Kent County
**Essential Needs
Task Force**

Food & Nutrition

Organizational Self-Assessment

2023 System Report

Introduction

This report contains results from the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF) Food and Nutrition Coalition (FNC) Organizational Self-Assessment (OSA). Seventy-eight respondents from 19 organizations completed the survey in November through December 2023. Twelve of these organizations have participated in the OSA every year for the past three years, five participated for the second time this year, and one participated for the first time.

The OSA survey asks about 12 organizational practices, listed below. Respondents were asked to rate their organization's commitment to and implementation of each practice. The practices were divided into four categories, each containing three practices, labelled A1-A3 for advocacy, C1-C3 for community engagement, D1-D3 for data, and E1-E3 for equity. These labels are only intended to aid in navigating between charts, not to convey value. The practices are abbreviated in the graphs throughout this report. Reference the list below for the full wording.

For each category, respondents were asked: "Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?" They were also asked if they would like to receive support with any of the practices. Finally, participants were asked if any changes had been made to advocacy, community engagement, data, or equity practices in the past 12 months.

Organizations were provided three options for participating: 1) have one person take the survey, 2) offer it a select group, or 3) offer it everyone at the organization. Thirteen organizations had only one respondent. Six organizations had three or more respondents, and each received a confidential report of their organizational results. This report aggregates results from all the organizations that participated.

Practices

A1 We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
A2 We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes
A3 We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of food insecurity
C1 We involve participants in our organizational and program planning
C2 We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community
C3 We adjust our programs based on participants' feedback
D1 We have a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission
D2 We identify and track outcomes, not just outputs, for our programs
D3 We adjust our programs based on data
E1 Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve
E2 Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff
E3 Our communications explain the root causes of food insecurity

Commitment

Participants were asked to rate their organization on the statement "we are committed to this in theory" for each of the practices. An average over three indicates agreement and under three indicates disagreement.

On average, participating organizations agree they are committed to each of these practices with strong agreement on nine.

		Value
C3	Adjust based on feedback	4.67
D1	Programs contribute to mission	4.59
C1	Involve participants in planning	4.32
E1	Org representative of community	4.29
D3	Adjust based on data	4.27
D2	Identify and track outcomes	4.23
A3	Promote action on root causes	4.21
C2	Empower participants to lead	4.14
E2	DEI training is mandatory	4.09
E3	Communicate root causes	3.77
A1	Look for advocacy opportunities	3.64
A2	Engage in goverment processes	3.47

Axis: 1 2 3 4 5

Color Key
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Recode Values
SD - 1 (1.00-1.99)
D - 2 (2.00-2.99)
N - 3 (3.00)
A - 4 (3.01-4.00)
SA - 5 (4.01-5.00)

When looking at the spread of responses, agreement (green text) is roughly 80% or higher on nine of the practices, and disagreement (blue text) exceeds 25% on two.

		Agree	Disagree		Neither
C3	Adjust based on feedback	100%	0%		
D1	Programs contribute to mission	100%	0%		
C1	Involve participants in planning	89%	5%		5%
E1	Org representative of community	89%	0%		11%
D3	Adjust based on data	84%	0%		16%
D2	Identify and track outcomes	89%	0%		11%
A3	Promote action on root causes	89%	11%		
C2	Empower participants to lead	79%	11%		11%
E2	DEI training is mandatory	89%	11%		
E3	Communicate root causes	68%	26%		5%
A1	Look for advocacy opportunities	63%	16%		21%
A2	Engage in goverment processes	58%	26%		16%

The practices towards the bottom of the charts above (A1, A2, and E3) have lower percentages of agreement and higher percentages of disagreement. This presents an opportunity for the FNC to explore why these practices matter. What benefits could implementing these have for our member organizations and our community?

In both this section and the following, the graphs are sorted by the system average. Organizational averages were calculated by adding the recode values of all the responses from an organization and dividing by the number of responses from that organization. There was also a "don't know" option, which was excluded from this calculation. System averages were calculated by adding all the organizational averages and dividing by the number of participating organizations.

