



Partner Agency Survey Report

Spring 2017

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Image courtesy of Brandon Denney

Executive Summary: The Partner Agency Survey is an annual initiative from Food Recovery Network (FRN) to collect information and feedback from the network's hunger-fighting partner agencies. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate FRN's nationwide impact and improve how the network serves hungry people. Distributed through the SurveyMonkey platform, the 2017 survey collected 127 responses over the course of 42 days, with a response rate of 42%. The results continue many of the trends indicated in the three previous iterations of the survey, while providing additional details to build off of this data. Results are broken into information about organizations and impact of FRN partnerships; impact areas include access and scope, food, money, time, and relationships. The results will inform both programmatic improvements and grant writing in the coming 2017-2018 year.

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Introduction

Food Recovery Network (FRN) uses the annual Partner Agency Survey to collect information and feedback from the network’s hunger-fighting partners. Hunger-fighting partners, also referred to as “partner agencies,” are the nonprofit organizations that receive recovered food from FRN student chapters and distribute it to hungry people in communities across the United States. As front-line, direct-service agents against hunger, partner agencies serve as pillars of support for communities. They make up the backbone of FRN programs, providing the final-step coordination in offering recovered food to those who need it most.

The purpose of the Partner Agency Survey is to tap into the community-based knowledge of the network’s partner agencies and produce usable information to both **evaluate FRN’s nationwide impact and improve how the network serves hungry people**. The results aim to inform both programmatic improvements and grant writing.

FRN initiated the annual Partner Agency Survey in 2014, making 2017 the fourth iteration of the survey. The survey composition, administration process, and analysis methodology have been modified and improved each year by the Partner Liaison VISTA (PLV). This report addresses the following outcomes:

- Use concrete descriptive information to **paint a picture of FRN’s partner agencies** and the people they serve
- Evaluate if and how involvement with FRN **impacts** partner agencies, both in terms of **benefits and areas for improvement**
- Determine **areas of opportunity** for maximizing the benefits of being part of FRN for partner agencies.

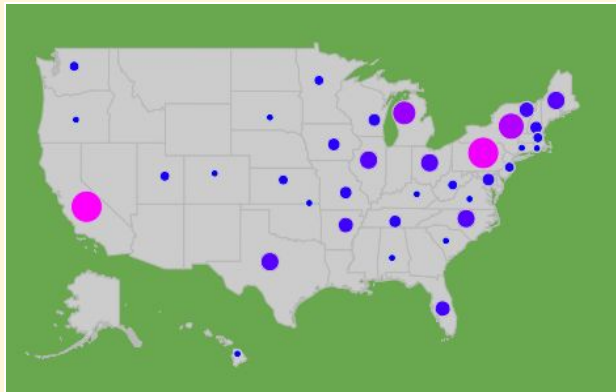
Survey Design and Methods

FRN's Partner Liaison VISTA (PLV) edited survey questions from past iterations to encourage standardization, efficiency, and inclusivity of different food recovery models. The survey, which was administered through the SurveyMonkey platform, contained 36 questions total, most multiple choice. It opened on March 5th, 2017 and remained open until mid-April, during which time the PLV sent reminder emails once a week. Data was analyzed through Salesforce and Google Sheets.

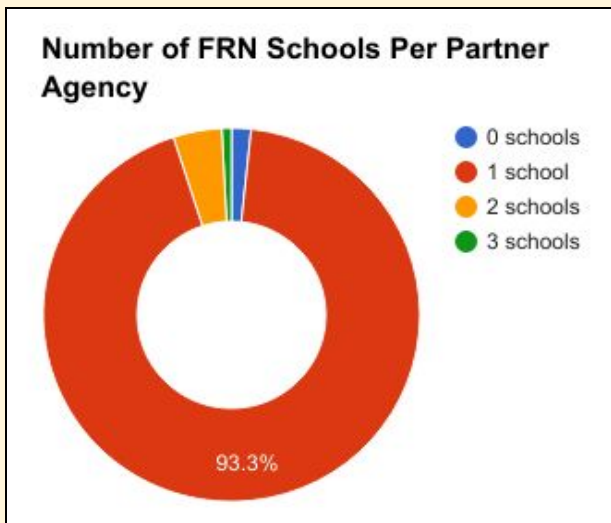
Results

Painting a Picture of FRN's Partner Agency Network

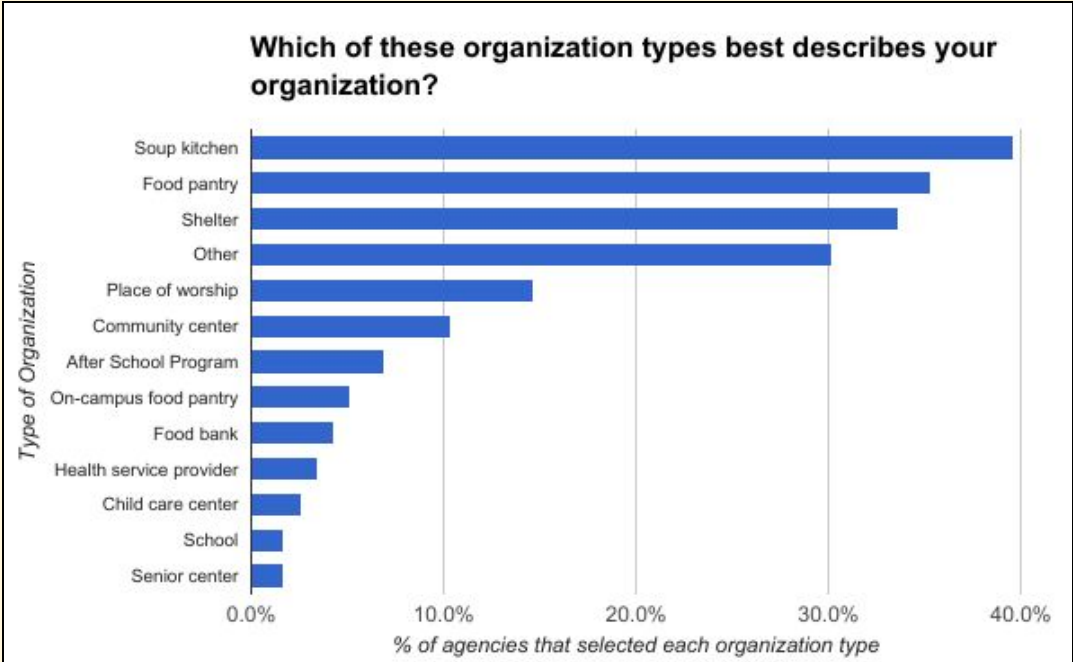
FRN's partner agencies are spread geographically across the US, with highest concentrations on the coasts.



