



PB&J Fund

Strategic Plan: Preliminary Findings
Report
September 2021

the
spark mill
we make change possible

Description of The Spark Mill

We are a regional strategic planning firm based in Richmond, VA. Serving clients throughout Virginia, we offer services in strategic planning, organizational development, nonprofit sustainability, board facilitation, and community engagement. We've been helping a wide variety of clients, including nonprofits, government agencies, associations, and businesses flourish and live into their mission and vision since 2009. Our seven-member staff prides itself on recommending cost-effective and practical solutions with tangible action steps that can be implemented by the organization and/or agency.

The Process

We use creative methods to refine strategy and end with an actionable plan that is immediately useful to guide decisions. We work together with clients to design a process that meets the overall goals of the project. The exact steps and timeline are adaptable to your organization, culture, and expectations. We rely on a wide variety of resources and tools during our engagement, including interactive facilitation techniques, group-process dynamics, strategy development models, conflict resolution, financial modeling, and board governance best practices.

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Project Overview

Charge & Goal

In 2021, The Spark Mill was hired to guide the PB&J Fund in the development of a plan to become a more equitable organization. The project began with the Gather phase, gaining input and feedback from key stakeholders about building a foundational assessment to potential pathways for PB&J Fund to take in order to become more equitable going forward.

This is the summary findings of all the data collected during the Gather phase. The project now pivots to the Soak phase, where The Spark Mill will guide the Transformational Team in listening to stakeholder data and discerning how it will shape the organization's plan.

The last phase, and ultimate goal of this project, is to transform all of the knowledge gained into a summary of what we believe are options for PB&J Fund's trustees to consider for the organization.

Process

We began the project in February 2021 with a kick-off meeting with Executive Director, Alex London-Gross and MLG Foundation Executive Director, Emily Wempler. At this meeting, we discussed an overview of the process and began establishing key dates for the project. To move us forward, we established a transformational team to support the planning process with staff and external stakeholder engagement,

Transformational Team members included:

- Shannon Banks
- Angel Feero
- Nick Feggans
- Alex London-Gross
- Karina Monroy
- Allisson Pillow
- Barbara Yager

During our April transformation work team meeting, we determined which key stakeholder voices we needed to engage and how best to talk with them. Once the team created the stakeholder list, The Spark Mill began engaging stakeholders and gathering data.

Gather Overview

We gathered data from approximately 28 people working in or affected by food insecurity, using one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and a staff interview session. We also conducted an environmental scan of the Charlottesville and Albemarle area and reviewed internal documents including organizational and financial data to better assess PB&J as an organization. In the

appendix, at the end of this report, you will find a list of stakeholders, as well as interview questions.

Upon completion of gathering data from internal and external stakeholders, we began sifting through the data and identifying potential pathways to answer the strategic question, “How does PB&J become an equitable organization?”

Inside the Report

Organizational Assessment

This section will provide a space to acknowledge the current climate and external landscape that impacts the findings of Gather and the opportunities for transformations available to PB&J to become more equitable.

Strategic Questions

In this section, we examine the strategic question of how PB&J can become an equitable organization? In order to answer this, we must look at the potential opportunities for further developing the organization.

For each strategic question you will find a brief narrative along with supporting quotes. Items in quotes are direct quotes from interviews.

Landscape

Here we give an overview of the what food insecurity looks like in Charlottesville. It is critical to identifying gaps and barriers communities face in accessing healthy food, as well as the organizations working to combat food insecurity.

Community Choice

The intersection of food security and nutritional education must incorporate culturally relevant foods and multiple dietary options. In this section we lift up the voices of stakeholders sharing their observations on the impact choice can have on communities.

Moving Forward

Analyzing the feedback from the external stakeholders, transformational team, and staff interviews; we have identified potential opportunities for PB&J to consider as it moves forward and develops as an organization.

Organizational

The PB&J Fund was founded in 2008, when Mike and Ellen Geismar created the MLG Foundation and devoted their resources to low asset families with children who were experiencing food insecurity, with a focus on healthful eating. The organization is fully funded by the MLG Foundation and does no outside fundraising. There is a track record of volunteer and paid staff delivered services that have a good reputation among partners. The following is an overall assessment of the organization.

Decision Making

Final decisions must be approved by trustees of the MLG Foundation, there is no board or community involvement at the highest level of the organization. The shared leadership model between the Executive Director of the MLG Foundation and the Executive Director of the PB&J Fund lacks certainty around how decisions are made, and needs clarification of roles and responsibilities, especially around who is empowered to make decisions about budgeting and programming. In order to be a community-based organization, there must be a built-in structure that includes avenues for community ownership; this is typically done in a 501c3 through a board of directors, but there are other creative ways to ensure this if the structure of the organization does not become a 501c3.