Agreement (green text) is calculated by adding the percent of organizational averages in the agree and strongly agree ranges. **Disagreement (blue text)** is calculated by adding the percent of organizational averages in the disagree and strongly disagree ranges. In the graphs showing the spread of responses, the second axis with gray bars and plain text indicates the percentage of organizational averages that were neutral.

Implementation

Participants were asked to rate their organization on the statement "we have implemented this as practice" for each of the practices.

On average, participating organizations see themselves as implementing each of these practices, with strong agreement on the top three.

D1	Programs contribute to mission	4.51 ●
C3	Adjust based on feedback	● 4.42
D3	Adjust based on data	● 4.02
D2	Identify and track outcomes	● 3.98
C1	Involve participants in planning	● 3.91
A3	Promote action on root causes	● 3.86
C2	Empower participants to lead	● 3.67
E2	DEI training is mandatory	● 3.67
E1	Org representative of community	● 3.51
E3	Communicate root causes	● 3.48
A1	Look for advocacy opportunities	● 3.29
A2	Engage in goverment processes	● 3.12

1 2 3 4 5

Color Key
■ Strongly disagree
■ Disagree
■ Neither
■ Agree
■ Strongly agree

Recode Values
SD - 1 (1.00-1.99)
D - 2 (2.00-2.99)
N - 3 (3.00)
A - 4 (3.01-4.00)
SA - 5 (4.01-5.00)

When looking at the spread of responses, agreement (green text) is roughly 75% or higher on six of the practices, and disagreement (blue text) exceeds 25% on three.

		Agree	Disagree		Neither
D1	Programs contribute to mission	95%	0%		5%
C3	Adjust based on feedback	95%	0%		5%
D3	Adjust based on data	74%	5%		21%
D2	Identify and track outcomes	83%	0%		17%
C1	Involve participants in planning	74%	21%		5%
A3	Promote action on root causes	74%	21%		5%
C2	Empower participants to lead	63%	16%		21%
E2	DEI training is mandatory	63%	16%		21%
E1	Org representative of community	63%	26%		11%
E3	Communicate root causes	63%	26%		11%
A1	Look for advocacy opportunities	42%	21%		37%
A2	Engage in goverment processes	37%	32%		32%

Unlike in the commitment section above, identifying opportunities to improve our implementation scores is less straightforward. It requires looking at additional data and will be discussed further in the next section. One factor to consider is where participants express a desire for support.

Participants would like to recieve support with all these practices, and almost 40% want support with the top four. Even the practice at the bottom of the chart was selected by one sixth of respondents.

C2	Empower participants to lead	50%
D2	Identify and track outcomes	41%
E1	Org representative of community	38%
C1	Involve participants in planning	38%
A3	Promote action on root causes	37%
C3	Adjust based on feedback	36%
A1	Look for advocacy opportunities	33%
D3	Adjust based on data	28%
E3	Communicate root causes	26%
E2	DEI training is mandatory	24%
A2	Engage in goverment processes	23%
D1	Programs contribute to mission	17%

Please note that support was not defined. Therefore, respondents to this question could intend several different meanings. For example, this could indicate that staff have too many things to do and not enough time for this work. In which case support might look like hiring more staff and redistributing job responsibilities. It could also signify that staff do not possess the knowledge or skills for this work and would like training and guidance as they learn.

Comparing Commitment and Implementation

The chart below compares the system averages for commitment and implementation (commitment minus implementation). The larger the number, the larger the difference and vice versa. The graph is sorted from smallest to largest difference (top to bottom).

The practices with the largest difference between commitment and implementation are low hanging fruit for furthering implementation efforts.

		Difference
D1	Programs contribute to mission	0.09
D2	Identify and track outcomes	0.24
D3	Adjust based on data	0.25
C3	Adjust based on feedback	0.25
E3	Communicate root causes	0.29
A1	Look for advocacy opportunities	0.34
A3	Promote action on root causes	0.34
A2	Engage in goverment processes	0.36
C1	Involve participants in planning	0.41
E2	DEI training is mandatory	0.42
C2	Empower participants to lead	0.47
E1	Org representative of community	0.78

Color Key
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Shape Key
- ◆ Commitment
- ● Implementation

Scores were higher for commitment than implementation on all practices. This is not surprising because implementing these practices takes work, which is necessarily preceded by a commitment to doing that work. For practices where the difference is smaller and commitment is lower, there is less opportunity to advance implementation, and our focus should be on increasing commitment. Articulating how these practices are important to our organizations can increase commitment and align our members around this shared understanding. This will ensure buy-in from our teams, which is essential for successful implementation.