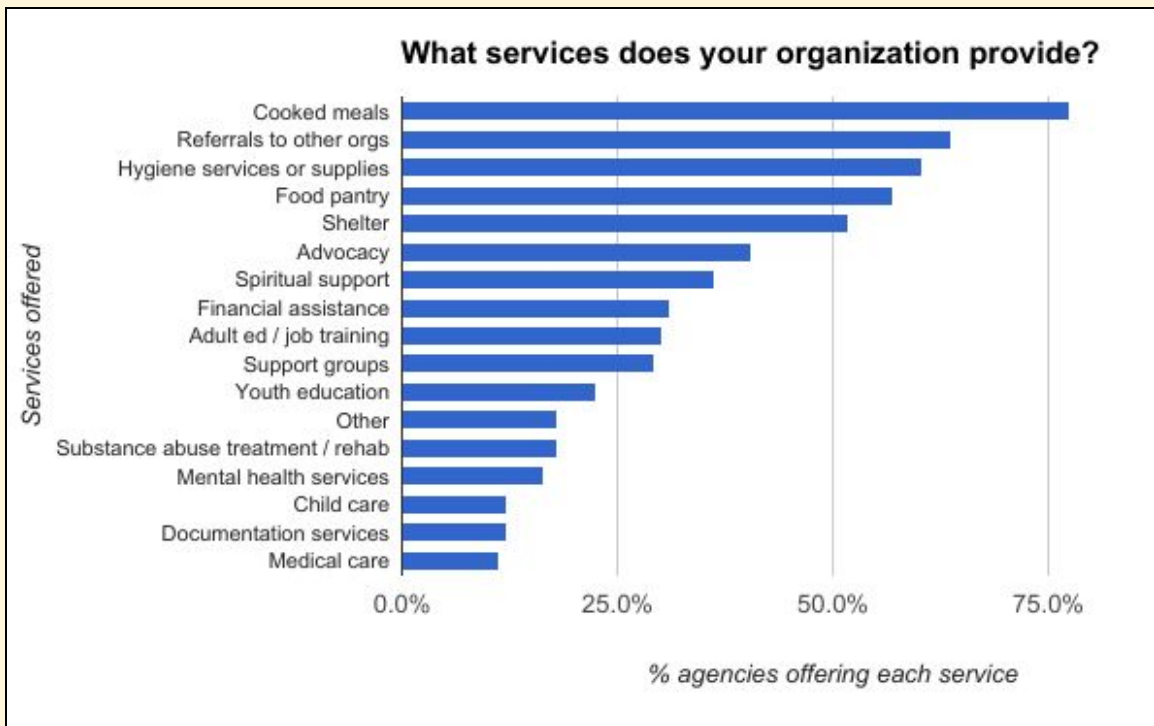
Most agencies (93.3%) work with one FRN chapter, but a few work with more than one.



Most partner agencies are soup kitchens (39.7%), food pantries (35.3%), and shelters (33.6%). There are also places of worship, community centers, after school programs, on-campus food pantries, food banks, child care centers, schools, senior centers, and more!

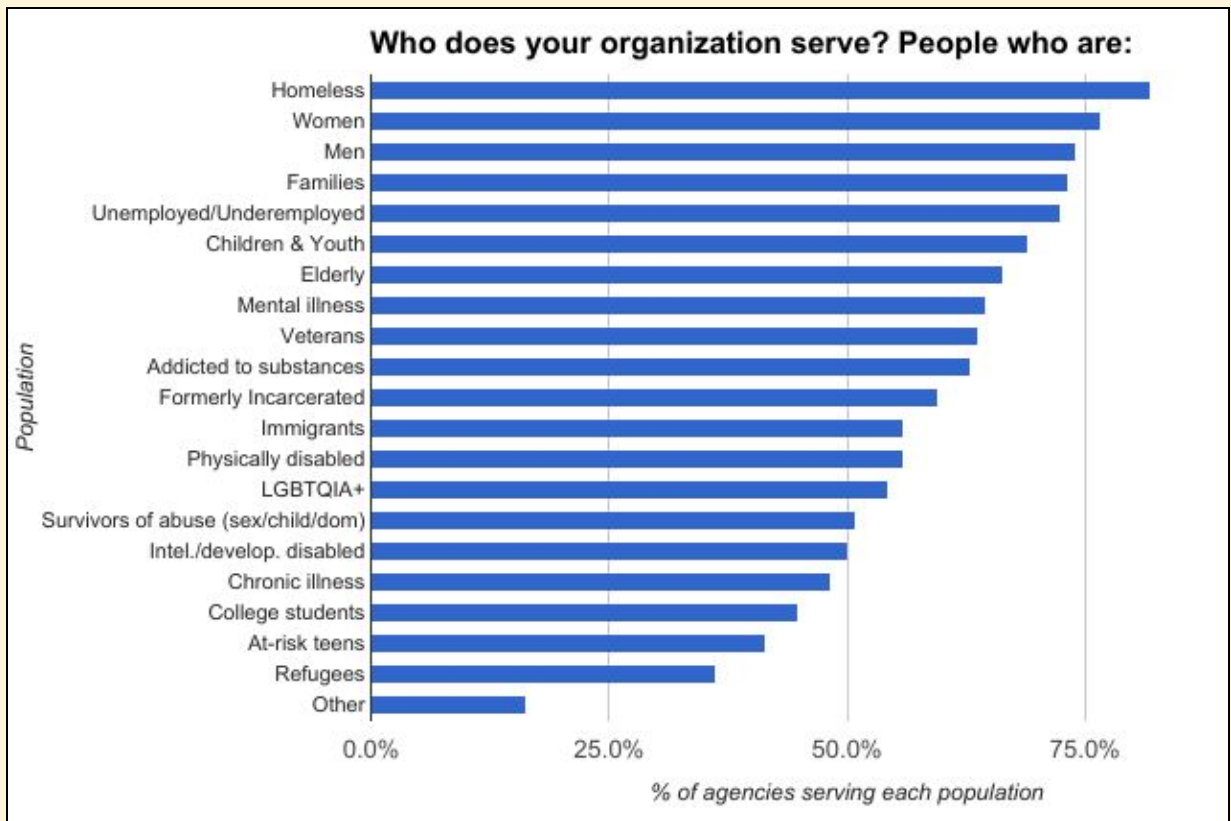


Partner agencies provide a wide variety of services, and many agencies provide more than one service. The services most frequently-offered by partner agencies are cooked meals (offered by 77.6% of agencies), referrals to other organizations (63.8%), and hygiene services or supplies (60.3%).