Community Recognition

Many of the stakeholders we spoke with knew who PB&J was and some had an idea of the programs offered, but most did not have a comprehensive grasp on the work as a whole. In addition, since Charlottesville has so many organizations working on food insecurity there was a lack of knowledge of who provided what services, often confusing one organization for another, or most often not being invested in knowing *who* was providing the services as long as they were provided. While we think there is a lot to be said about the need for collaboration in Charlottesville and that joining together to do work is likely in the best interest of many community members, it is still a challenge that most people don't really know exactly who you are. The truth is, because you aren't required to fundraise with your current structure, it's not as necessary for you to tell your story compared to the many organizations who are required to work on raising funds. This has likely also had an impact on the data you collect and your metrics around outcomes, which staff shared could use some additional energy.

Funding Dynamics

While there are so many benefits to being fully funded by one foundation, there are also drawbacks including the limitation of potential fundraising for additional income, which could expand your work. The issue with a sole funder is also sustainability. When you are uncertain

about the future of your funding it is difficult to do forward thinking planning. However, it is important to mention that some of the partners you work with list this as one of the great things about working with you, because there is no competition for funding, it allows you to interact with the ecosystem of organizations working on similar goals with a unique perspective. If you did decide that you wanted to fundraise in the future, this is a dynamic that would need to be considered when making plans.

These are the big areas that provide important context in order to fully grasp the feedback we received through the Gather phase. The rest of the report will cover other important aspects of a healthy organization, such as equity and programming.

Strategic Question

The leaders of the PB&J Fund were called to answer the question “How does PB&J become an equitable organization?” through a transformational planning process. It is important to note that every step of this process has been led with intention, humility, and an openness that is truly remarkable and has allowed The Spark Mill to dig deep and ask hard questions.

It would be a mistake to not acknowledge that the work toward equity started long before this process did, and while this report should serve as a catalyst to powerful changes in the organization, it is only because there is a strong foundation to build upon that the work is able to continue. Stakeholders shared with us that PB&J had a rough start, with hard lessons learned, since then work has been done to build and develop trust in the community. Thirteen years later, stakeholders told us they believe PB&J is doing good and important work, and is offering programming that is respected and valued by those who are able to participate.

More than that, they believe PB&J is capable of so much more when it comes to equity. We received many insightful and thoughtful responses to how PB&J could work toward becoming an equitable organization, and when we asked if they thought it was possible to do, almost everyone believed it was. That doesn't mean the work won't be hard, which is no surprise to any of you.

The Staff Must Reflect the Community

The feedback almost always centered in the fact that the organization is run completely by white women and that many of the volunteers are also white people. If equity is the goal, it's important that your staffing, whether volunteer or paid, reflects the kids and families you are serving. However, it is important not to jump too far ahead and assume that hiring all new people will solve the problem.

The place to begin the work is in building relationships and trust and sharing power; this will shift PB&J to a place that will allow People of Color (POC) to thrive in leadership in the organization and not put them in the position to solve all the problems created by white culture. This work has already begun and will need to continue. Many stakeholders shared that they felt Alex is key to this transition; she is trusted and respected and can move the organization into being equitable. It should be noted that all members of the staff are in different places when it comes to their personal understanding of race equity and justice and that moving forward in the work to be equitable will require personal work from the staff as a whole.

“No, I do not believe PB&J is an equitable organization, however in the work they strive to do they strive to create an equitable environment. What does equity mean to me? It starts with values and mission making sure they speak to the diaspora of the community- who is at the table making the vision, making the mission, who is executing these and that all parts are inclusive.”

“I don’t know if they are equitable because I look at equity differently than other people. I don’t know how many people they hire from the neighborhood and how many people they might have hired that have been able to move up in the organization. When I say “the neighborhood” I don’t mean the middle-class Charlottesville, I mean the people they serve. When I look at equity, I look at paying people a living wage and also not stagnating them to where they can’t grow in the organization. I don’t know their day to day enough to say if they are or aren’t.”

“Really need us to have someone on staff who speaks Spanish.”

“The organizational staff is not diverse. I do think Alex is really invested and committed in racial equity, so that is exciting to see where that goes.”

“They have to hire POC. Develop a community advocate program to share across organizations, this has been a stairway to bringing residents on as actual staff.”

“People in PB&J aren’t Charlottesville natives—how much of a deep community can you have when you are a transplant?”

“In my time with them, I have never felt the need to code-switch.”

“Be honest about white fragility, especially in Charlottesville. They will hear a no, and they will crumble.”

“I don’t think of them as equitable from the staff, I don’t think that the board is. They are an organization that has a lot of money, they mean well for the community, but in terms of diversity and being equitable, there is work to be done on that front.”

