Food Recovery and Food Safety
Options for local health departments

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Presentation overview

- Research introduction

- The role of local health departments

- Food recovery network and food safety

- Model food safety programs

- Moving forward – audience input

Why assuring food safety is important…

- We don't want to hurt the people we are trying to help.

- Secure the long-term supply of donated food.

Donor Brand Protection

Our Research

Purpose – How can local health departments best assure the safety of their local food recovery network?

Methods – In-person and phone interviews with stakeholders in the Midwest and across the U.S.
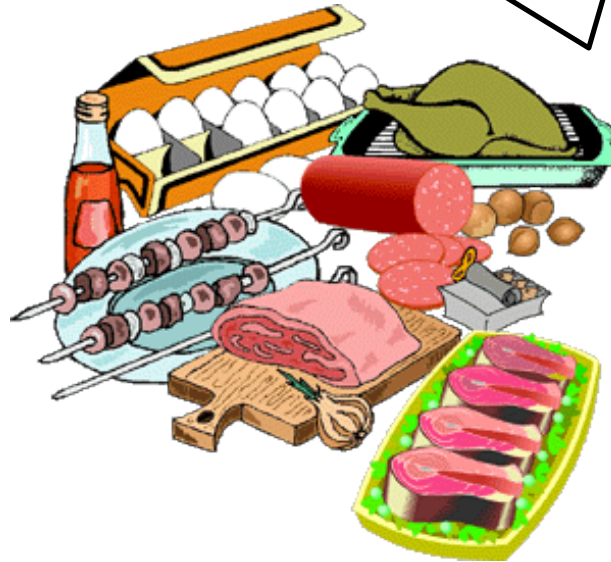
Local Health Departments

A range of current responses…

"Pantries must meet the same requirements as grocery stores."

"That food is being donated? OK, let's move on."

Local Health Departments

Face two major barriers…

1. Lack of resources

2. Lack of (or unclear) legal authority

   Exempt from inspection… "churches, temples, synagogues or other religious institutions, civic, fraternal, or veteran's organizations where food is prepared, served, transported, or stored by volunteer personnel only on non-consecutive days."
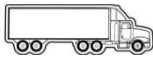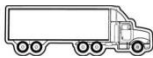
Commercial Food System
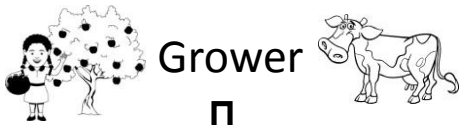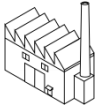
Grower

