

NKH: Survey Results

Introduction

In January 2011 the No Kid Hungry Campaign of Arkansas launched an online survey to collect information from the agencies serving children around the state. More than 250 agencies responded to the survey, giving the campaign a wealth of information about what is working to feed kids, where agencies need support, and how with support, they can serve more children and families.

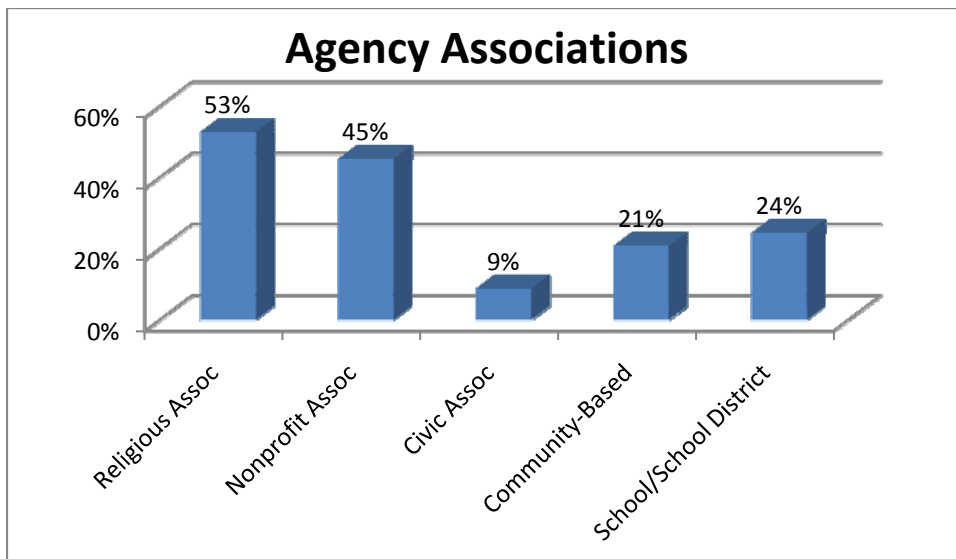
The survey was distributed through the members of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance (AHRA), the Rice Depot, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Volunteerism, Coop Extension, and other individuals connected to feeding agencies. Representatives from organizations that feed children had the option to complete the survey online or to submit a paper version through the mail or fax. Most survey respondents were associated with the organizations listed above, though there were a number of responses that could not be linked back those groups. The agencies included food pantries, churches, schools, after-school programs, shelters and other types of organizations.

About the Agencies

The survey first collected some basic information about agencies including their location, the types of networks they are connected to, and how well they felt they were currently meeting the needs of the population they serve. The responses came from all areas of the state, creating a better understanding of who is doing this important work and what they are facing each day.

Associations within communities

The survey asked that respondents identify the types of networks with which they are associated. Since the campaign would learn about associations with food banks through separate data collection, the survey focused on identifying other networks, including religious associations, nonprofit associations, civic associations, community-based associations, and schools or school districts. The chart below shows the percentage of agencies that reported affiliation with each type of association:

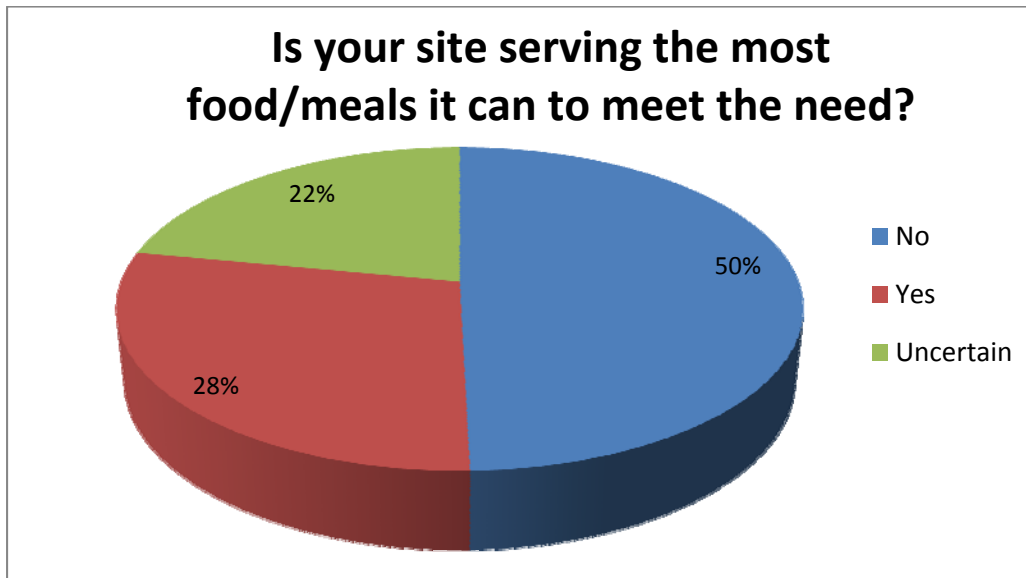


More than half of the agencies that participated in the survey reported that they were connected to a religious association. However, this percentage may not be accurate as many surveys were completed by churches that did not indicate a religious association. Thus, it is believed that the actual percentage of religious affiliated agencies is higher.

Almost half of the respondents reported being associated with nonprofit agencies and a quarter reported being associated with schools.

Meeting community need

Agencies were asked the following question: Do you believe that your site is serving the most food/meals it can to meet the needs of children in your community? Below are their responses.



This shows that about half of the agencies believe that there is more need in their community than they can currently meet, showing a perceived opportunity to do more.

What is Working

The survey provided an opportunity for agencies to report strategies they are using to feed kids in their community that they believe are successful and explain their effects on the children or the organization. The following themes were the most commonly reported as being effective at feeding children:

Getting the right food

Many respondents reported that they were finding success by focusing on getting the right food for kids. This included finding foods that were nutritious but also appealing to kids. They should be excited to eat the food and try new types of foods in the process. They should also not feel like they are being singled out from their peers because they eat food that is noticeably different. Pantries kept kids in mind as they stocked their shelves and made specific asks of the community when necessary. Multiple respondents reported that cereal drives were a specific program that worked well to provide excitement and nutrition when it comes to food.

“Try to make [the food] look good (children eat with their eyes. We use trays to divide food (they do not like food to touch). If trying something new, make sure there is something on the tray we know they like.”

Providing activities to attract/retain children

Many of the agencies that completed the survey provided food to kids in the context of other programming, such as day care, nutrition classes, after-school programs and residential services. These groups reported that these activities gave them access to children, allowing them to make sure the children got access to food. Some reported that participation in programs increased when they began to offer food. Other groups that are primarily focused on distributing food found that adding activities to their food offerings – such as playing games with children, giving books with food and offering tutoring services – got more kids to consistently access their services. There is also a sense that this interaction supports kids and makes them feel good about themselves.

“[Results include] children bonding relationships, kids learning to respect others at the table; kids sharing because they are concerned about each other having food to eat.”

Promoting services

Agencies associated increased participation in their programs with intentional efforts to promote their programs to children and families. This includes sending home fliers with kids, taking out advertisements in local papers, and encouraging word-of-mouth information sharing. Respondents noted that it was important to be consistent and meet expectations about what they have promoted. Similarly, some found that promoting their need for specific kid-friendly food increased donations at critical times.

“Getting the word out is the most important thing. Letting people know you are there and what you have to offer.”

Getting to know families

Many of the pantries that completed the survey reported that they found they could be more successful at feeding kids when they got to know their clients better. This was often a caveat to the fact that while the agency feeds kids through a family perspective, they are still trying to be mindful about children. Generally, by learning about the families, how many kids they have, what ages those kids are, and what additional types of assistance they need, the pantries could tailor their offerings. Many reported that they provided extra food to families with children or had snack-packs prepared to add to their pantry offerings.

“Talking to clients about their specific children and shifting appropriate non-FDA food to families. For example, knowing which families have infants and adding formula that has been donated.”

Backpack programs

Many survey respondents participated in backpack programs that they believed were important for keeping kids fed over the weekend. The comments on these programs had a lot to do with how they affected those who didn't take home the backpack – such

as siblings getting access to food or communities learning more about the hunger that exists there. However, there was concern with the amount of food that they were able to send home and having access to enough food for the program.

“I believe it helps with families at home. Usually older children won’t come forward and admit that they may need help when it comes to food.”

