescue's inventory of participatory opportunities.
2. Identify opportunities to expand the diversity of participatory opportunities that are being supported. Look at the way existing opportunities map onto the

dimensions and find the levels or categories of the dimensions that are currently not being addressed (see [Appendix C](#) for the complete list of dimensions to consider).

- ✱ BFR provides a diversity of options across dimensions. Within domains, we have few fiscal opportunities compared to hands-on contribution opportunities. We have some program governance opportunities that are effective (Grocery Program Coordinator and Participant Advisory Board), but our organizational governance opportunity (joining the board) has been ineffective as a participatory opportunity. We believe this to be because of the many barriers associated with joining the board.

3. For each level or category not being addressed, brainstorm how to address that gap.

- ✱ This is best done in a workshop that brings together as many stakeholders as possible. People who use the program are the most important stakeholder group to include.
- ✱ Alternatively, a pair (including one program participant and one staff member) or a small group can do this in a free form way.
- ✱ Use the provocations in this framework to guide the brainstorming.
- ✱ Look at the scenarios and preferred activities as inspiration.

4. From all the brainstormed ideas, narrow to one improvement/opportunity that the organization will proceed with. This framework provides several ways to help narrow down possible ideas:

- ✱ Look at the preferred activities.
- ✱ Consider how accessible this opportunity will be - can this impact a lot of people?
- ✱ Consider feasibility and how quickly it can be implemented (look for low hanging fruit).

5. Implement the selected improvement or opportunity.

- ✱ To create another opportunity for BFR participants input in decision-making, BFR created the Participant Advisory Board (PAB), which is much more accessible than joining the board of directors. BFR's program staff go to PAB members instead of requiring members to come to a meeting, and there are only meetings if the PAB decides to call a meeting. 6 BFR participants actively participate in the PAB. Their participation has been mostly program-related. We still have work to do to incorporate ways and address barriers for participants to join the organizational board.

6. Evaluate the improvement or opportunity by assessing the different measures of participation to determine whether the program had a positive impact. (See Re-assessment, below)



## step 5

### Re-assessment

The re-assessment stage evaluates how the organization is doing with participation, similar to the baseline stage. The evaluation includes a critical review of what is and is not working, and measurement to help understand if there is progress. During re-assessment, there is a particular focus on the efforts that the organization has implemented since its last assessment.

**Critical reflection.** This part of re-assessment focuses on reviewing the efforts the organization has undertaken towards becoming more participatory. Much like the baseline assessment, there is a need to leverage provocations around *critiquing* and *assessing* to guide conversations and reflection.

**Measure Impact.** While doing your baseline assessment, you may determine several ways in which you want to measure your impact. Depending on what measures you're interested in assessing, your impact measurement will be a different process. While you do your baseline assessment, you should have an idea of how you want to measure this and what methods you will use to evaluate your process.

This process is applied to a single improvement. If an organization works to create a participatory opportunity, they then need to evaluate whether or not it was successful. For example, if an organization started a feedback program, they may want to look at the rate of participation and access to participation internally to discover their success. However, they may also want to evaluate the program impact on food access. They could calculate how many more people are using their program, whether or not their needs are being met, whether or not the quality or quantity of food improves based on their feedback, among other things.

Regardless of the method or measurements, an essential part of measuring impact is following up with people who participate about your results. They want to know that their contributions make a difference and may not be able to see this right away without the organization sharing evaluation results.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A. Summary of Research Activities

In May 2015, Boulder Food Rescue partnered with researchers from CU to explore the issue of food insecurity in Boulder. Through a community-based participatory research process, the team co-developed a research agenda to understand the experiences of people facing food insecurity. The research aimed to identify ways to take action to improve food access in our community and engage people who experience food insecurity in realizing their vision of food security. All research activities were conducted in English and Spanish.

### PREVIOUS STUDY ACTIVITY 1: MULTIMEDIA-ELICITATION INTERVIEW (MEI) STUDY

For the first research activity, which took place between January 2016 and June 2016, the team conducted multimedia elicitation interviews (MEIs) with 26 people. In this activity, people who self-identified as having experienced food insecurity were asked to record their experiences accessing food using camera phones. Research participants took photos and recorded videos of their experiences for two weeks based on four prompts:

- \* Record moments when you are in the process of getting food.
- \* Record things that make it difficult for you to access food.
- \* Record tools you use to help you get food (for example bikes, computers, money).
- \* Record positive experiences you have with food.

Afterward, researchers met with each participant for an individual, semi-structured interview to discuss the media recordings they created.

### PREVIOUS STUDY ACTIVITY 2: PARTICIPATORY DATA ANALYSIS WORKSHOPS (PDAWS)

Following the MEI activity, the individual, semi-structured interviews were transcribed. From these transcriptions, small sections were selected to include in a group-based participatory data analysis workshop. In this workshop, people who self-identified as experiencing food insecurity, many who also participated in the MEI study, worked together to group related sections that were selected from the interview transcripts into common themes. They then worked to consolidate and label these themes.

During the participatory data analysis workshops, research participants identified several high level themes, some of which included:

- \* Valuing fresh, healthy foods
- \* Transportation challenges
- \* Limited or difficult hours of operation at programs
- \* Challenges discovering programs
- \* Red tape and paperwork
- \* Keep it out of the landfill
- \* Community and socialization
- \* Shame and stigma as barriers to access
- \* Lack of respect

The themes identified in the workshops have been communicated in more detail during various presentations to partner organizations, stakeholders in the issue of food insecurity, and people who participated in the research activities. These themes were used to inform the next steps of our research, which included the development of additional research activities to explore the issue of community participation in efforts to improve food security.