Processer

Distribution

Retail

Grocery

Restaurant

Institution

Food Recovery Network

Food Recovery Network

Commercial Food System

Grower

Processer

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Food Bank
1-2 per community

Food Assistance Agency
Up to 100+ per community

Food Recovery Network

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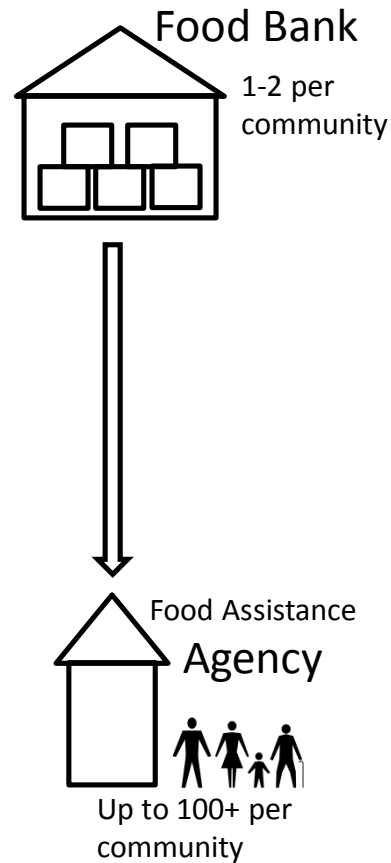
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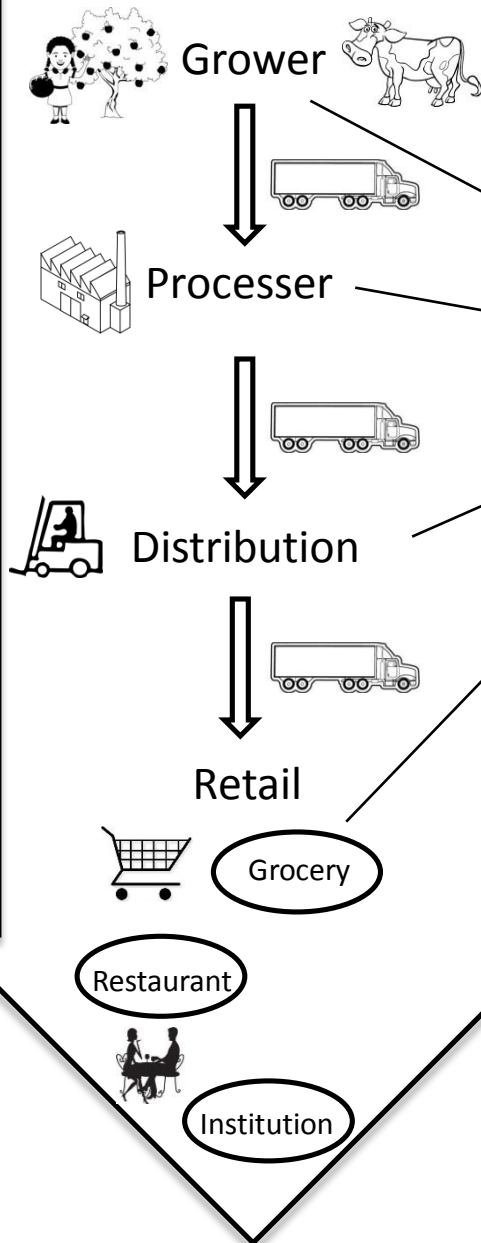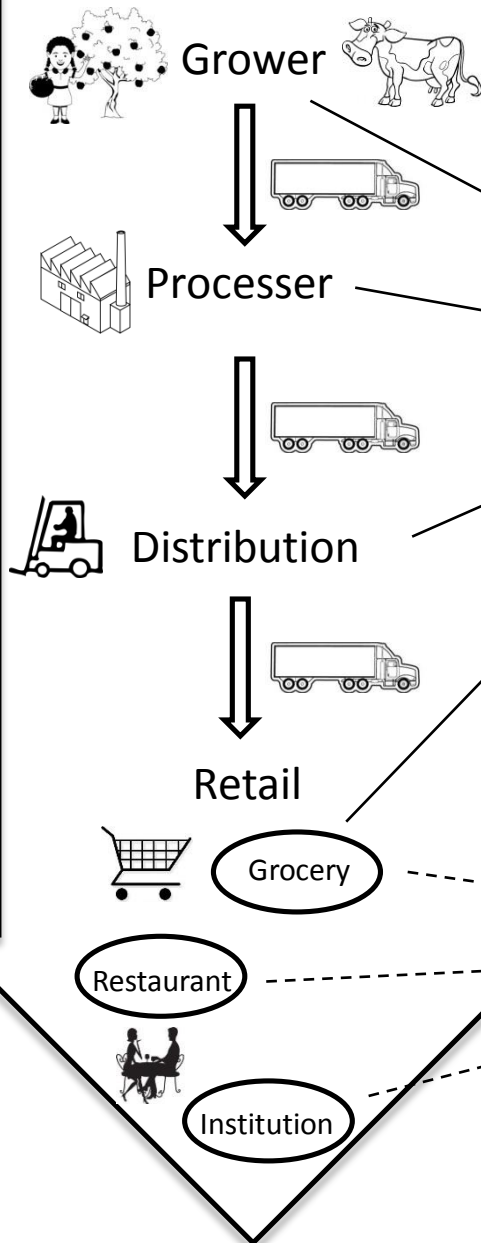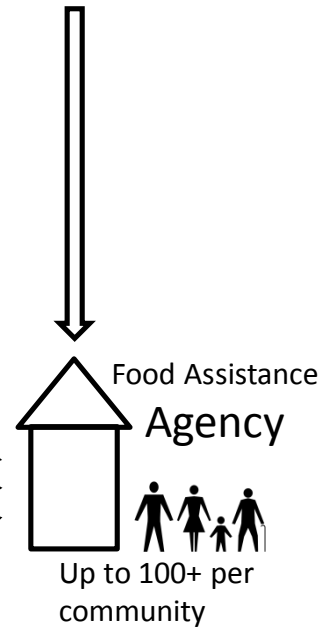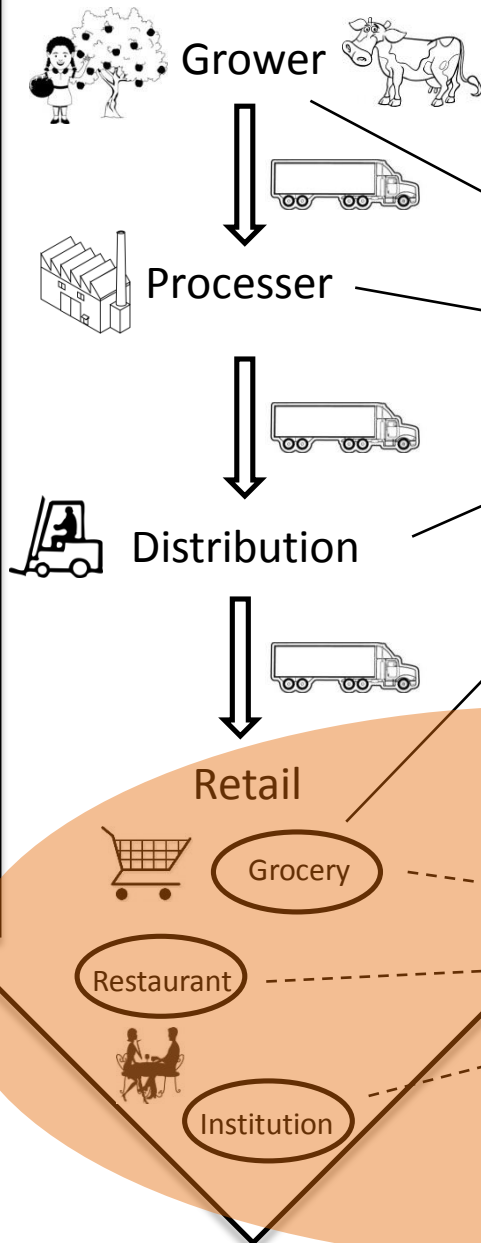
Our primary focus for food safety.