“There are like 100 non-profits in the Charlottesville area and a good portion are run by white people, white women especially. That’s just par for the course in non-profit work. I can genuinely say Alex is out front as much as possible, without making herself the organization.”

“Alex can lead that work. Working at the speed of trust, you can’t just have good ideas.”

Equitable Programming

The programming also received some feedback when it comes to equity. First and foremost, there are a lot of questions around the location of your building. There are critiques that it is located in an area that is not geared toward low asset kids and their families. The recipes chosen also received some feedback, the need for more culturally relevant options were requested, spanning from refugees to Black families to immigrants.

“Our recipes should be written for children—simple language and terms, so they will be more accessible to people who are not English speaking.”

“PB&J shifted when it became a nonprofit... it looked like a nonprofit, but not based in the community with the Main Street headquarters. The evolution of a dedicated white group’s want to support something, and they are more excited about the idea than the people. This is my first large critique - West Main Street is so far from the community. This drives perceptions of what it is.”

“They have a really, really great start, but their location has impacted their programming.”

“Their work with the Boys & Girls Club is a good step in equity, but there is a limit to how many kids can join. There is a waiting list to join the Boys & Girls Club, those kids don’t get to participate. It would be cool if they could participate in programming directly with PB&J.”

“When I look at other programming related to nutrition, I don’t see a lot of diversity in the people doing that. Food is very cultural and there is something about the power dynamic of serving a community that doesn’t share the culture. I wonder what impact that has.”

“PB&J has done a great job at affecting food insecurity and education in the area. The word merger can be scary, but whatever direction they go in, I hope they still remain ‘PB&J’.”

“PB&J they are approaching this work from a way of curiosity and humility and desire to be different. I admire them, I will say that their original premise, pre-Alex, was “We know what food is nutritious and we know what is best and we are going to deliver the program.” I think that has shifted and its really about feeding people.”

Use Your Privilege

This process also made it clear that there are multiple definitions for what it means to be equitable, and where justice fits in to the equation. In order to move toward equity, some stakeholders believe you first have some questions to answers.

- Is your goal food sovereignty?
- Do you believe that wealth building within the community is a key to ending the dependency that low asset people have on community-led organizations to provide them with food?
- Is that your work to do?

Your stakeholders seem to believe there are ways to use your privilege and connections to move toward equity beyond the PB&J Fund. While stakeholders had opinions on these questions, when it comes down to it, PB&J is the only one who can answer where you stand and where is the best place for you to do your work.

“My impression has always been PB&J is very well-funded with family funders. I wonder would they be able to support initiatives to give money directly to people on the ground doing the work to address food insecurity? Maybe sponsor microgrants?”

“Are we trying to end hunger, or trying to help people lose weight—these are two different answers.”

“There are very few people that are facing food insecurity where that is their only issue. Housing issues, medical issues, medical bills. There is a need to address root causes and provide services that expand beyond just food.”

“Food banks in our community are well funded and have a specific focus, that over the past 40 years, 60 orgs in Charlottesville, and the disparity has not changed, it’s just not enough. But these people are counting on this food, but it’s also a replication of capitalistic systems to keep hungry people subordinate.”

“Food deserts in Charlottesville exist—having ready access to healthy consumption of foods on a daily basis. A food serving org is not going to be able to fix, or will need to shift in order to fix hunger. If people have adequate rest and time, they will cook meals at home whether they have money or not. A significantly broader lens is required.”

“Part of their plan should be about building a model for food sovereignty. I might think about shrinking their footprint and working with specific community and do deep community engagement to create shift for a single community that could be scalable and replicable.”

“Their value proposition is around healthy meals and nutrition and there’s a correlation of hunger and nutrition. But also, there’s food sovereignty/agency—is something available when I want it?”

“I think their donor has a lot of connections they could be leveraging to develop a whole funding consortium that could push us as a community over the top.”

“South Wood or Friendship Court—these are over examined neighborhoods. There should be larger upstream systems work—if this works for this small community across the lifespan, it can shift the way EBT or foodbanks are working that may provide some efficiencies.”

“What would a five-year plan to bring food sovereignty to Friendship Court [be or include]? Hold to the vision and expand to “we don’t know if this is right” staying curious. Be aspirational, be thinking about it in an iterative process.”

“Organizations struggle to contemplate ending or merging, it wouldn’t be my knee jerk response, when the mission isn’t fully aligned with what’s happening now. That’s why we have 50 organizations working on food but people are still hungry.”

Landscape

In order to truly understand what the next steps are for the PB&J Fund, we had to understand the landscape for food insecurity for kids and families in the Charlottesville area. There were countless organizations to track, but we did our best to weave together the areas that may be gaps and the barriers for access to healthful food. The sheer number of organizations was brought up in every single interview yet stakeholders wondered how there can still be people who are hungry? Food insecurity is a real thing in Charlottesville, but stakeholders have varying opinions on what that may look like in different communities.