### **PREVIOUS STUDY ACTIVITY 3: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN WORKSHOPS**

The design workshops included people who self-identified as food insecure, who participated in a series of activities to articulate their ideal visions of what it would look like to participate in improving food access. The workshops were structured around using notecards to communicate and prioritize ideas for preferred forms of participation. Each note card represented a different person, place, goal, action, or thing related to food access in Boulder. For example, there were notecards labeled with the name of each food pantry, and there were notecards with the different actions people could use in participating such as "engaging in one-on-one conversations" and "writing down their thoughts." There were also blank notecards for research participants to add their own actions, places, goals, etc. Research participants used these notecards to construct scenarios describing their ideal participation experience. The scenarios told a story of who would be involved in the experience, what actions they would take, where the interactions would take place, and what tools they would use to complete their actions. After constructing scenarios, participants ranked the cards within each category. For example, they ranked all of the different potential actors based on the priority of working with them to improve participation opportunities.

## Appendix B. Preferred Participatory Activities

Our research uncovered a number of participatory activities that a broad range of people expressed interest in. These are activities that our research suggests would reach a range of people and provide a meaningful avenue for participation.

For each activity, we identify the type of activity it is (i.e., thought-based, physical, written, verbal, or social). More details about these types can be found in the dimensions of participatory opportunities in [Appendix C](#) below.



Write down thoughts, ideas, and input for improving programs and food access on paper, or in text message or email.

**INTELLECTUAL, WRITTEN**



Have one-on-one conversation in person or over the phone about experiences, ideas, and feedback.

**VERBAL**



Talk with someone in charge or people who can influence change about improving programs and food access.

**VERBAL**



Tell others about program improvements or the outcomes of participatory efforts.

**SOCIAL**



Assessing and identifying needs around food access for different people in the community.

**SOCIAL, INTELLECTUAL**



Attend meetings about efforts to improve food access to provide perspective and input.

**VERBAL**



Share or improve recipes for others to use.

**INTELLECTUAL, WRITTEN**



Sort, unpack, organize, and stock food.

**PHYSICAL**



Select the food that will be available/prioritized at food pantries.

**INTELLECTUAL**



Raise awareness of existing food access resources with other people in the community.

**SOCIAL**



Act as an interpreter.

**SOCIAL**



Cook food for others.

**PHYSICAL**



Volunteering.

**DEPENDS ON THE SPECIFIC FORM**



Act as a translator.

**INTELLECTUAL, WRITTEN**



Participate in an evaluation survey.

**INTELLECTUAL**



Share feedback on how to improve services using a suggestion box.

**INTELLECTUAL, WRITTEN**



Decide how programs allocate and spend their financial resources.

**INTELLECTUAL**



Set up information centers that educate people about available resources.

**SOCIAL**



Drive vehicles to help bring food to people or bring people to food resources.

**PHYSICAL**



Attend interactive workshops about how to improve services and food access.

**SOCIAL, VERBAL, INTELLECTUAL**

## Appendix C. Dimensions of Participatory Opportunities

Several different dimensions can describe every participatory opportunity. These dimensions are attributes of participatory opportunities, representing different aspects of each opportunity. The following is a complete list of dimensions we have identified through our research and reflection on participation.



The level of commitment required of someone to engage in the participatory opportunity. There are two ways to describe it.

### **A specific quantitative and/or qualitative level.** Could describe:

- \* Number of meetings — e.g., attend 3 workshop sessions
- \* Period of time — e.g., be involved for 3 months
- \* Frequency of engagement — e.g., volunteer at least once a week
- \* Duration per each engagement — e.g., committing to volunteering two hours at a time
- \* Some combination of these.
- \* Ex: 2 hours every week for at least 3 months.

### **A category that roughly summarizes the level.** Abstract categories like:

- \* No ongoing commitment
- \* Short-term commitment — e.g., one-week to 1 month
- \* Medium-term commitment — e.g., 1 month to 6 months
- \* Long-term commitment — e.g., 6 months or longer
- \* Unspecified ongoing commitment

---

## Location

This dimension enumerates the different locations in which someone can engage in a specific participatory opportunity.

- \* At a specific place (when the location is a specific place, information describing that place should be provided)
- \* At a program
- \* At home
- \* Anywhere
- \* At public, community spaces (e.g., the library, schools)

---

## Domains of engagement

Provides an understanding of what area of the community food system it relates to. Domain can be thought of as the primary category of a participatory opportunity. The domains include:

- \* **Program creation.** Contributing to any aspect of creating new food access programs. For example, attending workshops to brainstorm programs to make it easier to access food, or creating learning materials for a new program that teaches people how to eat healthy.
- \* **Program improvement.** Evolving existing food access programs to make them more effective. For example, identifying new foods that a food pantry should provide or ways to increase the number of people who engage with a program.
- \* **Financial.** Involvement in the financial aspects of an organization or governmental entity. This could involve deciding how financial resources are spent in a program or deciding how to best fundraise.
- \* **Governance.** Involvement in organizational decision making or having direct input on how decisions are made. This could be serving on the board or consulting on how to improve pantry policies around who can volunteer.
- \* **Community and governmental policy.** Developing policies to improve food access. This means policies that guide the actions of more than one actor or organization at a community-level or larger-scale. For example, conducting research targeted at changing city policy.
- \* **Hands on contribution.** On the ground, participation in the ongoing, day-to-day functioning of a program. For instance, cooking a meal for others or stocking/sorting food at the pantry.



