

**The Cost of a Free Lunch: Transforming Food Aid Fundraising Towards
Leveraging Systems Change**

By

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"Strength of purpose, achieves the impossible" - Unknown

Executive Summary

This project explores opportunities to support systemic change through the unique lens of fundraising, focusing specifically on donor relations practices, power imbalances, and the impact language has on the charitable food aid system. The primary purpose of this research study is to provide a set of recommendations for charitable food aid organizations to transform donor relations practices with the overall goal of building relationships that are geared towards leveraging long-term change within the food security system.

Food insecurity is a complex problem that continues to persist despite decades of food aid, with the demand continuing to rapidly increase due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Food insecurity is further compounded by record high inflation rates resulting in significant and ongoing increases to food prices creating a perfect storm for the hunger crisis that is taking shape in the Greater Toronto Area and Canada at large, with many people facing food insecurity for the first time. Addressing the immediate need of hunger relief are charitable food programs that operate on a continuous need for funding, which results in a significant ongoing organizational investment in fundraising activities.

Funding is crucial to continue operations and address the immediate need, however many authors argue that this dependency on funding creates a cyclical and transactional relationship between donors and charities (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998, Villeneuve, 2018). Primarily, there have been concerns that this cycle ultimately reinforces the status quo of charitable food aid due to focusing on addressing the immediacy of hunger as the problem rather than a symptom of poverty, while simultaneously centering the donor and the impact that would not be possible without their support. Donors are naturally motivated to give by the urgency of hunger as a problem, and as such it is reasonable for organizations to incorporate that in their fundraising activities to ensure operations can continue. However, at the same time this is problematic because it places donor motivation at the center of fundraising, which contributes to the transactional nature of donor-charity relationships and detracts from engaging donors as collaborators in addressing systemic solutions that reduce the immediate need of hunger.

While the reality of fundraising is vital to address food insecurity, this project strives to demonstrate why change to the status quo is necessary. Additionally, this project aims to encourage food aid fundraising professionals to explore opportunities to improve existing practices that will continue to ensure funding while concurrently addressing long-term solutions to food insecurity as a symptom of poverty.

Methodology and Methods

This research project utilized a mixed methods approach to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The methodologies that provided the research design were a gap analysis, a promising practices analysis, and a community-engaged approach. The data collection tools were a

current state system map analysis and web-based survey. These methodologies and methods were utilized to support answering the primary and secondary project research questions.

Primary Research Question:

- How can food aid charities based in the Greater Toronto Area transform donor relations practices to promote donor relationships focused on systemic change within the charitable food aid system?

Secondary Research Questions:

- What role does language play in food insecurity discourse and what promising practices can be developed for donor communications?
- How are power imbalances inherent in traditional fundraising strategies and what tactics will help shift away from those imbalances?
- What recommendations can food security organizations implement to transform their donor relations practices and gear relationships with donors towards affecting systemic change?

Key Findings

The findings from both research methods were reviewed and synthesized along with supporting arguments from the literature to extract and highlight those most directly related to the project research question. These key findings demonstrated that there is potential for transforming donor relations practices in a way that could focus more on long-term impact and systemic change.

The current state system analysis illustrated the ways in which the system reinforces itself through the connections and interactions of the system with a focus on the fundraising cycle. This supported the identification of common behaviours and possible opportunities for change within the system. Specifically, the analysis identified the shifting the burden archetype within the system due to the focus of resources on addressing symptoms of the problem rather than address the complexity of the problem itself. Further, this project research revealed three leverage points that hold the potential to affect change through the lens of fundraising in charitable food aid: changing the structure of information flows, the rules of the system, and the ability to evolve or self-organize within the system.

The survey findings demonstrated a consensus that donor relations practices in charitable food aid could be improved to better support systemic change and that donors play a role in affecting systemic change beyond their financial support. In addition, the findings highlighted specific tactics or practices that could be explored related to transformation, including language used in communications marketing and recognition benefits, and advocacy work.

Together, these findings informed the development of recommendations for fundraising professionals to consider implementing to affect behavioural change within the system and promote long-term impact on food insecurity.