Organizations Addressing Food Insecurity

Blue Ridge Area Food Bank	Ministerios Profeticos Palabra Viva
Boys & Girls Club	Buck Mountain Episcopal
Parks & Rec	Meals on Wheels of Charlottesville
Piedmont Community College	Effort Baptist Church
University of Virginia	Beaver Dam Baptist Church
Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry	North Gardens Ministries
PHAR	Crozet UMC
Emergency Food Network	Blue Ridge Presbyterian
Holy Comforter Catholic Church	Antioch Baptist Church
The Haven at First Market	Covesville Baptist Church
New Beginnings Christian Community	Midway Manor
The Salvation Army of Charlottesville	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Alliance for Interfaith Ministries	Local Food Hub
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlottesville	Sentara Starr Hill
Bethany Seventh Day Adventist Church	Trinity Episcopal
Church of Our Saviour Episcopal	City of Promise
Church of the Incarnation	Charlottesville City Public Schools
Jaba	Albemarle County Public Schools
Piedmont Housing Alliance	Move2Health Equity
IRC Charlottesville	Foodshed Capital
	PB&J

*This list is certainly not all-inclusive, but provides a good idea of the breadth of the landscape

“Everybody has their hand in food justice now. It has become a commodity now. It’s about money.”

“There is a lot more food insecurity than people realize. It is somewhat hidden...there is the university and affluent people here, but once you get into the non-profit world, you see the impact. It’s more prevalent than people realize.”

“Food justice work is not what is happening. There is a very limited group who do food justice work. Do you have access to a commercial kitchen to start a business? Food access market, do we have a lot of free fresh produce markets? Can we also have co-operated markets building the concept of community and individual wealth? It’s about building assets or access to those assets, even if it’s really tiny, like collaboratively owning a very small market; they can build and achieve more things.”

“Meeting people where they are—making them feel comfortable. Families don’t want to tell you that they are hungry—how do you navigate it, without making people feel bad because they are struggling to provide it for their family. People feel ashamed.”

“Honestly, I feel like there is a big narrative around people not having food in the community, and kids not eating, it’s a false narrative. It’s not that people don’t have access to food, times where families might run low. Children go hungry—that’s not the case. I worry more about parents not eating, not their children. Mom’s might be exhausted because of work; they fix their kids a meal and then lay down and don’t feed themselves.”

“Present day—low-income Black and Brown people—they don’t know PB&J. Especially during COVID, there are so many doing food access work, community members don’t know any one org by what it is if they aren’t in the community.”

Barriers

We heard about many ways that having access to food, including your programs was challenging.

Transportation was by far the most frequently listed barrier, but others were brought up as well. Since many kids are able to access food while they are at school,

there are serious consequences when school is not in session. When we synthesized all of the barriers, much of it comes down to the built environment - where are there grocery stores and who owns them? After all, if there was an affordable grocery store in everyone’s neighborhood, caregivers wouldn’t have to be taking their kids to the store with backpacks by way of a bus to get groceries every week. In addition to this, there are logistical barriers for families to be able to cook in their homes, including not having the tools and safe kitchen appliances to actually do the cooking. (Image source: [Virginia Food Desert Issue, May 2020](#))



“While you can work with an organization, like Boys & Girls Club, its easy because they can just schedule things for kids. For parents, it’s harder because it is something they have to do where it’s not like they can catch their breath or take time to relax, they would have to be active the entire time and a lot of them don’t see the benefit of it. They are getting by, and that’s their main goal. It’s a hard sell. How do we keep parents involved in this process and make sure they are committed?”

“Cost of Living here is so expensive it’s a barrier for a lot of our families. 75-80% of your income goes towards rent for some families so they don’t have income to buy fresh foods, so they have to buy processed food or fast food. If you’re working and making 50k and you have a couple of children and rent is \$1500 a month, you just don’t have the funds to go to the store and get those fresh meats and fruits and vegetables. A family like that wouldn’t qualify for SNAP benefits that would help cover that.”

“PB&J would reimburse us for transportation – they bent over to meet our needs. They have great volunteers that came and the teaching chefs were very intentional about who they hired and they love her kids. I would like to see more racial diversity across the staff – I knew they were working on it.”

“I think there is access to food. I don’t know why people think poor people don’t have access to food. They have access to food, just not healthy food. Healthy food is expensive. It’s much cheaper to feed a family at McDonald’s. Trader Joes and Whole Foods sell some of the best food but you can’t afford it. Even the farmer’s market is expensive. With 4 kids, myself, and my husband - you can get one meal worth of food at the farmers’ market or a month’s’ worth of food at the store.”