### Activity type

The type of activities that people will actually do when involved with a participatory opportunity. A participatory opportunity can have more than one activity type. For example, “Writing down thoughts, ideas, and input for improving programs and food access” is both a written activity and a thinking activity.

- \* **Thought-based.** These types of activities involve thinking or generating ideas or thoughts. There may be a physical manifestation of those thoughts later. However, the primary activity is thinking about the ideas.
  - \* Ideate (thinking of ideas)
  - \* Decision making
- \* **Written.** Activities that involve the process of physically recording information - either with hand writing or by typing it into an electronic system.
- \* **Physical.** Activities that involve physical activity and interaction with the physical environment. For instance, cooking meals, sorting food or driving a vehicle.
- \* **Social.** These activities involve interaction with people who would be identified as “peers” with an individual - so someone who is in a similar situation. The most common example is interacting with other people who experience food insecurity or who use food access programs.
- \* **Verbal communication.** Activities of this type are those where someone is conversationally communicating about food access and sharing information or ideas.





## Accessibility

An evaluation of how accessible a participatory opportunity is to different people. Helps us understand who might be excluded from existing participatory opportunities. Patterns of exclusion help focus efforts towards filling gaps. There are two aspects to the dimension.

**Potential limitations of access.** Things that limit access to a participatory opportunity. Potential limitations, which need to be considered because they could be mitigated based on the specific design of the activity.

- \* Transportation requirements
- \* Language requirements (only accessible to people who speak certain languages)
- \* Required ability (reading, writing, physical mobility)
- \* Prerequisite knowledge (need to know something)
- \* Technology requirements
- \* Financial requirements
- \* Lack of childcare
- \* Comfort sharing in social settings
- \* Lack of time/energy
- \* Negative feelings (shame, fear, discomfort, concerns about appearing ungrateful)
- \* The specific times the activity is offered
- \* Proximity (how close someone is to it)

**Level of accessibility.** Captures how inclusive a program is and generally what proportion of people can use it.

- \* High - most or all people should be able to engage in the participatory opportunity
- \* Medium - some people are able to engage in the participatory opportunity, but some people are not able
- \* Low<sup>7</sup> - few people are able to engage in the participatory opportunity. It may be targeted in some way to specific people.

---

<sup>7</sup> It's not necessarily bad for a participatory opportunity to have low access. It could mean that a program is targeted to meet the needs of a specific group of people. However, it could be problematic if too many opportunities have low accessibility.



## Availability

Describes how readily available a participatory opportunity is for people. It addresses questions such as: Can someone start participating at any time? Is the opportunity only available at certain times (e.g., an annual survey or monthly activity)? Is the opportunity only going to be available at a single time and then no longer available?

There are two facets to availability, which we believe should be considered as separate dimensions of participatory opportunities.

**Frequency of availability.** How often a participatory is available for people to be involved.

- \* Consistently available
- \* Available at a regular interval (weekly, monthly, yearly)
- \* Available on an irregular basis (offered occasionally, available whenever there is time)
- \* Available with sufficient demand
- \* Only available once (something prevents it from ever being available again)

- \* Not planned to be available again (was available at some point, but there is no intention for it be made available again. However, it could, technically, be made available again)

**Specificity of availability.** Some things are available only at a specific time (e.g., at 3 pm on September 25, 2018), during a narrow time frame (within at most a few hours), during a broad time frame (on a specific day or week), during hours of operation, or at any time.



## Reciprocity

Describes the ways participatory opportunities can give back to the people who are involved. Types of reciprocity include:

- \* **Direct tangible.** These benefits have monetary value and go directly to people who participate. The most common form of tangible reciprocity is monetary - providing people some form of financial benefit for their participation, such as a gift card or cash. There are also other forms of tangible reciprocity, including meals or ready to eat

food, groceries, recipes, and transportation benefits.

- \* **Indirect.** Benefits that do not go directly to people who participate. Indirect reciprocity relates to how participation helps to improve programs, and therefore, people's participation can ultimately benefit them through having improved resources. There is not a one-to-one relationship between their

participation and the benefit, but their participation played a role in improving services, which they could benefit from.

- \* **Emotional.** Folks who participated in our research also suggested that participation would have an emotional benefit by reducing stigma and guilt around using resources and increasing their sense of ownership. People could also feel

positive about giving back or helping others.

- \* **Social.** Public acknowledgment of their contribution (if they feel comfortable with it), and the ability to build relationships or meet new people.
- \* **Skill/knowledge development.** Learning or improving skills and/or access to additional leadership or personal growth opportunities.



## Transparency

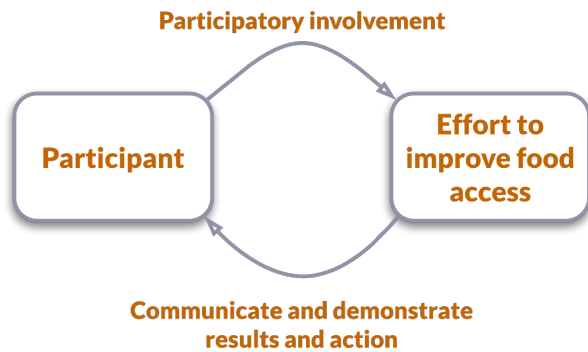
The extent to which participants can understand the impact of participatory opportunities. When people participate, they are giving their time, energy, and resources, and so it makes sense that they want to know what comes of their involvement. From our research, it is clear that people want accountability from organizations to take action based on their participation.