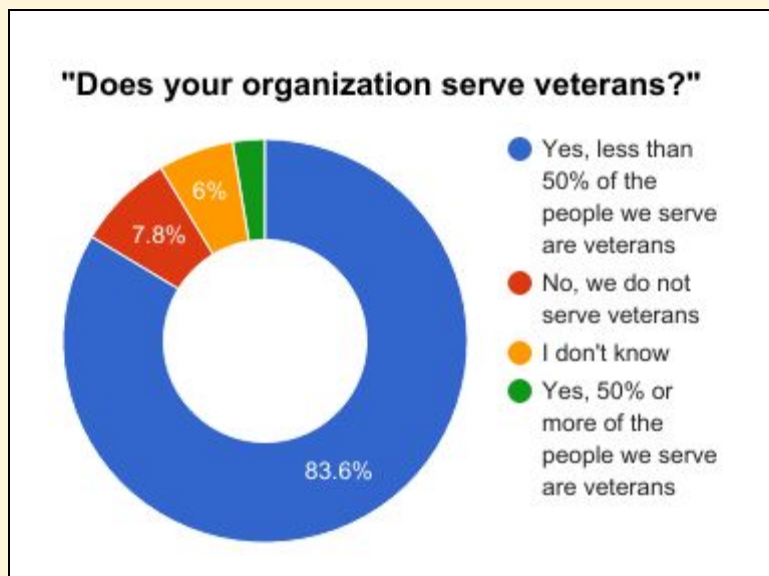
The size range for partner agencies in 2017 spans from 30 to 600,000 individuals served per year. This goes to show that agencies of any size can work with FRN!

Agencies serve an array of populations, many overlapping quite a bit. **The most frequent population served is people who are homeless (81.9%), followed by women (76.7%), men (74.1%), families (73.3%), unemployed/underemployed (72.4%), and children and youth (69.0%).**

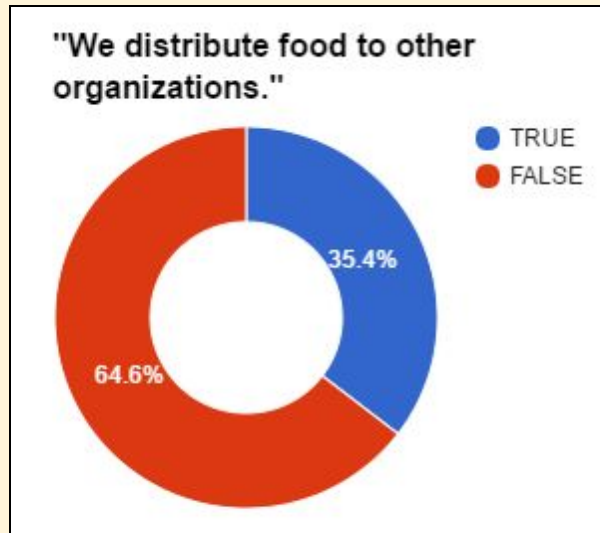


Other populations served are people who are elderly, experiencing mental illness, veterans, addicted to substances, formerly incarcerated, immigrants, physically disabled, LGBTQIA+, survivors of sexual/child/domestic abuse, intellectually/developmentally disabled, experiencing chronic illness, college students, at risk teens, and refugees.

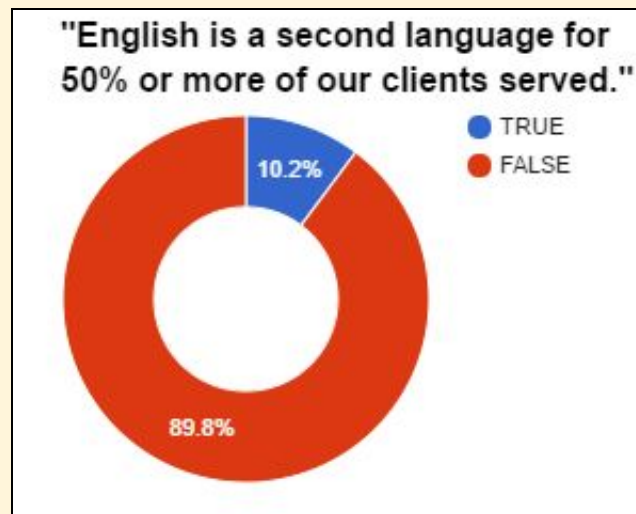
Nearly all agencies (92.2%) serve veterans, though only 2.6% serve 50% or more veterans.



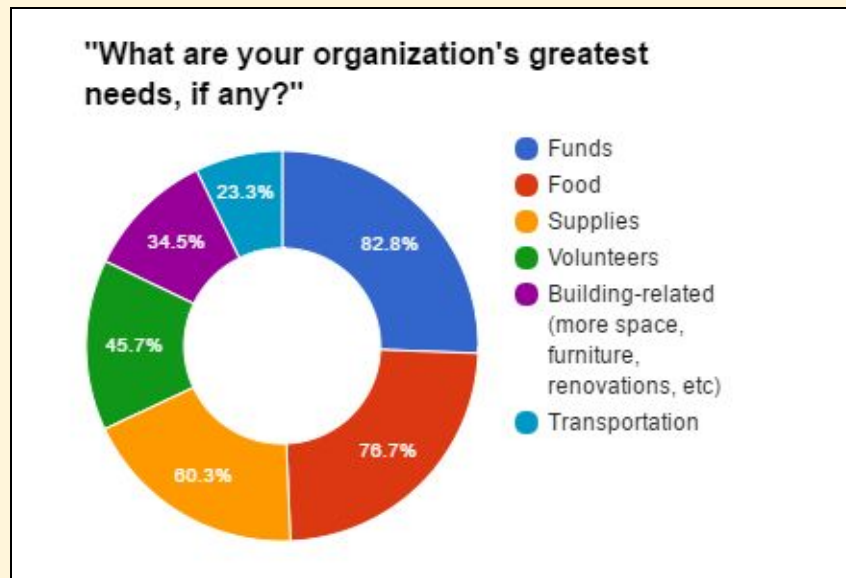
35.4% distribute food to other organizations, showing that FRN-donated food spreads far and wide across communities.