“My mom was happy that I was the one cooking, she works on a truck and wasn’t home very often.”

“Keep on teaching the kids how to cook in the kitchen, and I have seen the kids where they are preparing their own meals, because parents aren’t home, or sleeping.”

“Realistically, when you are thinking about the community, a lot of single parents, they work, being a provider and a caretaker is complicated, and it’s a lot of weight on one person. Trying to prepare a full course meal, it’s a lot of extra work after you’ve worked 16-hour shift. When we are talking about nutrition – smaller, easier prepared meals. The right things that don’t require work.”

“A parent who doesn’t have transportation, it’s a lot of work to shop for a family of 4-5 or more, and take all those groceries back walking on the bus. Biggest barriers of accessing food.”

“A barrier is a lack of transportation or no child care in order for someone to travel to a food bank is an issue.”

“We serve a large Latinx population and it’s also very possible there is an undocumented population there, so driving will put those people at risk. Transportation can be a challenge or barrier.”

“There is a lack of access to transportation that connects you to food, affordable community markets with access to food. The corner stores have access to beer, but not fresh food.”

“You have to look at if people can actually make the meal? Do they have the equipment like knives or measuring cups? If someone is lacking proper refrigeration or safe or reliable ovens, that’s going to be a huge barrier.”

“It’s one thing to give people enough food, but does it meet the cultural and dietary needs of them and their families. Do they have the methods to prepare their food? Residents in low-income housing have expressed hesitation to baking or using their stove due to them being unsafe or unreliable. So just providing food isn’t enough.”

**Mapped using CAT trip planner*

Public Transportation to Grocery Store

Westhaven to 5th Street Food Lion

- .3 mile walk (each way)
- 21-25 minute bus ride (each way)

Meadowlands Apartments Crozet (PHA)

- No bus routes to 2 closest grocery stores
 - Harris Teeter (1.4 mile walk)
 - Great Valu (1.5 mile walk)
- Closest grocery by bus appears to be 1.5 hour trip to Kroger with 1.5 mile walk (each way)

Gaps

There are still areas of the city, and certainly parts of the surrounding counties, that need services more than others. Some stakeholders reported that certain neighborhoods received many services while others had far less, and the counties seem to have far fewer despite having more people. In addition to geography, there are also gaps reported for parents who need to eat and who may need to learn how to cook. It was also brought up that certain communities are more likely to underreport food insecurity needs, specifically the refugee populations. The migrant and immigrant communities are also reported to be underserved and stakeholders noted language barriers and specific food needs around cultural relevance that are essential to consider.

“In the places just outside the City of Charlottesville, it is incredible the amount of food insecurity that exists. There are food deserts, no access to any fresh food. I see it much more in the county and I don’t see it being tackled as much as it is in the city. It’s easier to get to the city kids. You can see the impact a lot more, so it’s easier.”

“No one else is doing what PB&J does. Schools do it, but hardly provide this type of program.”

“Nutrition education is something you have to search for. A lot of families don’t even know there are resources for it. How do you teach kids and families about more healthy eating habits; how food can affect so many aspects of your life. Charlottesville can do a better job with providing more resources on healthy eating and how nutrition affects your body and your life.”

“We need organizations such as PB&J to teach kids how to prepare a meal - now it’s just McDonald’s and heating up stuff and oodles of noodles, so I think there is room there for teaching people how to cook - they just have to be a part of the puzzle.”

“I think there is still a large cluster of people in the area not being reached...senior buildings, nursing homes - it’s one thing to drop off food and it’s another to show them how to do anything with it - for me you are still missing the mark.”

“Most of these organizations have attempted to create a nutrition program, but it usually results in a printed piece of paper. I think that it’s poorly done. There is a big missed opportunity, where they are doing it right now is not effective. Nutrition education starts from birth. Young mothers are not trained.”

“There is a lack of food and nutrition service with single men, especially young men; single moms; elderly people; students that have an IEP in school, but no one works with them, they are just let go.”

“A gap in food security I work with are refugee and new Americans because they are gardening, they do not report being food insecure.”

“Nutritional education is not available in the languages people speak, that’s a big gap. Part of my job is to provide initial nutrition class and grocery store orientation to new arrivals.”

“Many of the cultures don’t eat raw food, because of lack of clean water. So many traditions will cook the food heavily to make it safe to eat. No one grows lettuce in our gardens, they don’t grow their crops. Gap on how to get people to eat fresh uncooked fruits and vegetables.”

*“It’s much harder for the older population. They are much better at hiding their food insecurity.”
“Our kids are hungry and so are their parents.”*

“Charlottesville is in some ways diverse, besides black and brown people, we have a good amount of immigrant and refugee population who may not eat the same food as Americans, I remember that being sort of an issue. Immigrant families wanted their children to participate, but they weren’t serving food that they eat.”