There are opportunities for improving implementation of practices where the difference is larger. It is important to understand that this self-assessment does not actually measure implementation of these practices. It measures respondents' current opinions about implementation. Perceptions do not always align with reality and can change even when circumstances remain the same.

We know that respondents believe that implementation is lagging behind commitment, especially on C1, C2, E1, and E2. We do not know if this is actually the case or if respondents are just unaware of work being done by their organizations. The latter could indicate a need to improve internal communications and relationships between different teams. We should discuss why implementation scores are lower for these practices and explore opportunities to improve implementation.

Participants were also asked if any changes had been made in the past 12 months to their organization's advocacy, community engagement, data, or equity practices. Ideally, this question would help us understand why a respondent's rating of their organization's commitment or implementation changed from the previous year. Unfortunately, it did not yield these results. So, this data was excluded from this report and is included only in the organizational reports as a possible indicator of areas where internal communications may need to be improved.

Feedback from Open Ended Questions

Twenty-three respondents from 12 organizations provided 59 comments in response to the open-ended questions in the OSA survey. The question "Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?" was asked about each category of practices and about their organization in general. In addition, each category contained a check all that apply question with an "other (please specify)" response option where respondents could provide comments. All these responses were analyzed and two main themes emerged: challenges and wins.

Challenges were found in 14 comments by nine respondents from five organizations. Wins were discovered in 37 comments by 18 respondents from 12 organizations. Wins were also split up into the sub-themes of making progress, desire to do more, and committed. One respondent shared,

> "We have hired a data specialist who collects and tracks data, but our software is very outdated and not supported; and the workload exceeds one person's capacity to effectively make change. However, having the capacity to have data make a difference in our programs is one of the organization's goals."

In this quote, you can see that the organization is making progress (by hiring a data specialist), experiencing challenges (outdated software and not enough staff capacity), and still desires to do more (has a goal of using data for program planning). Here are a few other quotes (with slight modification as needed to maintain anonymity) that clearly show one or more of the themes:

> "We are experiencing a lot of growth and change, which creates new opportunities. I would like to see us develop our participants into leaders in the process. I think we do an excellent job from a staffing perspective, but client movement would be fantastic."

> "We are in the process of developing an advocacy policy."

> "It is hard to attract the board members that we desire."

> "We need to create better jobs to have more diverse staff."

> "Love our membership advisory committee and we have a few board members who are members so there is buy in."

> "Our recent community survey and listening to our families has helped determine the direction of our work."

Conclusion

It is affirming to see so many of ENTF's partner organizations committed to and implementing the organizational practices assessed in this report. These practices are not a traditional part of essential needs work and show a dedication to creating better organizational cultures and changing our systems to address the root causes of food insecurity. ENTF provides resources and trainings to build organizational capacity for advocacy, community engagement, data, and equity work. We also provide one-on-one support in these areas as requested by partner organizations.

The information in this report will help the FNC determine what to focus on throughout the year. The practices with the greatest opportunity for increasing commitment were:

A1 We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
A2 We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes
E3 Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity

The practices with the greatest opportunity for improving implementation were C1, C2, E1, and E2. Of these, C1, C2, and E1 had the most demand for support.

C1 We involve participants in our organizational and program planning
C2 We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community

E1 Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve
E2 Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff

Based on current capacity, ENTF staff recommend that the Committee select two to four of these practices to focus over the next 12 months. When compared to past years' results, the practices with the greatest opportunity for increasing commitment have remained consistent all three years. The practices with the greatest opportunity for improving implementation have changed only slightly with C1, E1, and E2 as the top three in 2021 and C1, C2, and E1 as the top three in 2022.

The next step in prioritizing our efforts is to discuss the following questions and decide which practices to focus on for increasing commitment and furthering implementation:

1. What in this report is the most surprising to you?
2. Are perceptions more positive or negative than you expected?
3. Where would you focus your attention and why?