English is the primary language for at least 50% of clients at the majority of partner agencies (89.8%). For agencies at which more than half of clients speak a different primary language, the most common other languages are Spanish, Russian, French/Creole, and Hmong.



The primary needs of FRN's partner agencies are funds, food, and supplies. As one respondent said, "lack of funding affects all of the above."



Partner agency representatives also shared ideas for how they'd like to see their FRN students getting involved to meet these needs. If the respondent gave permission to do so, these ideas will be shared with FRN students.

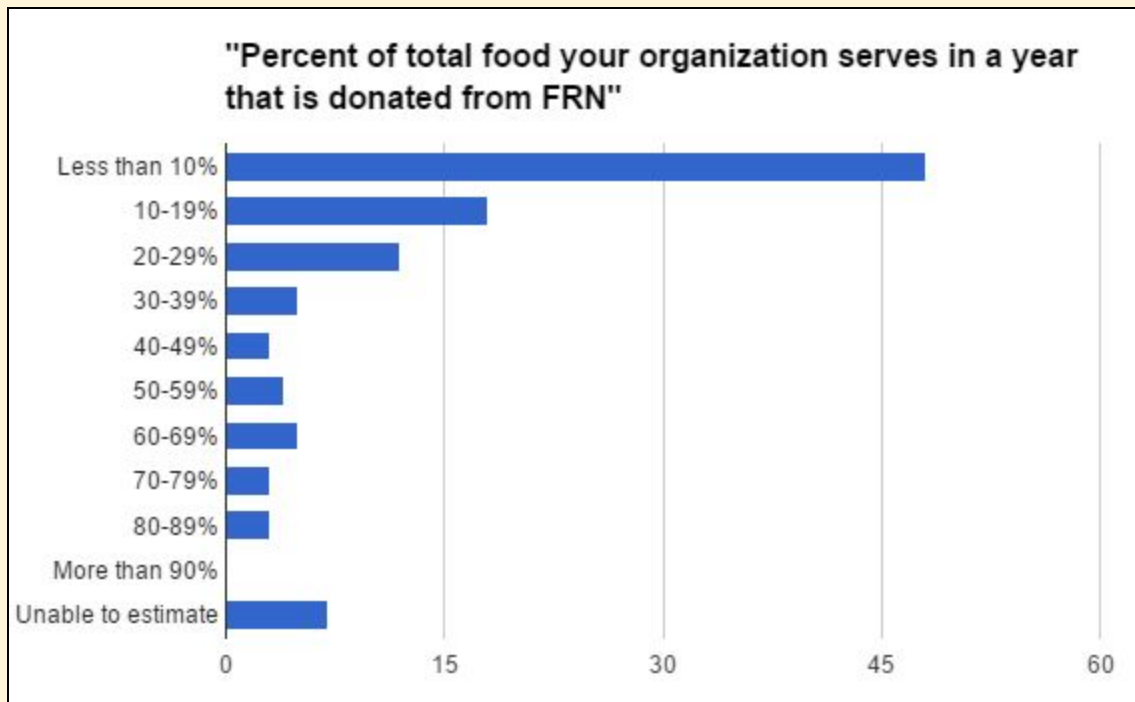
Impact of FRN Partnerships

The potential benefits of working with FRN fall into the categories of access and scope of programs, food, money, time, and relationships. The survey results indicate if and how these resources satisfy the needs and desires of partner agencies.

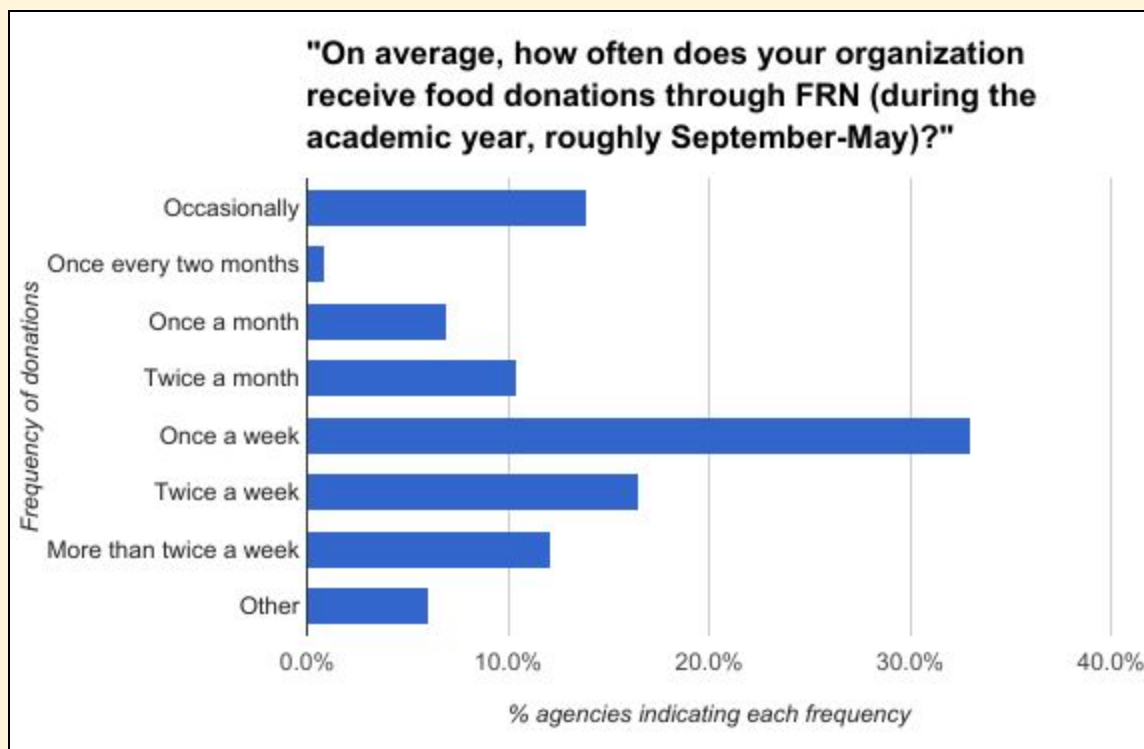
Access and Scope of Programs

FRN's partner agencies have reported serving up to 1.7 million meals per organization per year incorporating FRN food. Most fall within the range of 8 to 68,000 meals per year--quite a large range!