“[Nutrition education in Charlottesville] I don’t see it as a really high priority in Charlottesville. It’s not a popular subject when it comes to programming. I can think of only a few nutrition education programs in town and they wouldn’t be very known or sought out.”

“There is a large immigrant population here. There does seem to be support for them when they first come to the area, but over time that sort of fades. It’s critical to have people who can communicate with them in languages they are comfortable with and have food that is culturally relevant to them.”

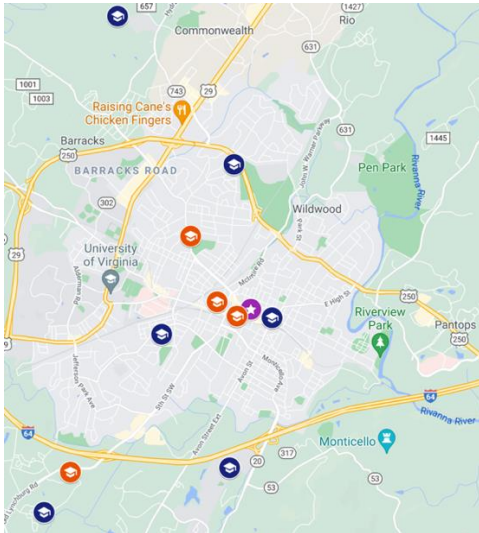
“This area tends to be very religious, so a lot of partners in food insecurity are faith-based and that’s fine, but some people might not be comfortable accessing services through a specific church or faith organization. It’s important to have places like PB&J where they don’t have any open politics or spiritual beliefs being put out that may be a barrier for people to engage with them.”



“Westhaven – the site that gets everything. What about the other ones? How do we make sure we are serving all of the communities that we know exist?”

“What about the food insecure families that don’t live in public housing? We know it is all over the city – those kids are getting missed. Can we pull this data from United Way? Is there ALICE data

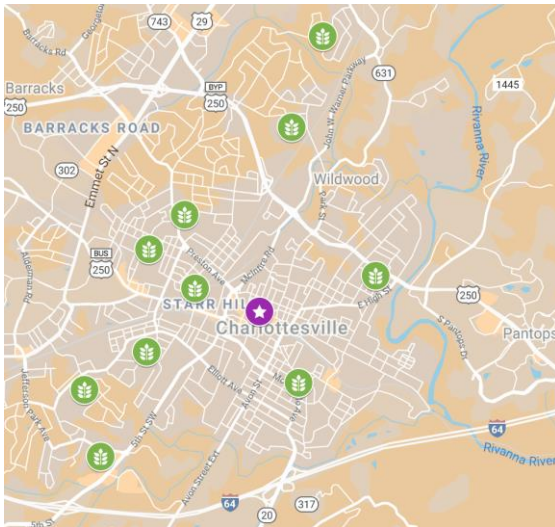
available? Can we target any specific areas? We know poverty concentrates so how do we know they are getting served the same way. Do the schools have this data?"

Cooking Class Locations



	locations offering children cooking classes
	locations offering family/adult cooking classes

Community Garden Locations



Community Connectors

Stakeholders shared with us who to look to for more connections to members of the community. While, PB&J is certainly in contact with participants of your programs, it is helpful to know who else is out there to engage with to continue to build and deepen relationships. It's also a good reminder that it is important for these people to know about the programs you offer so they can refer to you.

"People know about PB&J if only through having children in school, and I think the city schools bring children through PB&J. I don't know how much people know about PB&J."

“Teachers see what kids eat or don’t eat. So many teachers provide their own money to provide snacks for kids. They know the kids who probably didn’t have breakfast or may not have anything to eat when they go home.”

“Food banks and pantries keep a record of where their clients come from, how often they come, the size of their families, etc. They know what areas have the most food insecurity.”

“The kids are the pathways to know if there is a family issue with food.”

“Mentors, we have a lot of mentoring programs. A lot of children vent to their mentor about issues. Charlottesville has an abundance of mentoring programs (Sisters to Sisters, etc.)”

“Social Workers – Social Workers based in schools? (Family Support Program “Family Support Worker”) – They follow the child through each grade in the school process. They are very tight with the families. They do home visits so they can see what’s there and what’s not there.”

“The Boys & Girls Club staff see the kids every day. They notice when kids are hoarding food, trying to grab as much extras as they can. They see those patterns.”

“We have partnered with health clinics to identify people with diet-related health issues and who wanted to make a change to how they eat.”

“There are people who are well meaning and trying to work in those communities to bridge the gap, but there is a disconnect. People in those communities may not feel comfortable approaching those organizations.”