Steps in the Food Recovery Process

Donor

1. Decide food item will not be served/sold. Assess safety of food for donation.

↓

2. Repackage/Label/Store

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Transport Vehicle

3. Retrieval and transport

Steps in the Food Recovery Process

Donor

1. Decide food item will not be served/sold. Assess safety of food for donation.

↓

2. Repackage/Label/Store

↓

Transport Vehicle

3. Retrieval and transport

↓

Pantry

4. Receive donated food. Assess safety of food for consumption.

↓

5. Repackage/Label/Store

↓

6. Display during pantry hours

↓

7. Assess safety of left-overs for consumption.

# Food Safety Guidelines

- ServSafe® Food Handler's Guide for Food Banking

- Conference for Food Protection - Comprehensive Resource for Food Recovery Programs 2016

- Feeding America – A Comprehensive Guide for Agencies, Volunteers, and Food Bank Staff

- Harvest Support Network – Training Resources

- Many local guidelines

For the most part…

We know what it takes to provide safe, recovered food.
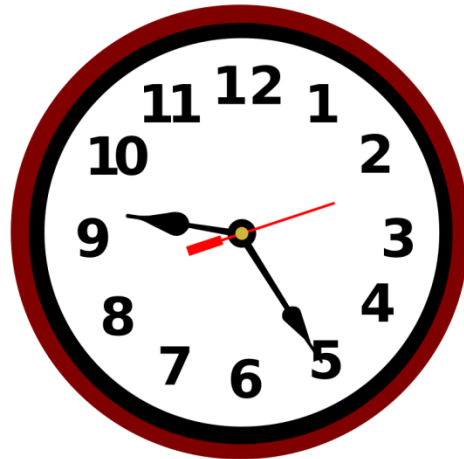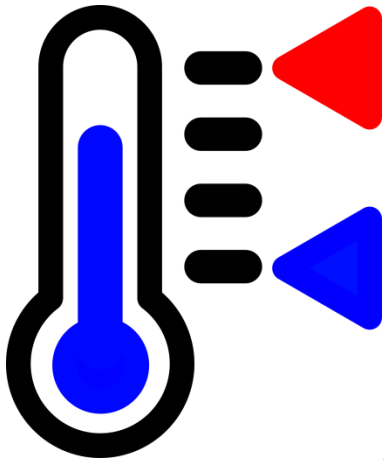
But areas of uncertainty remain...

- Food date interpretation

- Transport temperatures/times

- Repackaging

- Display temperatures/times

- Others

Food Safety Allies

- Feeding America – Food safety requirements and inspections for participating agencies – may vary by local food bank.

- Food Donation Connection – Helping major restaurant chains make safe local donations – some inspection of agencies.

- Some corporate guidelines (eg. – Starbucks) – may vary by local store.

Food Safety Program
for a local food recovery network

A community-wide process to assure the safety of all food distributed through the local food recovery network.

Criteria for a Model
Local Food Safety Program

1. Includes food safety practices known to be effective (see prior slides).

2. Food safety expectations are responsive to the needs of the food-insecure.

3. Food safety conditions and practices are reasonably verified and enforced by unbiased parties.

4. Promotes information sharing and optimization of resources.

5. Requires resources consistent with those locally available.

2. Food safety expectations are responsive to the needs of the food-insecure.

Evaluation of tolerable risk in commercial food safety programs is fundamentally different than in food donation programs. The reason is that lack of food for the food-insecure poses its own set of public health risks.

Food safety practices that make a small improvement in donated food safety but result in a large reduction in food availability could aggravate public health risks rather than reduce them. Thus, some practices expected in commercial food service establishments may not be appropriate for donated food.

3. Food safety conditions and practices are reasonably verified and enforced by unbiased parties.

Verification and enforcement – typically by local health departments – is an essential component of commercial food safety programs.

Given limited resources and legal authority, other approaches to verification and enforcement may be warranted for food recovery safety programs.

4. Promotes information sharing and optimization of resources.

The decentralized nature of local food recovery networks can be a barrier to effective communication. Organizations may be too small to attract necessary resources.

Food safety programs that facilitate communication and coordination among agencies can improve food safety and food safety resources.

Possible models…
For Local Food Safety Programs

- Current "hands off" or "kitchen-only" program.

- Strict permitting and enforcement.

- Umbrella organization.

- Small-load logistics organization.

- Other

Possible models…
"Hands Off" or "Kitchen Only"

❌ 1. Effective food safety practices.

✔ 2. Responsive to the needs of the food-insecure.

❌ 3. Verified and enforced.

❌ 4. Information sharing and resources.

✔ 5. Within public resource limits.

Possible models…

Strict permitting and enforcement

- All agencies fully permitted and inspected by health department

- Hold to same standards as restaurants and grocery stores

Possible models…

Strict permitting and enforcement

✔ 1. Effective food safety practices.