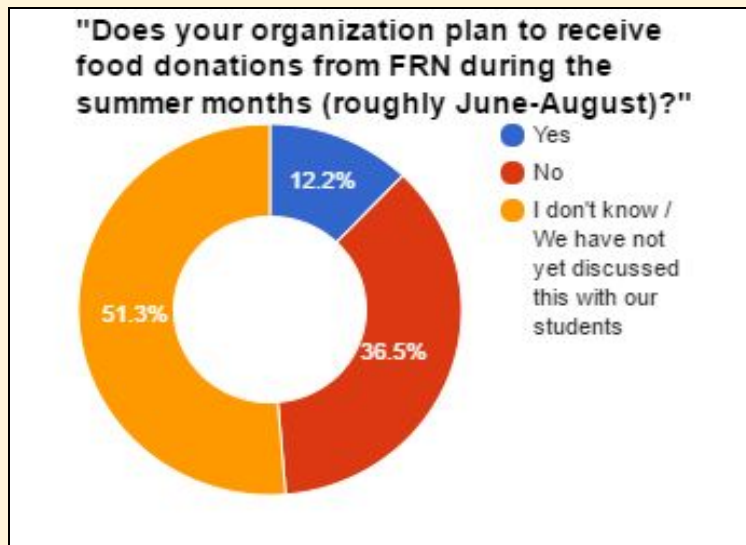
94.8% of agencies receive additional food from sources besides FRN. In fact, nearly half of agencies (48%) receive less than 10% of their food from FRN. While FRN can operate successfully as the sole provider of food to agencies, this is a highly uncommon scenario in the network.



Most agencies (33.0%) receive donations at a frequency of once per week. 61.7% received donations *at least* once a week, demonstrating that for most agencies chapter consistency is a strength of the program, at least during the school year.

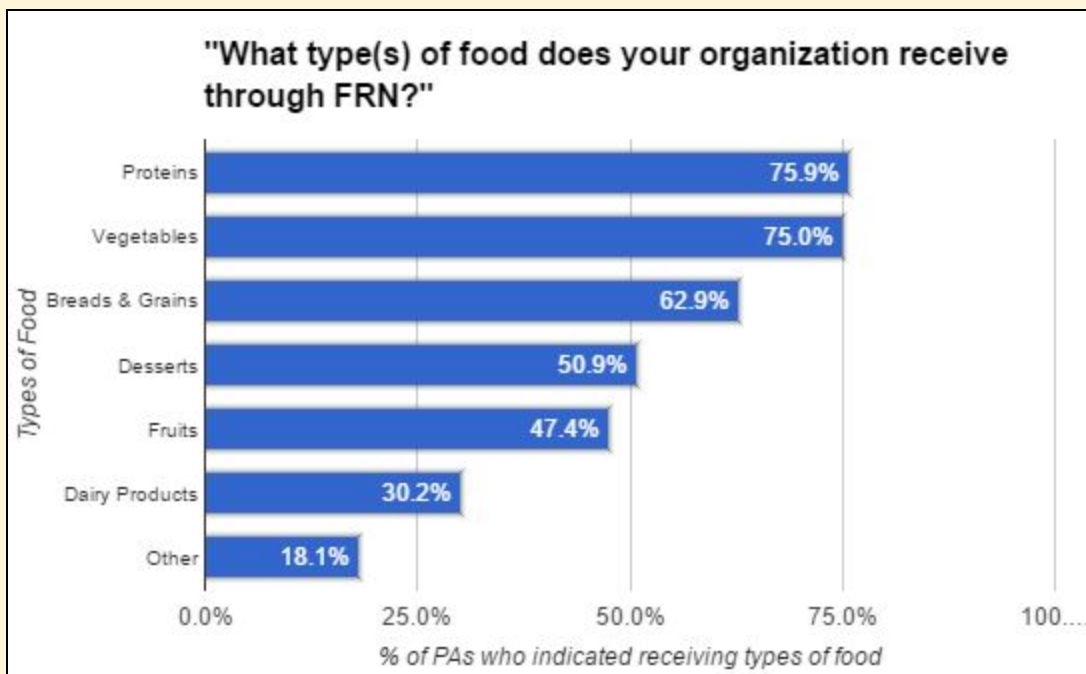


36.5% of agencies *do not* recover food over the summer. Only 12.2% of agencies planned to recover food over the summer in March of 2017; however, most (51.3%) had not discussed this yet with students.