Partnerships

Similar to the responses related to providing activities, some agencies partnered with existing organizations to gain access to more food or to more needy children and families. These were school, nonprofit, and corporate sponsors. These programs are seen to connect food to people in need that meet them where they are.

“We have adopted a local health clinic that provides services to their clients.”

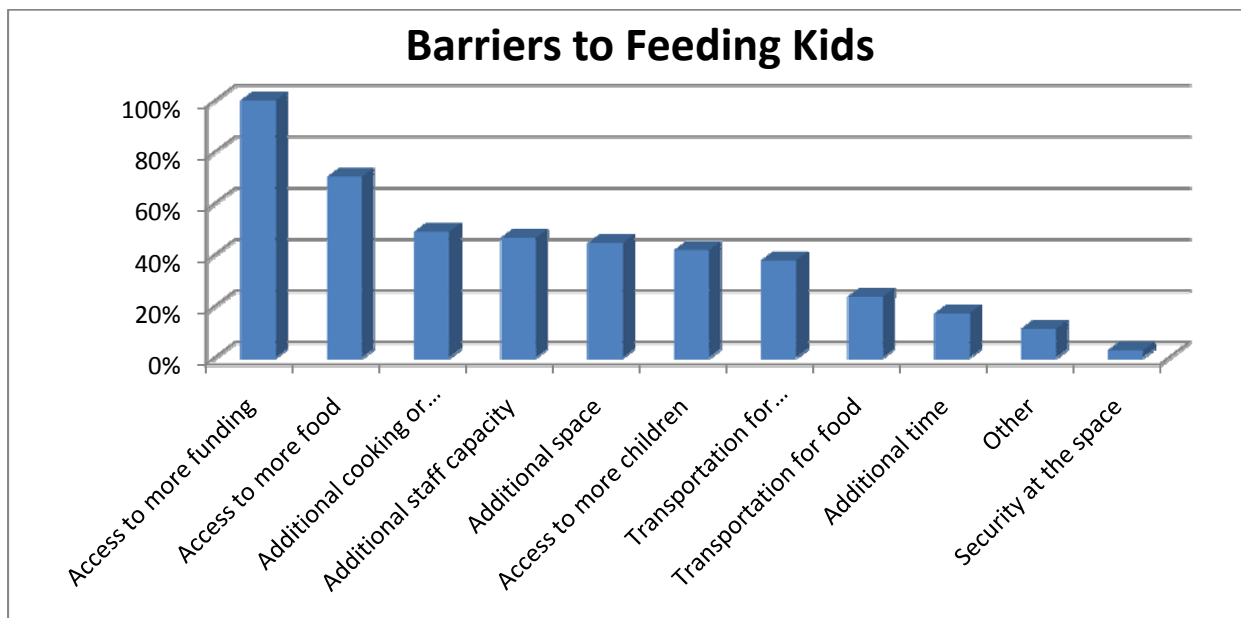
Other successful practices

Some other responses of successful practices include:

- Providing transportation for children to come get food
- Having extra food on hand to meet kids’ needs as they arise
- Giving clients choices about food to eat take from the pantry
- Having committed volunteers and staff who go above and beyond
- Providing information to get access to WIC and/or SNAP

Barriers to Success

The survey provided an opportunity for agencies to identify their top five barriers to success in priority order. The following chart shows each barrier listed and its relative importance compared to the most important barrier – in this case, access to more funding.



As the chart shows, access to funding is the greatest barrier perceived by agencies in Arkansas, being weighed 30% more important than the next greatest barrier, access to more food. It should be noted that access to more funding would allow agencies to address the other barriers listed without additional assistance.

The second most important barrier, access to more food, is reinforced by comments throughout the survey and anecdotes from agencies that they are having increased difficulty accessing food. This may be connected to the recession and decreasing food donations.

The following three barriers range between 49% and 44% importance – additional cooking or refrigeration equipment, additional staff capacity and additional space. These barriers relate to the actual space in which agencies serve children and the people who are working to provide these services (many of whom are volunteers). These barriers can be met through increased capital, including monetary, physical and human.