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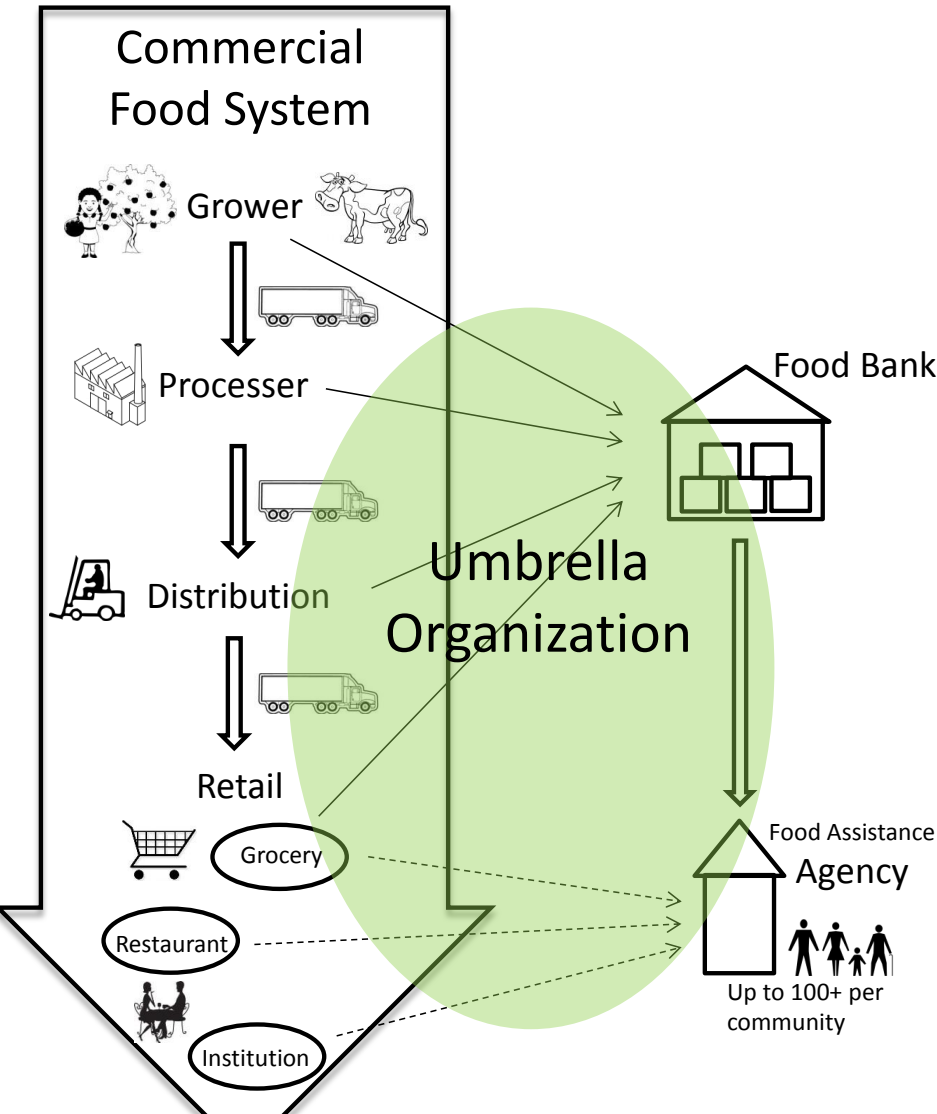
Possible models...
Umbrella Organization

Commercial Food System

Grower → Processer → Distribution → Retail (Grocery, Restaurant, Institution)

Umbrella Organization

Food Bank → Food Assistance Agency (Up to 100+ per community)