Recommendations

The following five recommendations were developed from the research findings:

- **Recommendation 1: Develop ethical communications practices.**
 - Develop an internal language policy that outlines how communications should be framed when shared with donors and the wider public, to align language with ethical considerations and ultimately support promoting systemic change.
 - Prioritizes ethical language, imagery, and storytelling in communications used with donors.
 - Implement an internal language policy that specifically outlines what terms are appropriate to use with donors and the public, as well as clearly defining those that are not appropriate.
- **Recommendation 2: Incorporate long-term impact communications.**
 - Focus on communicating long-term impact in conjunction with short-term impact. Incorporating long-term impact into donor communications is important because it supports building a narrative focused on creating impact that extends beyond the symptom of the problem.
 - Explore reframing impact metrics to allow opportunity to discuss progress made towards systemic solutions in conjunction with necessary short-term impact on the symptom of the problem.
- **Recommendation 3: Develop community and movement building opportunities.**
 - Develop opportunities for community and movement building with supporter bases, as well as engaging in collaborative efforts with the communities served by charitable food aid and other organizations working within the charitable food aid space. Supporting self-organization within the charitable food aid system will create space for increased ownership over systemic solutions and enable collaboration with diverse stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 4: Incorporate policy education and awareness into donor relations.**
 - Incorporate advocacy and policy education into donor relations practices to build awareness of the current state of the problem and support ongoing discussions of opportunities and possible actions that can be taken to support systemic change.
 - Develop resources that empower donors to become civically engaged with the problem they already support addressing through their financial support.
- **Recommendation 5: Engage in transparent conversations about resources.**
 - Engage in transparent conversations with donors about the high resource cost of donor driven practices like marketing and recognition benefits as well as funding applications and requirements.
 - Work with donors to develop innovative opportunities to reduce the internal costs of these activities, while still maintaining mutually beneficial relationships to maintain funding.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	IV
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	IV
KEY FINDINGS.....	V
RECOMMENDATIONS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	IX
LIST OF TABLES	X
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND AND DEFINING THE PROBLEM.....	1
PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE & SCOPE.....	6
RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY.....	7
ORGANIZATION OF REPORT	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
THE APPROACH TO CONDUCTING THE LITERATURE REVIEW	9
CURRENT STATE OF THE CHARITABLE FOOD AID SYSTEM.....	10
FUNDRAISING CYCLE CRITIQUES AND EMERGING FRAMEWORKS	12
THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE	15
LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY.....	16
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	17
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY, METHODS, AND DATA ANALYSIS.....	20
METHODOLOGY	20
METHODS.....	22
RESEARCH ETHICS	23
DATA ANALYSIS	24
SURVEY FINDINGS.....	24
STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS.....	25
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS – CURRENT STATE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS.....	28
CHARITABLE FOOD AID SYSTEM.....	28
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: CURRENT STATE SYSTEM ANALYSIS	33
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS – SURVEY RESULTS.....	35
SURVEY THEMES.....	35

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: SURVEY	39
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....	41
CONNECTING KEY FINDINGS WITH THE LITERATURE	41
ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION	47
UNEXPECTED FINDINGS AND NEW IDEAS	49
STRATEGIC AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS	50
LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	50
REVISITING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	51
CHAPTER SEVEN: RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER.....	54
INTRODUCTION.....	54
RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER	54
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	57
REFERENCES.....	58
APPENDICES.....	62
APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL	62
APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT POSTER.....	63
APPENDIX C – WEB-BASED SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	64

List of Figures

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022).....	19
FIGURE 2: SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY TARGETED GROUP (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022)	25
FIGURE 3: CHARITABLE FOOD AID SYSTEM - CURRENT STATE (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022) ...	29
FIGURE 4: SURVEY QUESTION 18 FINDINGS (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022)	38
FIGURE 5: SURVEY QUESTION 19 FINDINGS (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022)	38
FIGURE 6: REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022)	52

List of Tables

TABLE 1: SURVEY QUESTION 11 FINDINGS (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022).....	36
TABLE 2: SURVEY QUESTION 12 FINDINGS (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022).....	37
TABLE 3: SURVEY QUESTION 20 FINDINGS (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022).....	39
TABLE 4: KEY RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS (CREATED BY EMILY BARRIE, 2022)	48

Chapter One: Introduction

“Giving is not just about making a donation, it’s about making a difference.”
(Kathy Calvin, CEO United Nations’ Foundation)

The purpose of this project is to identify opportunities for transformation through donor relations practices within the context of charitable food aid in the Greater Toronto Area with the goal to supporting systemic change within the charitable food aid system. Approaching systemic change from the angle of fundraising is a unique way to frame the issue of charitable food aid that this project utilized to demonstrate how potential opportunities to adjust or evolve existing practices in the system from a fundraising perspective can support change to the status quo of the charitable food aid system, and ultimately support affecting systemic change.