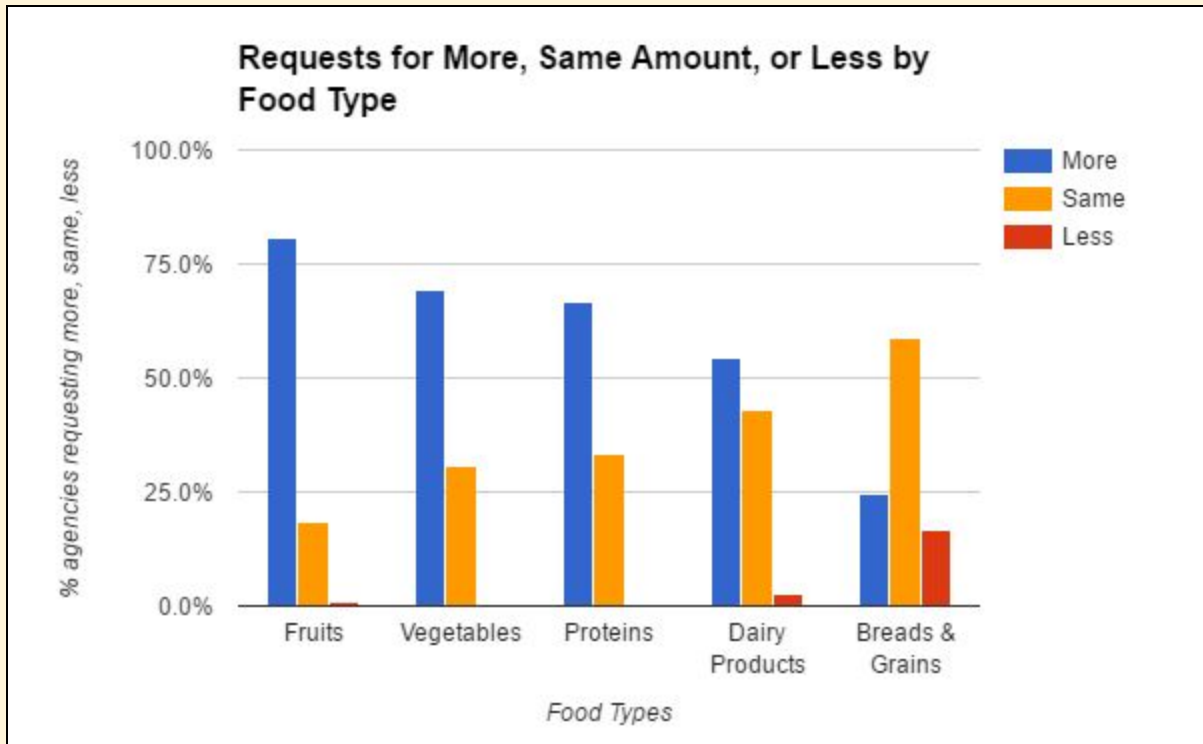
Food

The types of food received by the highest percentages of partner agencies are proteins, vegetables, and breads and grains. 75.9% of agencies receive proteins through FRN, 75.0% receive vegetables, and 62.9% receive breads and grains.

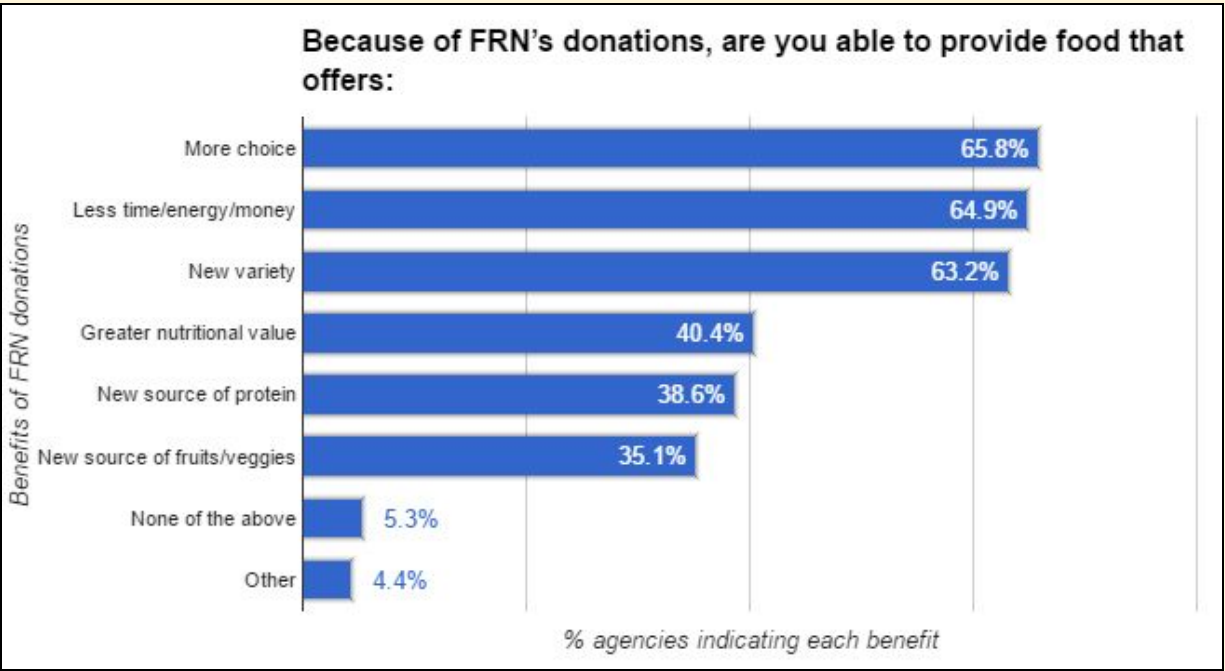


Only 10.3% of agencies receive just one type of food through FRN; 66.4% of agencies receive three or more types of food.

The most highly-desired types of food for FRN’s partner agencies are fruits, vegetables, and proteins.

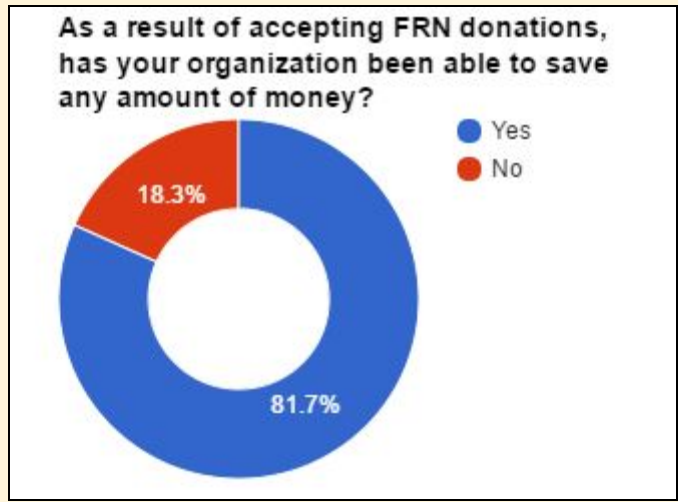


The primary benefits contributed by FRN food donations are choice, convenience (time, energy, and monetary savings), variety, and nutrition. For some, benefits also included introducing a new source of protein and/or a new source of fruits and vegetables.