One way to think about transparency is as a feedback loop. When people participate, they are providing input into efforts to improve food insecurity. Whoever is leading those efforts should, in turn, provide feedback to participants about what came of their participation. This closes the loop of input and output of participation (see figure below).

Level of transparency can be viewed as a spectrum ranging from *no transparency*, where there is no mechanism for sharing the outcomes of people's participation, to *complete transparency*, where people readily access detailed, up-to-date information about the outcomes of a participatory opportunity.

An example of the *no transparency* side of the spectrum would be a survey conducted by a food access program where they never share any of the survey results or the actions taken based on it. The program keeps the results internally and does not communicate the changes they are making, if any, based on the results. An example of the *complete transparency* side of the spectrum would be a survey conducted by a food access program where they put up public displays and create flyers showcasing the results of the survey soon after the survey closes and the actions they plan to take based on the results. They also send emails or text messages with results to anyone who completed the survey and provided

their contact information for follow-up. As progress is made on those actions, the program shares updates in a variety of forms and people can contact them through a well-publicized phone number or email about it.



In the *middle*, there might be a situation where findings from a survey are posted and handed out to people, but the ongoing progress made to address any identified issues is not communicated to outside of the group that conducted the survey. To increase the transparency of this project, a team might consider different ways of sharing the findings such as emails, text messages, media outlets, or hosting lunches or dinners where they present to interested people. They could also provide survey participants the chance to sign up for a monthly update about actions taken to address the issues the survey identified. In that way, they are communicating regularly about the impact of participating in the survey.

Transparency does not apply only to participatory opportunities focused on people providing their feedback on services (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups); it applies to all forms of participation. Transparency can apply to situations where people are in workshops brainstorming and designing new ideas for improved food access by sharing monthly updates about what is being done with their ideas with them and attributing any changes to them. It also applies to on-the-ground volunteerism, such as participating by sorting food, where people who are involved could learn about who received the food they sorted and gain an understanding of how their involvement positively impacted the quality of food.

With transparency, it is essential to consider *who* the program is transparent to. As a general rule of thumb, we should prioritize transparency with the people who participated and should aspire to transparency to a broader audience such as everyone who uses a program, communities who might be affected by outcomes of the participatory activities, or the broader community. In some cases, it may not be appropriate to communicate action and outcomes outside the people who participated, especially if the information is sensitive.



## Tools

Tools are things that enable and facilitate participation. Some tools help to reduce or overcome barriers to participation, such as a car or bus pass reducing the barriers of transportation and living far from where a participatory opportunity is taking place. Other tools are required for a specific activity. For example, a paper survey would require paper and pen/pencil for a person to complete; or if someone is making phone calls to raise awareness of food resources, they would need a phone to complete those calls.

From our research, we identified three primary roles for tools, which include:

- ✱ **Supporting the performance of participation.** Tools can enable people to carry out the activities of some participatory opportunity. Ex: using a mobile phone to provide feedback.
- ✱ **Increasing access to participation.** Tools can make it easier and open up opportunities to a broad range of people. Ex: transportation to physical spaces where participatory activities are taking place; cash helps offset the costs of participation; websites or phones can help people participate from their homes. In that way, some tools increase access to participation by opening up different forms of participation that meet different people's needs.
- ✱ **Increasing the comfort of participation.** Tools can make participation more pleasant, and help people feel welcome and included throughout the process — food and cash show appreciation for giving time. We observed in our workshops that food was a source of joy, appreciation, and community. Research participants prepared

food, which they brought to share with others during the workshop, creating a sense of closeness and community among the group.

In exploring different tools for participation in our research, there is an openness to using technology as part of participation, such as leveraging phones, websites, and computers for participation. However, this is not for everyone, and we found that there is an overall preference for participatory experiences that do not use technology, like filling out surveys or feedback cards with paper and pen, word of mouth for raising awareness and having conversations. Organizations should leverage technological tools to create new avenues and forms of participation, while still ensuring there are plenty of opportunities that leverage more traditional modes of participation.

### ***Different tools for participation***

Research participants identified 21 distinct tools that would be useful in supporting their participation with efforts to improve food access. [Appendix D](#) lists all of those tools, information about their role in participation (i.e., supporting performance, supporting access, providing comfort).

## Applying the dimensions of participatory opportunities

The dimensions can be applied to any participatory opportunity - from an initial idea to an existing program. To do so, a team would select a specific opportunity and assess how the opportunity maps to each dimension. In this way, the dimensions can be used to critique an existing opportunity or review the design of a new activity to identify any concerns.

Below are some examples of how the dimensions could be applied to two different ideas. Opportunity 1 is higher level and less specific, while opportunity 2 is detailed and contains more specifics.