Participating Organizations

We are thankful to all those who participated in the OSA this year. An asterisk has been placed by the names of the organizations that received an organizational report.

Access of West Michigan*	Kids' Food Basket
Buist Community Assistance Center	Meals On Wheels Western Michigan
Catholic Charities West Michigan	North Kent Connect
Community Food Club*	SECOM Resource Center
Feeding America West Michigan*	The Other Way Ministries*
Flat River Outreach Ministries	The Salvation Army of Kent County
HOPE Gardens*	United Church Outreach Ministry
Health Net of West Michigan	United Methodist Community House
Hispanic Center of Western Michigan	YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids*
Kent School Services Network	

This is the third year the FNC has conducted an OSA. While there were significant changes to the survey between 2021 and 2022, there were only minimal changes between 2022 and 2023. This project was developed and overseen by the FNC Data-Story Action Team. The full survey can be viewed in the appendix.

You can contact our team at entf@hwmuw.org or reach out directly to our data analyst, Emily Madsen, at emadsen@hwmuw.org.

Appendix – OSA Survey

The ENTF Food and Nutrition Coalition (FNC) invites you to take part in an organizational self-assessment. This project will help us understand your perspectives on organizational practices around:

- Community engagement
- Data
- Advocacy
- Equity

All responses are voluntary. You may skip questions that you do not understand or prefer not to answer. If you do not provide your email address, your response will be anonymous. If you provide your email, your response will be kept confidential by ENTF.

ENTF will create two types of reports.

1. System Report – This report will look at the results from all the organizations that participated in the project. In it your organization's results will be anonymized or aggregated with other organizations. This report will be made publicly available.

2. Organizational Reports – These reports will look at individual organization's results and will only be created for organizations with three or more respondents. In them individual responses will be anonymized or aggregated with other respondents. These reports will only be provided to the corresponding organizations and will be kept confidential by ENTF.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Emily Madsen.
- Email: emadsen@hwmuw.org
- Phone: 616-752-8623

Before getting started, please tell us the name of your organization.
This is required.

_____

Community Engagement

This section looks at how your organization includes participants in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We involve participants in our organizational and program planning.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

We adjust our programs based on participants' feedback.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

☐ Involving participants in our organizational and program planning

☐ Adjusting our programs based on participants' feedback

☐ Empowering participants to become leaders in our organization and community

☐ Other (please specify) _____

☐ None of the above

Has your organization changed its community engagement practices within the past 12 months?

○ No

○ Yes

○ Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

_____

_____

_____

Data

This section looks at how your organization uses data in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We have a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

We identify and track outcomes, not just outputs, for our programs.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

We adjust our programs based on data.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

☐ Building understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission

☐ Identifying and tracking outcomes for our programs

☐ Adjusting our programs based on data

☐ Other (please specify) _____

☐ None of the above

Has your organization changed its data practices within the past 12 months?

○ No

○ Yes

○ Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

_____

_____

_____

Advocacy

This section looks at how your organization engages with elected officials and other policy makers to inform their work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of food insecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- ☐ Looking for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
- ☐ Engaging in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- ☐ Promoting policies and practices that address the root causes of food insecurity
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ None of the above

Has your organization changed its advocacy practices within the past 12 months?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes
- ○ Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

_____

_____

_____

Equity

This section looks at how your organization embeds equity in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve (e.g. geographic, race/ethnicity, experience, income, etc.).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Our communications explain the root causes of food insecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have implemented this as practice.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

☐ Attracting and retaining board members and staff that are representative of the community we serve

☐ Providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for our board and staff

☐ Explaining the root causes of food insecurity in our communications

☐ Other (please specify) _____

☐ None of the above

Has your organization changed its equity practices within the past 12 months?

○ No

○ Yes

○ Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

_____

_____

_____

Before you go...

Please consider providing your email address if you would like support with any of the practices in this assessment.
This is optional. Your survey will no longer be anonymous, but your responses will be kept confidential.

_____

Did you participate in the FNC Organizational Self-Assessment (this survey) last year?

◯ No

◯ Yes

◯ Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your organization?

_____

_____

_____