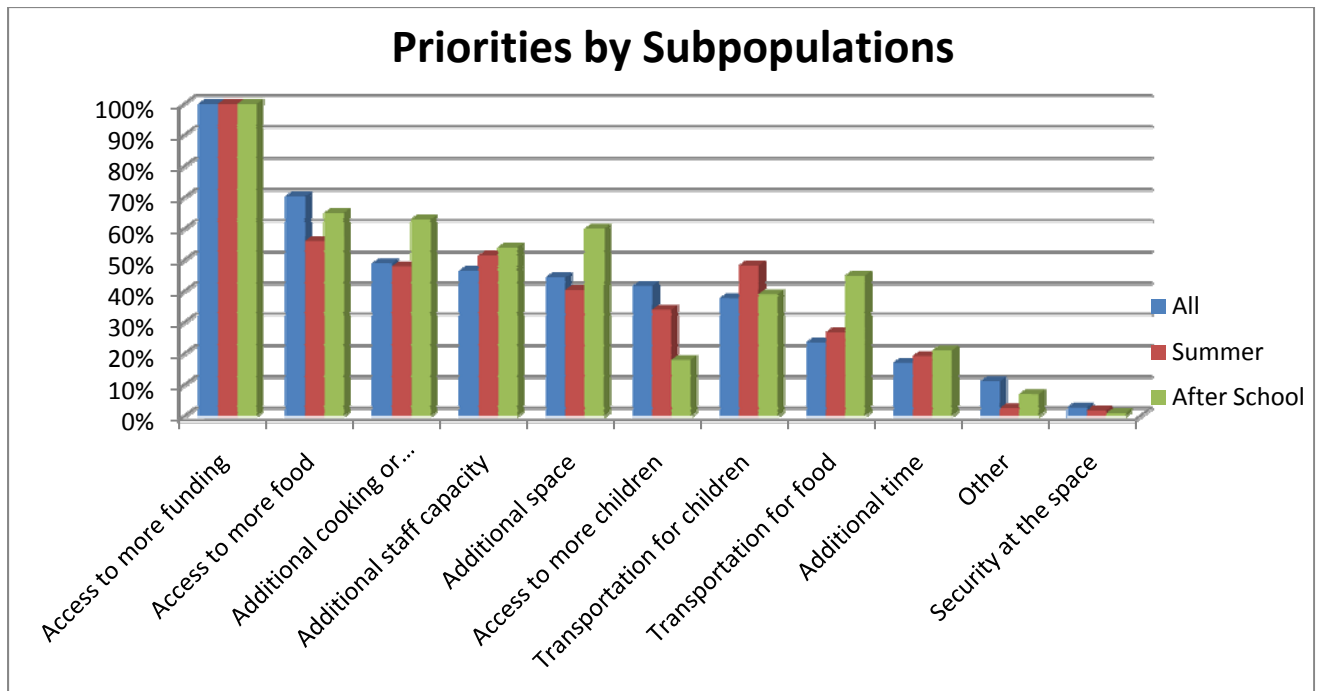
The next two barriers – access to more children and transportation for children – relate to making connections between children and services. The final four barriers are less than 25% of the importance of the first barrier, funding.

Summer feeding and after-school programs

The largest subpopulation within survey respondents were those already providing meals to kids during the summer months. There were also a number of groups already serving children after school. To better understand how these specific groups view the barriers to their success, you can see how their results compare to the larger populations’ results in the chart below:

Priorities	All		Summer		After School	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Access to more funding	1	100%	1	100%	1	100%
Access to more food	2	70%	2	56%	2	65%
Additional cooking or refrigeration equipment	3	49%	5	48%	3	63%
Additional staff capacity	4	47%	3	51%	5	54%
Additional space	5	44%	6	40%	4	60%
Access to more children	6	42%	7	34%	9	18%
Transportation for children	7	38%	4	48%	7	39%
Transportation for food	8	24%	8	27%	6	45%
Additional time	9	17%	9	19%	8	21%
Other	10	11%	10	3%	10	7%
Security at the space	11	3%	11	2%	11	1%

As the chart above shows, the order for priorities is generally consistent throughout the different populations. However, there are key areas of increased importance for the two subpopulations.



For the summer sites, there is a greater gap between funding as the most important barrier and all other barriers. This may be related to last summer’s increase in funds through a pilot project, showing summer food providers the increased services they can provide through additional funds. Additional staff capacity and transportation for children increased in their rank of priority, showing that they are considered a higher priority for summer feeding agencies.