“The way to get to these families is through the kids. If the kids learn to cook, they will teach and adapt their traditions to what is available in America for the whole family. Modern cooking techniques and nutritional knowledge.”

Community Choice

We received so much feedback around choice—if there is one thing you should take from this report it is the people want to choose what they eat. This seems simple enough to understand, and yet it has often been stripped from those who are experiencing food insecurity. When it boils down to it, people want to be able to go to the store, buy what they want, be able to afford their choices, and have the time to prepare food the way they like to eat it. And yet, the system that has been engrained in the way that food insecurity is “solved” is to give people food based on what they have or what *they* think other people should have. It’s a decades old way of thinking that is hard to break out of for so many reasons. Your stakeholders urged PB&J to think through the ways you could center your programming in choice—from the recipes to the ingredients to where community members pick up the food or take classes.

Recipe Examples Offered By Area Organizations

·Egg rolls	·Whole wheat ricotta pancakes
·Tomato soup	·French toast with bananas
·Mini-quiches	·Sweet potato muffins
·Mac & cheese	·Cantaloupe smoothie
·Homemade granola	·Peach salsa served with
·Fruit and yogurt parfaits	crostinis, tortilla chips, and
·Kale chips	goat cheese
·Crepes	·Apple and Fennel Salad
·Open face roasted veggie	·Zucchini Fritters
sandwiches	·Green Skillet Baked Eggs
·Mango salsa	·African Peanut Stew
·Cranberry orange muffins	·Green Pepper Frittata
·Vegetable jambalaya	·Black Eye Peas & Okra
·Farro and vegetable salad	Potatoes
·Roasted cauliflower soup	·Braised Citrus Greens
·Hearty vegetable pasta sauce	·Cajun Shrimp and Okra
·Pantry white chili	·Fajitas
·Quinoa burger	·Potato Hash
·Spinach mushroom enchilada	·Butternut Squash Soup
·Chicken and veggie enchilada	·Stuffed Acorn Squash

“Affordable fresh fruit and vegetables, things they can’t get in their areas with no grocery stores.”

“PB&J provides recipes that allow for substitutions and ingredients for families with certain eating restrictions/diets because of cultural or religious reasons. I think that this is an important part of equity work.”

“Incorporate traditional foods, which are often cuisines that are very healthy. But [they] don’t have access to those foods, that honor their food traditions. Improve the recipes, for instance reducing salt and oil.”

“If you don’t ask people what they want, your impact will not be what you hope. The food donations, it could be fabulous, but it might not be what the people want.”

“PHAR has been doing resident-led redevelopment, The people want space for a grocery store that’s community-owned. They want nutrition and cooking classes, spaces for WIC, and spaces for doctors and a pharmacy.”

“Food choice is missing. As someone who has celiac disease, I would never be able to go to the food bank.”

“The challenge is, what’s “healthy”, but matches the culture of the people?”

“I don’t believe that getting a vegetable for produce and teaching them how to cook it is ever going to work. That’s a luxury of time and energy and imaginative capacity. I have never seen the reverse happen—where is a survey of our community that drives what we plan and is distributed. Start with what people say they need and eat, and how to manage it.”

“Meals prepped – prepared and moms and dads, and teenagers can warm it up in the oven and it’s ready to go. Healthy stuff. A lot of smaller business more than willing to support something like that and do it on a small budget.”

“One thing that might be cool, everyone eats at fast food all the time. If you could do a re-creation of some of those, to try difference between them to see which one you prefer.”

“Maybe have a day when the kids get to pick what they cook, I know that this may be a struggle because of planning.”

“We could work harder on trying to involve the families and children and parents in what we are eating—culturally diverse menu. It would be helpful if we had more information about what families want to eat at home. Right now, it’s what we like, and what our families eat.”

“The need for little sort of big cities, little grocery stores where people can walk to, and get the supplies they need. This is missing in certain parts of the area. I recall where people used to walk to it, they closed, it became a high-end restaurant, and people are like, “I don’t like it, it’s too expensive.”
“The community gardens—Cultivate Charlottesville—they do use people who live in the community to work in the gardens. It seems like a gathering place—market days. They are excited to go, it’s a community place. You get to pick out your bags of produce that you want. It has a good feel to folks.”

“When it comes to the nutrition part of it—a lot of our nutrition messaging and recipes we cook may be too strict, in an ideal situation, I don’t always eat those things. I’ve been wondering if we loosen up, to encourage to enjoy healthy things without being so rigid. Thinking of new recipes and some kids didn’t love what we give them—if we were more lenient, they might try it.”

Moving Forward

The truth is that answering the question: “How does PB&J become an equitable organization?” is not easy because there are so many ways this could happen. There is not one path forward that makes the most sense, we have outlined what we believe the current options are in this section.