Examples

- Waste Not OC

WASTE NOT OC
COALITION
Feed the Need
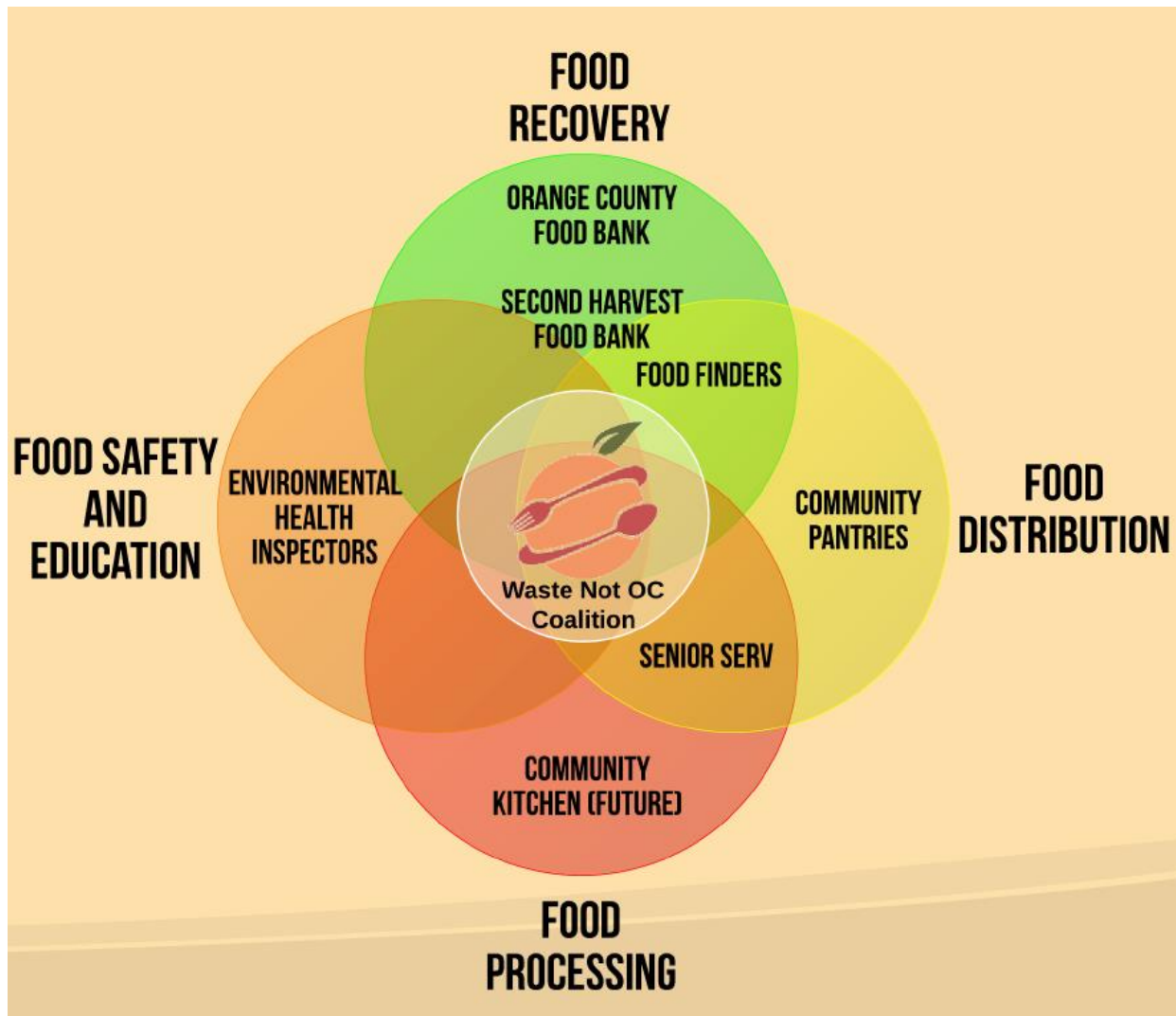
- Food Rescue Partnership

FOOD RESCUE PARTNERSHIP
Feeding People, Not Landfills

Umbrella organization…
Waste Not OC

Waste Not OC - Orange County, CA

- Outreach and advocacy to those outside the food donation network.

- Facilitation for those within the network.

- Founded by health department.

- Health inspectors promote food donation, provide training.

- But no inspection of pantries or kitchens.

- Coalition with major food distributors accesses resources for agencies

Umbrella organization…
Food Rescue Partnership - Quad Cities, IA/IL

- Outreach/advocacy/facilitation.

- Founded by health department.

- Health inspectors promote food donation, provide guidance to pantries and kitchens.