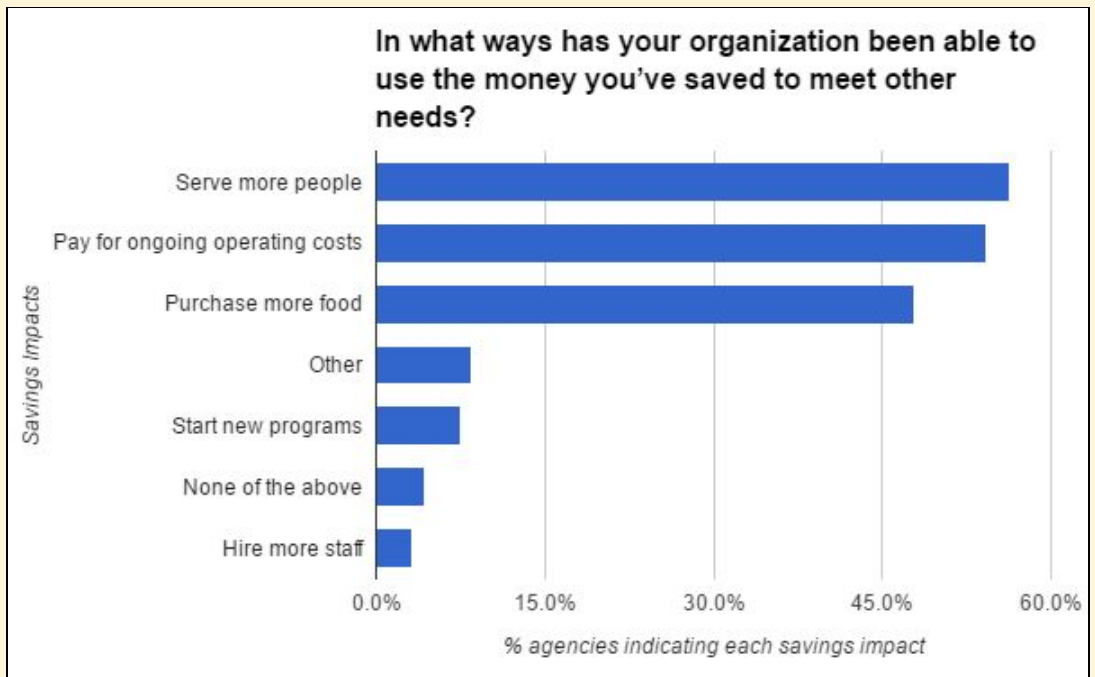


Money

81.7% of agencies report saving money as a result of accepting FRN donations. Agencies who saved money saved **between \$50 and \$50,000 per year**, averaging at \$7,000 per year. The average dollar value of FRN donations per agency per year is **\$8,664**.

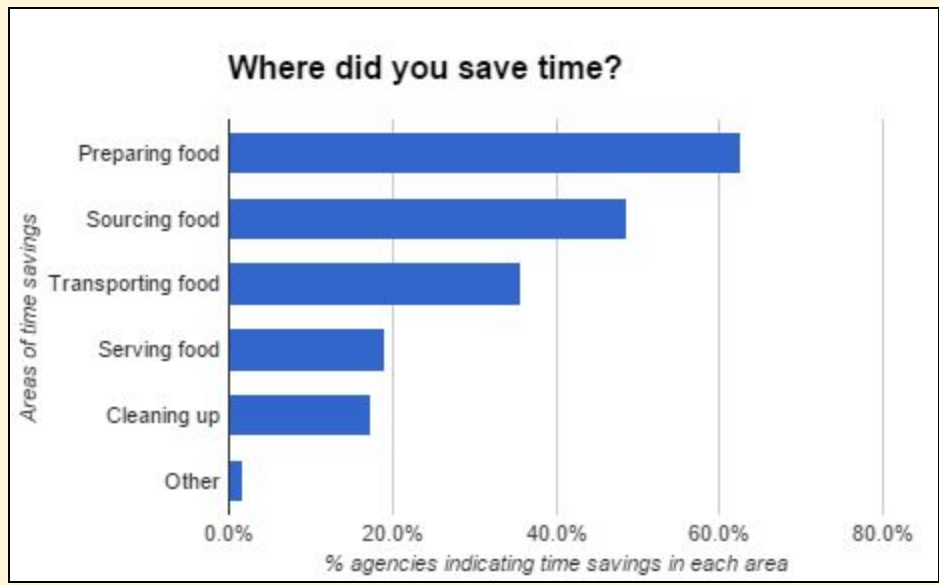


This money is used by 56.4% of agencies to serve more people, by 54.3% of agencies to pay for ongoing operating costs, and by 47.9% of agencies to purchase additional food. Some, but not many, agencies also use the money to start new programs or hire more staff.



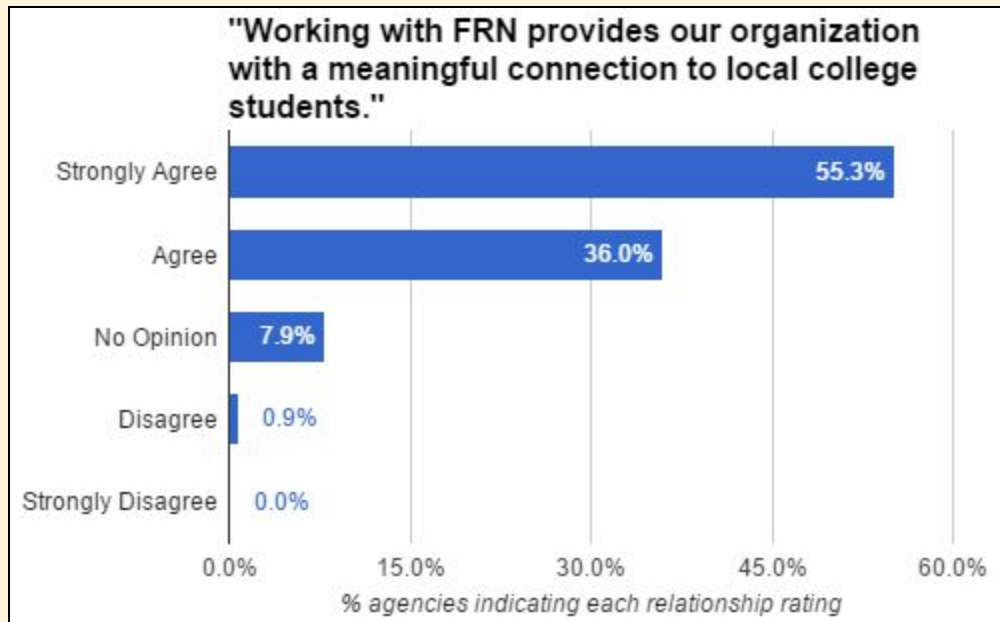
Time

Most agencies (80.9%) report saving time as a result of accepting FRN food donations. Of these, 62.6% of agencies save time in the area of food preparation and 48.7% save time in food sourcing. Others save time in food transportation, serving food, and cleaning up.