All four options require structural changes when it comes to equity and organizational structure. The final decision maker of any of these options will be the trustees, but we encourage the staff at PB&J to fully recognize the opportunity and knowledge they have to help guide and support the trustees in making the decisions to come.

Knowledge and Data Source

This is perhaps the most surprising possibility. The fact that PB&J does not compete for funding and is not responsible for fundraising, allows true flexibility and innovation that is not offered to most organizations. It also allows you to hold a perspective that provides space for organizations to collaborate with you and not be in fear of losing funding. This puts you in the position to provide the resources to do a deep dive into the community, research, and develop a real answer to how to address food insecurity for the city, with a focus on kids and families. This would require deep community relationship building and convening.

Merger or Collaboration

Since there are so many programs working in the same arena, it would make sense to consider a merger. The key things to consider in a merger would be to work with an organization who is further along in their equity work. This would allow PB&J to live into its goal around equity, and also to share the resources that you have with an organization who is already doing deeply vested work in the community. This choice would likely require a lot of decision making and power to be shared and potentially absolved. There were several specific suggestions provided by stakeholders.

Transform to Focus on Gaps

Of course, PB&J could shape and refine current programs and structure to respond to the gaps, barriers, and desires outlined in this document and continue with the work as a separate entity. This would require PB&J to become a 501c3, and to do fundraising in addition to the MLG Foundation. When you become a 501c3 you are required to have a board of directors, and this is the place where PB&J could build up a group of people who are in the communities that will receive programming, giving them ultimate power and decision making on what happens with the organization. It's important to underscore that this choice is still an enormous amount of work, and requires huge changes in the way the current organization functions.

Reallocate Funding

The final choice is to dissolve and to bring back grants to the community. Instead of funding PB&J, fund other organizations who are doing work that is valued by the trustees. Currently, you have feet in both the funder pool and the recipient of funding pool and it's hard to balance. Stakeholders shared that the fact the MLG hasn't offered grants in a couple of years has been challenging, and that instead of providing your own programming, you could focus on equitable funding in the community as a whole. This would allow you to put the power into the hands of those who are doing equitable work.

Appendix A:

Key Stakeholders and Interview Questions

Interviews

Stakeholders

Jeanette Abi-Nader	Executive Director, Cultivate Charlottesville
Theresa Allen	Manager, Food and Agriculture Program, International Rescue Community
Shantel Bingham	Former Program Director, Charlottesville Food Justice Network
Eboni Bugg	Director of Programs, Charlottesville Community Foundation
Shymora Cooper	Resident Services Coordinator, United Way of Greater Charlottesville
Daniel Fairly	Youth Opportunity Coordinator, City of Charlottesville
Robin Goldstein	Executive Director, Meals on Wheels of Charlottesville
Claudette Grant	Community Outreach & Engagement Specialist, UVA School of Medicine
Joy Johnson	Outreach Worker, Westhaven Nursing Clinic
Noelle Luendo	PB&J Participant, Charlottesville Resident
Jackie Martin	Director of Community Benefit, Sentara Martha Jefferson
April Oliver	Clinic Coordinator, Westhaven Community Center
Jo Olson	Assoc. Director, Community Partnerships, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville
Latara Ragland	Family Services Specialist, City of Charlottesville Human Services
Destynee Spruill	PB&J Participant, Charlottesville Resident

Focus Group

Laura Brown	Director of Community and Policy, Local Food Hub
Joe Kreiter	Partner Engagement Manager at Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

Transformational Team

Shannon Banks	Director of Community Education, ReadyKids
Antwon Brinson	Owner/President, Culinary Concepts AB
Angel Feero	Elementary Programming Coordinator, Abundant Life
Nick Feggans	Unit Director, Jack Jouett Boys & Girls Club
Karina Monroy	Executive Director Creciendo Juntos
Allison Pillow	School Counselor, Charlottesville City Schools
Barbara Yager	Health and Wellness Coordinator/Volunteer Management, City of Promise

Staff

Amy Curtis	Nutrition Educator, PB&J Fund
Alex London-Gross	Executive Director, PB&J Fund
Tracey Roberts	Program Manager – Chef for A Day, PB&J Fund
Emily Wempler	Executive Director, MLG Foundation

Base Interview Questions

1. Tell your story about how you began working with food insecurity
2. PB&J in the community: What do they do? What is their reputation?

3. Do you consider them to be an equitable organization?
4. What does food insecurity look like in Charlottesville?
5. What does nutrition education look like in Charlottesville?
6. What are the community needs for food access and nutrition? What are the gaps?
7. What are family barriers around accessing food?
8. Who is the most likely community member to know a family is lacking food access?
9. What other organizations are working in this space?
10. Are there areas of Charlottesville that are not being served?
11. Who else should we talk to?

Appendix B:

Environmental Scan References

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