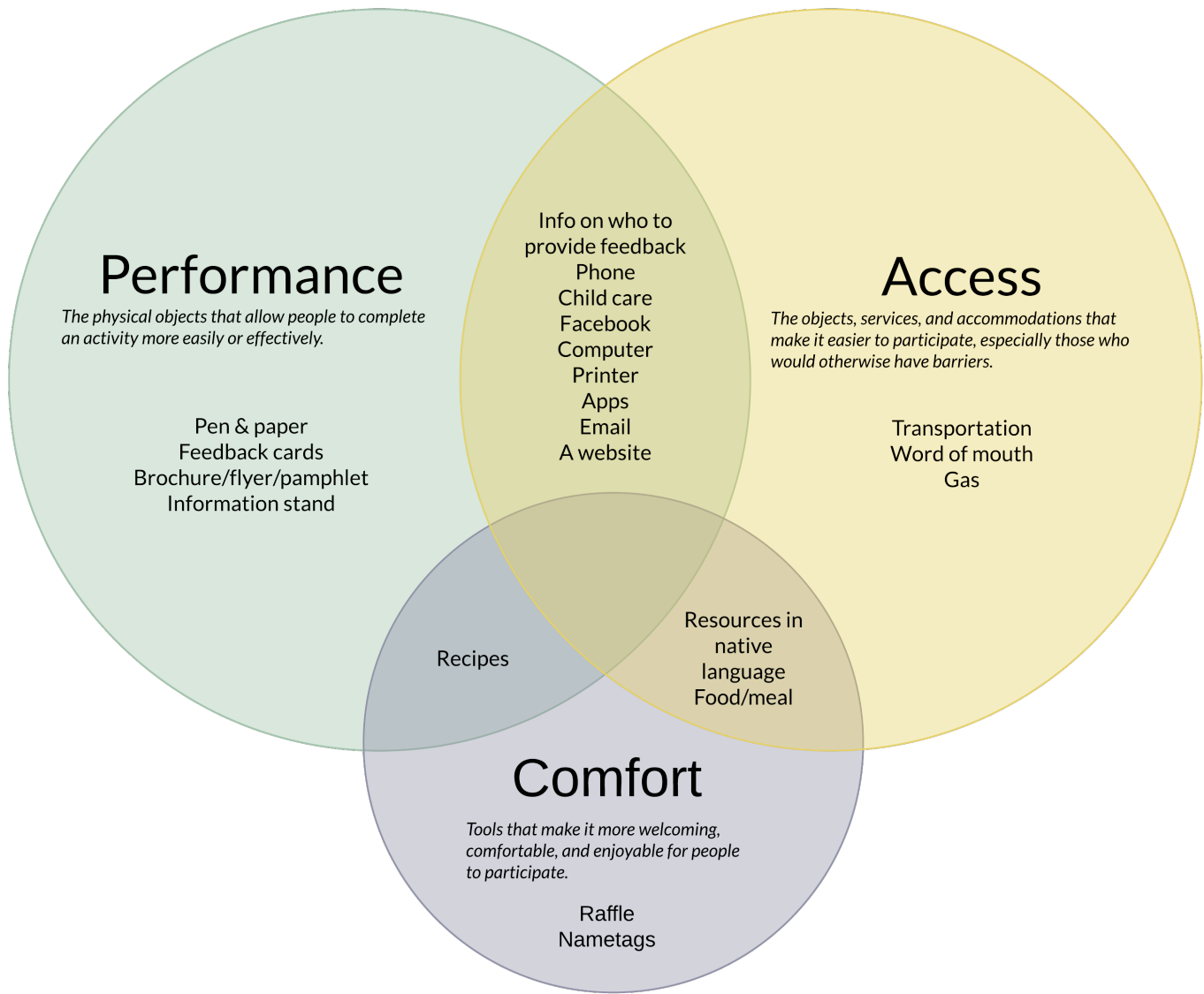
<b>OPPORTUNITY 1: HIGH LEVEL</b>	
<p>Pantry clients write down thoughts on open-ended feedback cards about how to improve the services of food available, which are made available at all times at the food pantry. The cards are offered in English and Spanish. A summary of common issues and associated actions are posted monthly in the pantry.</p>	
<b>Commitment</b>	None
<b>Location</b>	Specific location - Food pantry
<b>Domains</b>	Programmatic evolution
<b>Activity</b>	Thought-based, Written
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Consistently available
<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	During hours of program operation
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Indirect
<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate for pantry clients and staff/volunteers
<b>Accessibility</b>	Medium to High for pantry clients, Low for non-clients who are unlikely to be going there already
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Transportation requirements (need to get to the pantry), Language requirements (only available in English and Spanish), Required ability (reading and writing), Lack of time (focused on getting food, may have limited time at pantry), negative feelings (concerns about people seeing them filling out a card, don't want to be ungrateful)

## OPPORTUNITY 2: DETAILED

Attend an interactive workshop for a few hours at a time to discuss ways to improve food access.

<b>Commitment</b>	One time (unless a workshop series)	<b>Location</b>	Specific location - A non-private space large enough to facilitate people moving around and posting things on the wall
<b>Domains</b>	Depends on the workshop topic, potentially could touch on all domains	<b>Activity</b>	Thought-based (ideation), Social, Verbal
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	'Available on an irregular basis' or 'Only available once' depending on offering additional workshops in the future	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	Specific time
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Direct tangible (if incentive, food, or transportation offered), Social (meeting others), Indirect (if outputs used to improve food access), Emotional, Skill/ knowledge development (depending on structure and activities)	<b>Transparency</b>	Depends on the action plan for the results
<b>Accessibility</b>	Low to medium - a few hours is a significant commitment and a workshop format may be uncomfortable for some		
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Lack of time, participant availability, transportation requirements, comfort sharing in social settings, lack of childcare, language requirements (each workshop would be offered in one language at a time),		

# Appendix D. Tools to Support Participation Identified During our Research





## Appendix E. Scenarios of Participation

### RAISING AWARENESS OF RESOURCES AND HEALTHY BEHAVIORS AMONG PEERS

- \* I would share information about transportation resources frequently, via word of mouth, in order to raise awareness about the available resources.
- \* I would like to create awareness in the community about sugar consumption. This would give me a chance to volunteer and be heard and, ultimately, to change regulations. I could do this once a month on Friday afternoons.
- \* Food access organizations, nutritionists, and people engaging in participatory opportunities could set up information centers every month/during weekends in stores/grocery stores to share information to increase awareness and knowledge about resources available in the community.
- \* I would make phone calls to different people to let people who might be eligible to use resources know about the food access resources in the community.
- \* I would talk to people at the Farmers Market, church, in my neighborhood, local farms, community gardens, and BHP to let them know where they can go to go for food access resources.
- \* I would help the farmer's market share resources available in the community.