- But inspection of pantries or kitchens is voluntary.
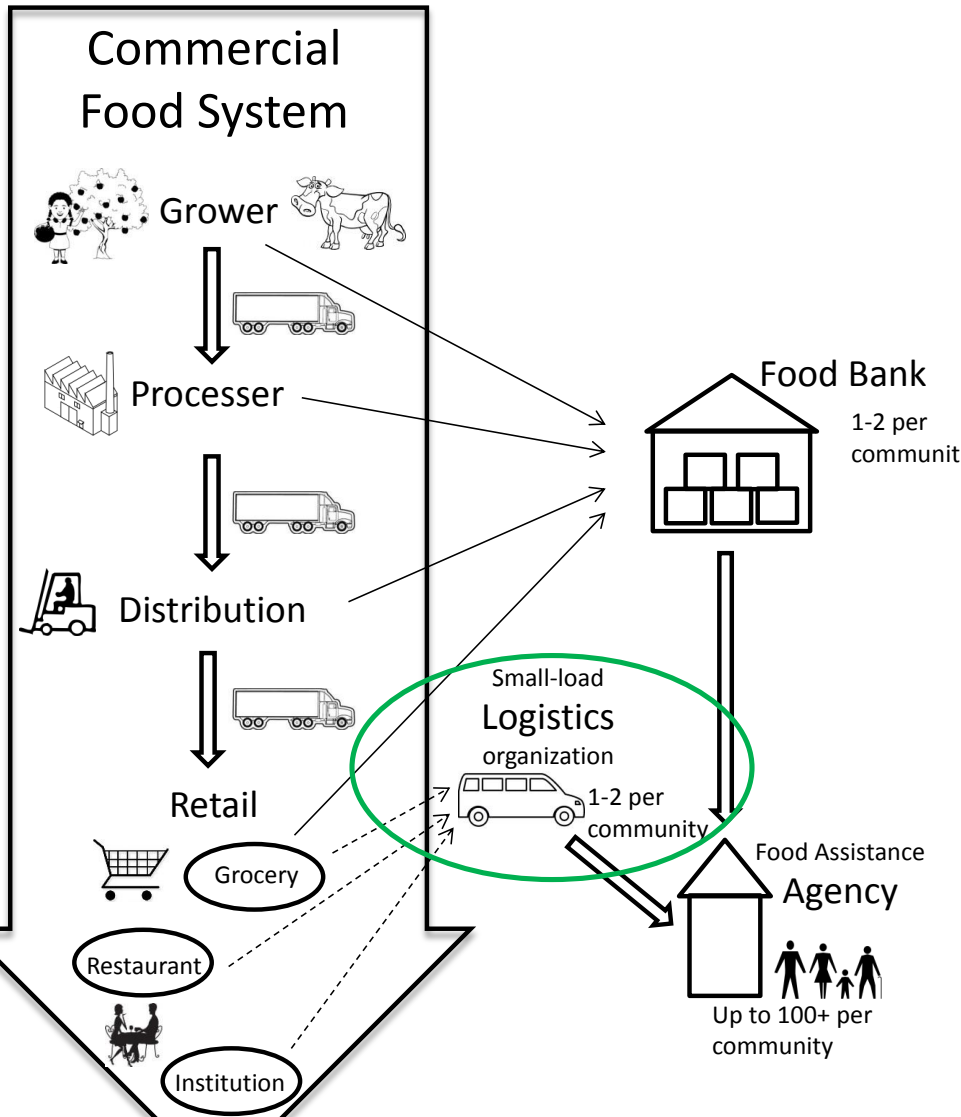
Possible models…
Umbrella Organization

✓/✗   1.   Effective food safety practices.

✓   2.   Responsive to the needs of the food-insecure.

✗   3.   Verified and enforced.

✓   4.   Information sharing and resources.

✓?   5.   Within public resource limits.

Possible models…
Small-load Logistics Org.

Commercial Food System

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Processer

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Retail

Grocery

Restaurant

Institution

Food Bank
1-2 per communit

Small-load Logistics organization
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Examples…

• Food Finders (LA/OC, CA)

Food Finders
Feeding people. Giving hope

• Table-to-Table (Iowa City)

TABLE TO TABLE

Possible models…
Small-load Logistics Org.

- Standardize and fund logistics

- Central point of communication with agencies

- Potential to inspect participating agencies
  - T2T – assist agencies but no formal inspection.
  - FF –require agency to have certified FH, but inspection only "as needed."