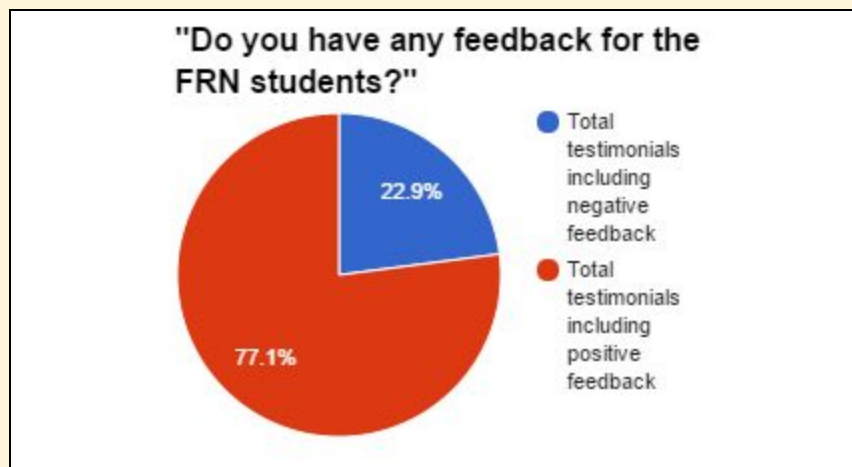


Relationships

91.3% of partner agencies agree that working with FRN provides their organization with a meaningful connection to local college students.

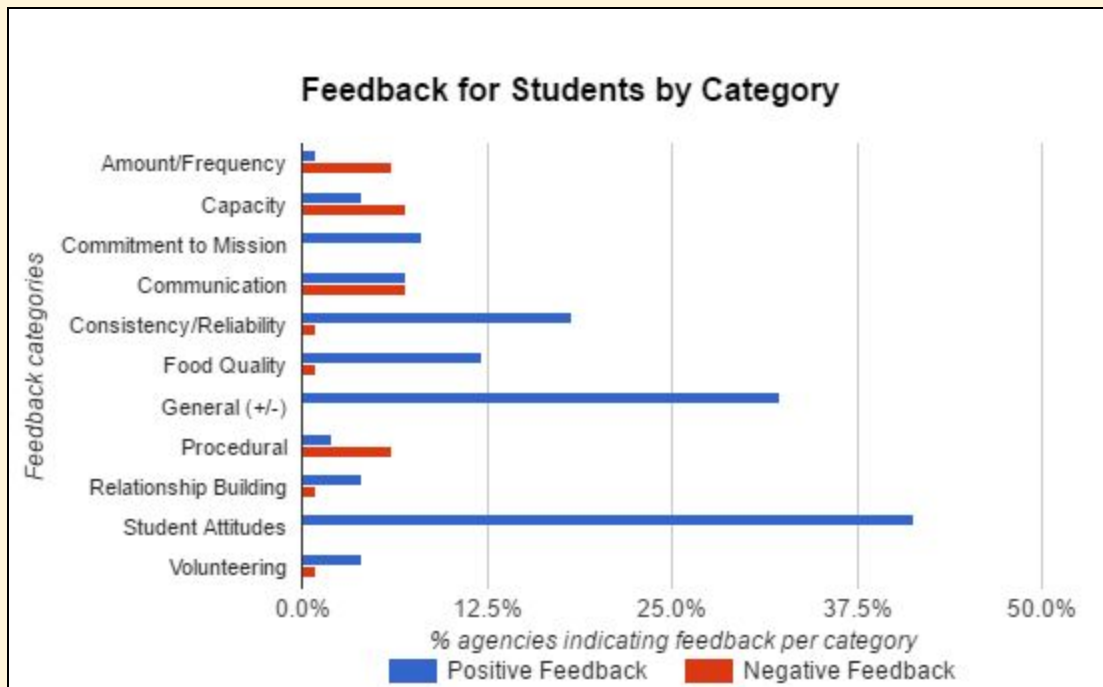


When asked to provide open-response feedback to students, 77.1% of responses included positive feedback, and only 22.9% of responses included negative feedback (including areas to grow and expand).



The top areas of positive feedback were: student attitudes, general appreciation of student's work, consistency and reliability, and food quality (including nutrition and

variety). **The top areas of negative feedback were:** limits on program capacity, (mis)communication, amount and frequency of donations, and procedural issues.



When asked about connecting with the network as a whole, **71.0% of agencies indicated no desire to connect beyond their current programs; those who did express a desire to connect more provided specific ideas**, including:

- Help expanding to other universities
- Help reaching more food donors (particularly national franchises)
- Sharing ideas and learning from what other programs are doing
- Receiving newsletters with updates from the network
- Improved communication with student leaders
- Help tracking data and impact

Conclusions

FRN's national team plans to take concrete, data-driven steps forward with the information provided through the 2017 Survey. While some of the feedback will take some time to incorporate into national programming, some steps can be taken immediately:

- 1) Facilitate a community panel and brainstorm about summer recoveries at the annual National Food Recovery Dialogue in Fall 2017, with the goal of equipping students with the resources to implement summer recovery programs in the future,
- 2) Develop resources for students to improve communication with their partner agency representatives, including a “Strong Relationship Checklist” that students and partner agency representatives can use to facilitate discussions,
- 3) Share individualized feedback with students regarding agency needs and feedback, where permissions were given, so that students can respond directly and depending on their capacities.

FRN National will continue to work through the data and testimonials, and incorporate feedback into programmatic decision making throughout the year.

Thank you to all the partner agency representatives who contributed to FRN’s data collection. We appreciate and value your community service, and look forward to continuing the work of building a strong network together.



*Lipscomb University students at the Share Our Supper FRN chapter worked with their Student Government Association to host a dinner honoring campus facilities workers. This photo shows students and facilities workers building relationships over a shared meal. **Photo credit: Feiten Photography***