### SHARING AND DISCUSSING IDEAS WITH PEERS AROUND FOOD ACCESS

- \* I would attend interactive workshops for a few hours at a time (3-4 hours) to discuss ways to improve food access.
- \* I would like to share ideas and information about communal cooking and food storage. Myself and others could discuss opportunities to improve communal cooking and food storage for people who need it.
- \* I would share recipes at the food pantry to improve the quality of food for people. This would improve the quality of food for people because they would have ideas on how to use ingredients and prepare new foods.

## PROVIDING FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATING WITH PROGRAMS ABOUT FOOD ACCESS

- \* I would like to fill out surveys, send text messages, or make phone calls to provide feedback.
- \* I, with other people involved, would like to talk to people who can influence systems to create systems change and changes in SNAP benefits with the food stamp office.
- \* Myself and other people who experience food insecurity could have dialogues with organizations at the Food Pantries once a month. For example, on Friday, afternoons. We could share these conversations and the outcomes of them with the community at large using brochures.
- \* Someone who uses a program could periodically share their story of how they work through shopping with benefits with the WIC office at the grocery store, so they can understand how to make shopping easier with benefits.
- \* Get together during the weekends at the food pantry and share a meal/snacks to create new programs and help decide how programs should spend their money, to improve services in the food pantries.
- \* Share what I think and my ideas, to improve the quality and quantity of food, by writing it down on a paper survey or sending a text message.
- \* I would write down thoughts and ideas on feedback cards at the food pantry to improve the services and the quality of food available.
- \* I would write down thoughts and ideas on feedback cards at a food pantry to improve the quality of food available.
- \* I would share recipes at the food pantry to improve the quality of food available.

## TAKING ACTION DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH FOOD ACCESS

- \* I would volunteer in my housing site or neighborhood once or twice per week to dispose of trash and keep my community clean when BFR brings food.
- \* I would like to volunteer and work with people in charge of programs to sort the food before offering it at the food pantry or my community center (primarily in reference to BFR food drops at community centers).
- \* I would like to volunteer at the Food Pantry once a month or every week, for example, every Tuesday morning, to volunteer as a translator or interpreter.
- \* I would volunteer every few months at the food pantry.

## TAKING ACTION ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD ACCESS

- \* I would work to raise wages.
- \* In my neighborhood or at the Health Center, I could help as an interpreter/ translator to raise funds for programs to improve food access, which would ultimately improve the quantity and quality of food. In that way, food access could be easier for me and others.
- \* I would like to work with grocery stores to reduce the cost of food.
- \* I would like to research facts and write down thoughts and ideas at home to change policies.
- \* I would like to ensure resources being provided at my children's schools and in the community, in general, are in my native language. Someone in my family could help to do this.

## Appendix F. Measures of Success

Organizations can use measures of success to identify areas of opportunity to increase participation and to evaluate their ongoing progress towards becoming more participatory. The following are different types of measures organizations can leverage.

In addition to leveraging these measures within individual organizations, they can be applied across organizations or at a community-level. For example, multiple organizations might come together to conduct a community-wide assessment of food service participation by surveying of residents who access any services in the community. They could use different measures described below for this assessment.

### OBSERVED PARTICIPATION

These measures aim to summarize the extent to which participation is taking place and the level of participation taking place.

- ✱ **Participation rate.** The proportion of people involved in some form of participatory activity around food access. Although this measure is conceptually straightforward, there is a nuance in how it is calculated and, from that, how it should be interpreted. Participation rate can be calculated for a specific participatory opportunity, a food access program or organization (e.g., a food pantry, the SNAP program), or for the entire community (i.e., across everyone in Boulder experiencing food insecurity).
- ✱ **Access to Participation.** The proportion of people who have access to a participatory opportunity. Barriers to access, such as time of day, time commitments, and required skills (see the [Accessibility dimension](#) in [Appendix C](#) for more limitations of access), prevent people from having access. It is important to assess the extent to which people have access to at least some participatory opportunities and then work to grow this.  $X/Y$  where X is the number of people who have meaningful access to participation opportunities and Y is the number number of people who use a program
- ✱ **Participation retention.** The likelihood that people continue to participate after having participated for the first time. If people find their experiences valuable and meaningful, then they will want to return. Retention, therefore, is a good measure of whether the opportunities being offered are meeting people's needs, interests, and expectations.
- ✱ **Level of participation.** The average level of participation across all people. Simply put, this is the number of times, on average, people participate. This can be based on only those people who have participated, as to avoid conflation with participation rate and access to participation. In that context, this measure would be interpreted as: of the people who participate, how much do they participate?

## PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS AROUND PARTICIPATION

In addition to measuring the participation that occurs, it is also meaningful to measure people's perceptions and beliefs around the participatory opportunities they have.

- \* **Perceived access to participatory opportunities.** This measure relates to the extent to which people feel like they have access to opportunities to participate. This includes their *awareness of opportunities*, their *self-efficacy around participating*, and their *perceived level of inclusion* (whether they feel welcome to participate in those opportunities).

## PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS AROUND ORGANIZATIONS

Because participation is a means to build relationships between organizations and folks in the community, understanding people's beliefs around organizations is valuable. Organizations should aim to increase positive perceptions and beliefs about their organizations and the way that they operate.