Looking at the after-school feeding subpopulation, there is a higher priority placed on additional cooking or refrigeration equipment and additional space. There is also a lower priority indicated for needing to access more children. This may indicate that after-school programs have as many participants as they can serve, but lack the space and proper equipment to fully meet those needs.

Interest in Campaign Goals

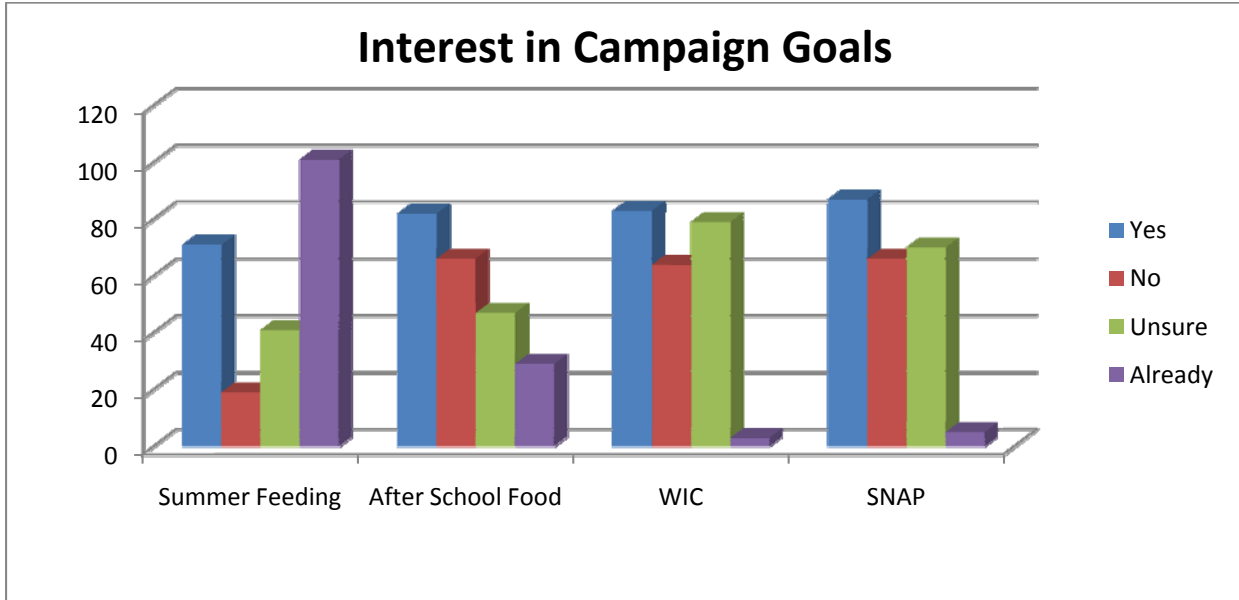
The campaign has already identified the need to increase summer feeding opportunities for kids and conduct WIC and SNAP outreach to get a higher percentage of eligible families in the program. The survey was created in the wake of new federal legislation allowing for after school meals, so while there was no coordinated effort underway to increase these types of programs, it seemed prudent to gauge interest in this area as well. To see opportunities for growth in these areas, the survey asked respondents if they have any interest in pursuing these strategies at their site. Below are the specific questions asked:

- With additional support such as funding, volunteers, food or training, would your site be interested in helping to feed kids over the summer months?
- With additional support such as funding, volunteers, food or training, would your site be interested in feeding kids after school during the school year?
- With additional support such as funding, volunteers or training, do you believe that your site could do WIC outreach?

- With additional support such as funding, volunteers or training, do you believe that your site could do SNAP (food stamp) outreach?

The survey also provided links to information about WIC and SNAP programs. However, the first two questions were left somewhat vague to gauge interest in the general ideas, rather than immediately concern agencies with the idea of government funded programs, which are often perceived as complicated and difficult to manage.

Below are the results for each question:



Summer feeding:

The responses for summer feeding show that this is the most common program that respondents are already providing in their community. It is also the program that the least number of respondents are uninterested in pursuing.

After-school food:

The results for after-school food show a stronger interest than disinterest in pursuing this type of program.

WIC & SNAP:

Very few organizations that took the survey are currently doing WIC & SNAP outreach. More than a third of organizations are interested in providing the service, a little less than a third are not interested, and about a third of organizations are uncertain.

The contact information for all of the organizations have been shared with the campaign and the appropriate agencies to follow up with immediate outreach.