Possible models…
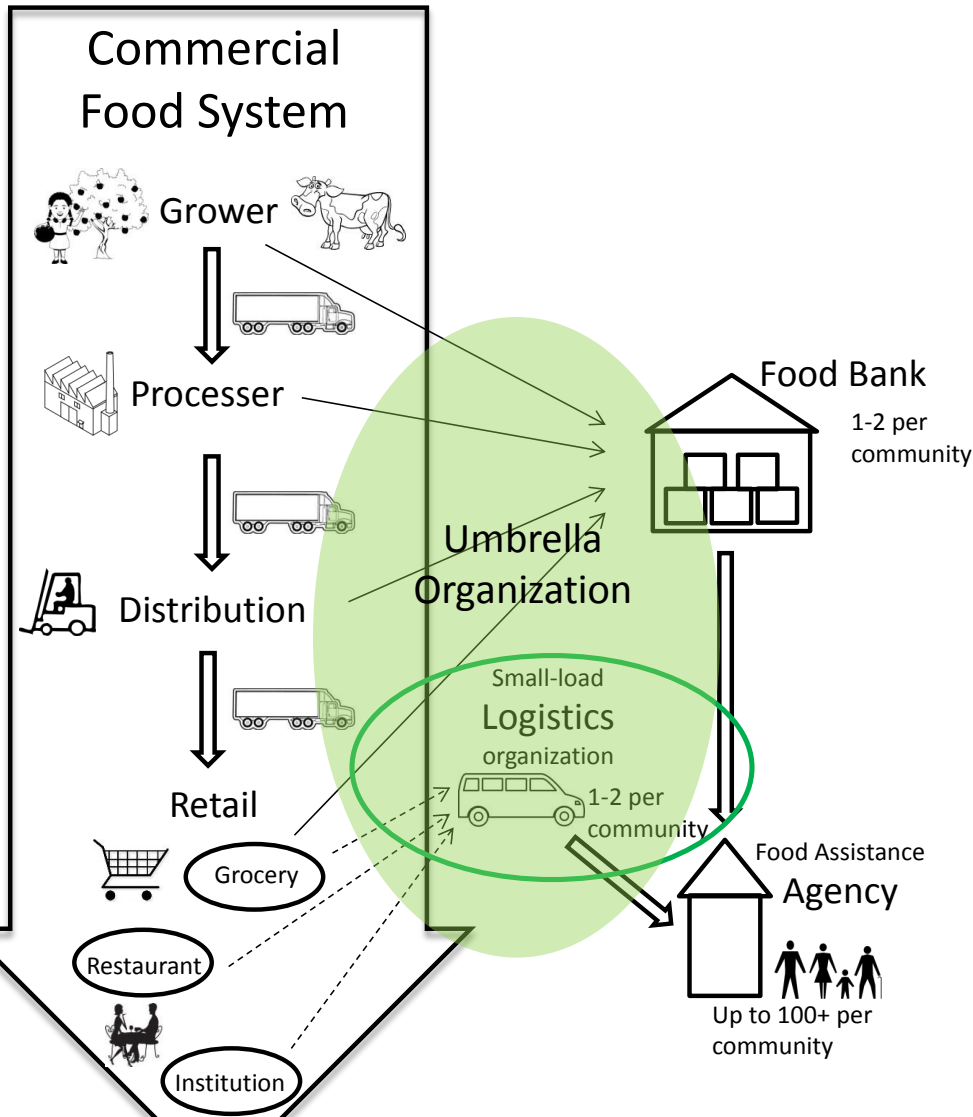# Small-load Logistics Org.

✔/✘ 1. Effective food safety practices.

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✔/✘ 3. Verified and enforced.

✔/✘ 4. Information sharing and resources.

✔/✘ 5. Within public resource limits.

Moving forward

Possible hybrid model?

Umbrella organization plus Small-load logistics org.

All agencies inspected by FB or Logistics Org. – using HD-approved protocol.

Moving forward

Ideas?

Suggestions?

Audience Input?