- \* **Perceived control and ownership.** The level of influence or control that people who participate feel they have over their experience with the organization (influence on decisions, resources available, how they engage with the organization). People want to feel like they have control over their lives and a sense of ownership over the resources they use. Strong participatory structures will lead to a greater sense of control and ownership for people. We want people to feel more like owners and contributors instead of users and clients.
- \* **Perceived transparency.** How transparent they feel a food access organization is around their programs, decisions, and financial activities. It also includes people feeling like they know who makes decisions and whom to talk to when they have a problem, question, or feedback. As opportunities for participation increase, people will feel like organizations are being more open to listening and transparent about what they are doing.
- \* **Trust.** Having a high level of trust with clients is very important. Our research found that trust was a major factor in determining whether a person would engage with a food resource or not. Because of that, ensuring that people have a high level of trust is important. Effective participation should increase trust because it increases program participant involvement and transparency into the organization.

## FOOD ACCESS

One of the primary goals of participation is to meet the food access needs of the community better and, ultimately, to improve food access and the experiences people have in accessing food. Because of that, it is important to consider measures related to food access to evaluate existing participatory structures.

- \* **Needs being met.** This measure relates to whether people feel their needs are being met through the programs they use. If organizations are effectively engaging people by both getting their input and acting upon it, then organizations will be better serving the needs of those people, and that will be reflected in how well the organization meets their needs.
- \* **Negative feelings around using services to access food.** In our research, we found that people often have complex negative feelings around using food access programs. These feelings include guilt, shame, helplessness, embarrassment, among others. We also found that participating - giving back and contributing to the system - helps reduce feelings of negativity around food access. Measuring this is important because good participatory structures should lead people to feel more positive about their ongoing engagement with food access programs.
- \* **Quality of food.** People who attended our design workshops conveyed that one of their primary goals for participating with food access programs was to contribute towards improving the quality of food. An objective measure of food quality would allow organizations to assess whether participation is having a meaningful impact on one of the most important participation outcomes.
- \* **Resource awareness.** Some people who were involved with our design workshops discussed wanting to help raise awareness of the resources that exist as a way to participate in improving food access.
- \* **More people accessing food.** More participatory programs lead to programs that better meet the needs of people using the program, and potentially, people who could use the program but do not. This will lead to increased program use.
- \* **Individuals having better access to food.** Overall, as organizations are able to gain input and participation from the people involved in their program, they should be able to better respond to their needs and improve food access.

## ORGANIZATIONAL

Healthy participatory structures should help organizations feel closer to the people they work with. Through participation, organizations will gain greater insights into the needs of their community and feel more confident in reacting to those needs. Organizations can collect data related to their staff and volunteers to get a sense of whether the efforts are improving the capabilities of their staff and volunteers.

- \* **Staff/volunteer/board understanding of people they work with.** How well people in the organization feel like they know the people they are serving and understand their needs. This includes awareness of needs and the level of confidence people have that they understand the people they serve.
- \* **Proportion of staff/volunteers who connect directly with clients.** As organizations increase the number and breadth of participatory opportunities, clients will be involved in more areas of the organizations increasing, the number of staff who connect directly with them.

## Appendix G: Boulder Food Rescue's Participation Inventory

### SHARE FEEDBACK

BFR participants share their feedback about the program. Feedback can be provided through a variety of methods - phone, text, email, feedback forms, in person, and annual surveys.

<b>Commitment</b>	None	<b>Location</b>	From home, At a program
<b>Domains</b>	Programmatic evolution	<b>Activity</b>	Thought-based, Written, Verbal
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Available at regular intervals or available at irregular intervals	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	At any time
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Improve the program	<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate to complete
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Language requirements (only available in English and Spanish), negative feelings or perceived possible negative implications of offering negative feedback		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 200+

### CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

BFR participants contribute content to the newsletter. This could be an event notice, a recipe, a personal feature, or other content.

<b>Commitment</b>	One time	<b>Location</b>	From anywhere
<b>Domains</b>	Hands-on contribution	<b>Activity</b>	Written, Thought-based
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	One time commitment or regular consistent intervals	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	Available at anytime
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional, Skill / knowledge development	<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	This is definitely more accessible with internet and email access. Could be written on a hard copy and transcribed.		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 2



## DELIVER FOOD

BFR participants deliver food to their own community or to other recipient sites.

**Commitment** Long term

**Location** At food donor, On a bike or in a car, At recipient site

**Domains** Hands-on contribution

**Activity** Physical, Social

**Frequency of Availability** Available at regular intervals or available on at irregular intervals

**Specificity of Availability** 7 days a week, 12 hours per day. 6am-7pm

**Transparency** Moderate

**Reciprocity** Physical, Social

**Accessibility** Low to medium

**Potential Limitations to Access** Must be able to either drive or haul food on a bike, access to car or transportation to get to bike and trailer site, able bodiedness to lift and carry boxes, access to phone or email

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 4

## SERVE ON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board members are responsible for maintaining bylaws, advising and setting long-term goals and strategy, fundraising, and short-term and long-term financial management of the organization.

**Commitment** Long term

**Location** At a meeting place

**Domains** Governance, Fiscal, Programmatic evolution

**Activity** Social, Thought-based

**Frequency of Availability** Requires regular intervals for meetings and also flexible work between meetings

**Specificity of Availability** During meetings

**Transparency** Complete

**Reciprocity** Emotional, Social, Skill / knowledge development, Improve programs

**Accessibility** Low

**Potential Limitations to Access** Participant must be able to make meetings, food, childcare, language interpretation and translation, transportation, accessibility of meeting spaces, welcoming and inclusive space

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 1

## GROCERY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Participants coordinate and lead food redistribution in their own community. They complete organizational and direct volunteering roles, or delegate those roles to other volunteers.

<b>Commitment</b>	Long term	<b>Location</b>	At the food redistribution site
<b>Domains</b>	Hands-on contribution , Relationship building, Governance, Programmatic evolution	<b>Activity</b>	Physical, Social, Thought-based
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Requires frequent, Regular intervals.	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	Available for hours at a time consistently when deliveries happen.
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional, Social, Skill / knowledge development, Improve the program	<b>Transparency</b>	Complete
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Requires large blocks of time to be available and in public spaces; physical ability is helpful, but not required if other volunteers are able to do physical tasks.	<b>Accessibility</b>	Low

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 21

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE RECIPE BOOK

BFR participants contribute a recipe to a participant-sourced recipe book.

<b>Commitment</b>	One time	<b>Location</b>	From anywhere
<b>Domains</b>	Hands-on contribution	<b>Activity</b>	Written
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	One time commitment	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	Available at anytime
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional	<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	This is definitely more accessible with internet and email access. Could be written on a hard copy and transcribed.		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 33

## SERVE ON PARTICIPANT ADVISORY BOARD

BFR participants advise on important decisions BFR staff and board make. This is accomplished through recruitment, commitment, and program staff reaching out to members of the Participant Advisory Board when important decisions are being made.

<b>Commitment</b>	Long term	<b>Location</b>	From home or where they get food, Phone, Coffee shop (according to preference)
<b>Domains</b>	Governance, Programmatic evolution	<b>Activity</b>	Thought-based, Written or verbal
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Irregular and infrequent intervals	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	Available at anytime
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional, Social, Skill / knowledge development, Improve programs	<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Participant must have access to phone, email, or another way to connect with program staff.		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 7

## GROCERY PROGRAM VOLUNTEER

Assist the Grocery Program Coordinator in a variety of food redistribution tasks including receiving the bicycle delivery volunteer, contacting neighbors, organizing the delivery, and clearing up after the redistribution

<b>Commitment</b>	Short to long term, could be sporadic.	<b>Location</b>	At the food redistribution site
<b>Domains</b>	Hands-on contribution	<b>Activity</b>	Physical, Social
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Requires frequent, Regular intervals.	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	Available for hours at a time consistently when deliveries happen.
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional, Social, Improve the Program	<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Requires large blocks of time to be available and in physical spaces, physical ability is helpful but not require for all tasks.		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 20-30

## TALK ABOUT YOUR WORK WITH BFR

BFR participants talk with people not directly involved with BFR about their work with BFR or how BFR impacts their food access. Historically, Grocery Program Coordinators have talked about their organizing work at events.

<b>Commitment</b>	One time	<b>Location</b>	At an event, Could be recorded or written from anywhere
<b>Domains</b>	Fiscal	<b>Activity</b>	Social, Emotional
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Requires irregular, Infrequent intervals	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	During an event; could be more flexible if filmed, recorded, or written
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional, Social	<b>Transparency</b>	Moderate
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Participant has to be willing to talk to an unfamiliar audience and be somewhat vulnerable, willing to identify themselves as a participant		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 1

## BRING A DISH TO PASS AT AN EVENT

BFR participants make and bring a dish to pass at a community meal or other event.

<b>Commitment</b>	One time	<b>Location</b>	From home, At an event
<b>Domains</b>	Hands-on contribution	<b>Activity</b>	Physical, Social
<b>Frequency of Availability</b>	Available at irregular intervals, could be frequent or infrequent	<b>Specificity of Availability</b>	At any time, but immediately before or at the beginning of an event
<b>Reciprocity</b>	Emotional, Social	<b>Transparency</b>	Complete
<b>Potential Limitations to Access</b>	Requires access to food, kitchen, cooking tools, possibly transportation to transport food to the event. Physical mobility / dexterity to cook.		

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 5-10

## JOIN BIKE MAINTENANCE TEAM

BFR participants join bike maintenance team. Those with less maintenance skills and experience can join the Tools and Tires Team, performing routine bicycle maintenance, making small adjustments, fixing flats, filling bike tires with air, lubing chains. Those who are more experienced or skilled can perform more complicated repairs like repairing and replacing components, making complicated adjustments, and diagnosing and troubleshooting bicycle malfunctions.

**Commitment** Long term

**Location** In the field at food donor sites where bikes are stored, At the bike co-op

**Domains** Hands-on contribution

**Activity** Physical, Thought-based

**Frequency of Availability** Available at regular intervals or available short notice at irregular intervals.

**Specificity of Availability** At any time

**Transparency** Moderate

**Reciprocity** Emotional, Social, Skill / knowledge development, Improve the program

**Accessibility** Low

**Potential Limitations to Access** Physical ability to work on bikes required, knowledge of bike maintenance or bike repair required, own transportation required, email and internet access required

**Participant Engagement in 2017** 0

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our utmost appreciation to the research participants who contributed their experiences and expertise to this project.

Special thanks to Ingrid Castro-Campos and Joel Marquez for their numerous research contributions leading to the creation of this framework; Diana Alvarado for interpretation and translation; Jill Strange, Rachel Arndt, and Amelia Hulbert of Boulder County Public Health for feedback and workshop support; Sarah Ditton for feedback and contributions on executive summary and accompanying toolkit; and to all of the agencies and organizations willing to leverage their relationships to support our outreach efforts for this project. Layout and design of this report created by Becks Boone.