Charitable food aid provides vital and emergent support to people experiencing food insecurity. This support is critical as the demand for food continues to rise at an alarming rate, which has only been further compounded by the ongoing effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, with inflation at record levels the cost of food is becoming insurmountable, leading to many people throughout the Greater Toronto Area, and Canada at large, to face food insecurity for the first time. To ensure these food aid programs continue to operate, charitable organizations require ongoing access to reliable funding, and by extension, the donors that have the means to provide that funding. This funding dependency creates a cyclical relationship between donor and charity that ultimately reinforces the status quo of charitable food aid due to predominantly focusing on addressing the immediate problem of hunger, rather than the root problem of poverty. As food insecurity is an immensely complex social problem, this project attempts to approach the problem from the perspective of fundraising and framing donor relations as an opportunity for engaging and empowering donors to promote systemic change that will address poverty as the root cause of hunger. Therefore, this research project sought to identify opportunities to transform donor relations that focus on leveraging positive systemic change within the charitable food aid sector.

Background and Defining the Problem

Charitable food aid programs have grown in number and scope in Canada, and the Greater Toronto Area, since they first began addressing food insecurity, primarily during the 1980s (Poppendieck, 1998; Tarasuk, Dachner, and Loopstra, 2014). Since then, thousands of food programs have been established in Canada, with as many public and private donors responding to the need through financial and food donations (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Tarasuk, Dachner, and Loopstra, 2014). With almost 20% of Canadians accessing charitable food aid in 2021, the current state of food insecurity in Canada is alarming and becoming increasingly urgent as the demand for food has led to a 72% increase in the number of people accessing food services due to the varying impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Nikkel,

Summerhill, Gooch, Bucknell, and LaPlain, 2021). Indeed, today, food insecurity in Canada is at an all-time high. In the Fall of 2020 one in ten Canadians aged 12 and up reported experiencing food insecurity (Statistics Canada, 2022), and since then food bank visits alone have grown by 20% (Food Banks Canada, 2021). With inflation skyrocketing and the demand for access to healthy food rapidly increasing (Lorinc, 2022), now more than ever the development of sustainable long-term systemic solutions to the problem of food insecurity are crucial.

Meanwhile, donor relations practices have evolved into the fundraising cycle that is seen today, using methods and language that favour retaining donors and ultimately reinforcing power dynamics inherent in the charitable model (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Fundraising is a multi-faceted reality that is entrenched within the charitable and nonprofit sector in Canada. A reality which, towards the goal of raising financial support for various causes, encompasses a myriad of processes and behaviours that support the tactics used to acquire and retain donor funds on annual basis, which ultimately supports an organization's strategic efforts to achieve their mission. While the intentions of this cyclical donor-charity relationship are positive, with it comes numerous fraught and complex issues that are unintended.

Broadly, the current state of donor relations is transactional and exists at the surface level of asking for and ideally obtaining financial support for an organization's mission, reinforcing a power imbalance inherent within the donor-beneficiary dynamic. Particularly, traditional fundraising practices rely on language tactics that celebrate the donor as the saviour without whom beneficiary circumstance may not be improved, thereby instilling a power dynamic (Poppendieck, 1998). This dynamic is problematic not only because of the direct issues of an imbalance of power, but because it centers the donor and prioritizes efforts to retain their support, which tactically does not always address the root causes of the issue the organization exists to serve (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998). While donor motivations to support the immediate issue through funding are both necessary and commendable on the part of the donor, this project seeks to identify opportunities for charities to incorporate long-term impact in their donor relations practices and thereby empower donors to support impact beyond the vital support of the immediate demand.

Regarding relevant existing policy, poverty reduction and food policy initiatives are found at each order of government in Canada. At the federal order, the Food Policy for Canada initiative was released by the Government of Canada in 2019 that focuses on the development of a sustainable food system, with emphasis on addressing food insecurity and poverty reduction (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2019). While this initiative addresses food insecurity and the issues surrounding it, there appears to be a gap in the discussion regarding the role of the charitable food model in this system and its impact on affecting systemic change.

Further, the Canada Revenue Agency governs over charitable organizations through a regulatory and financial lens; however, does not impose guidelines informing donor relations

practices beyond the financial and ethical implications of fundraising as that falls beyond the scope of their jurisdiction (Canada Revenue Agency, 2019). Instead, various professional associations provide guidelines to support ethical donor practices although discussion if any regarding the dynamics inherent in fundraising and their impact on long-term solutions is limited (Association of Fundraising Professionals, 2014; Community Centric Fundraising, 2021; Trust Based Philanthropy Project, 2021). Moreover, these membership organizations do not have any regulating or enforcing authority over donor relations and fundraising practices, holding little influence over public perception of member organizations, thus limiting incentives for organizations to change their practices. As such, there does not appear to be any existing policy or institutional guidelines that inform donor practices specifically related to food security. It is important to note here that government policy may not be needed for this problem, but perhaps points to reasonable need for additional rules and regulations at sector and organization levels to support charities in maintaining ethical donor relations practices.

Food security goals and poverty reduction frameworks also exist in the different orders of government and in nongovernmental organizations. For example, the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by member states in 2015 towards the implementation of the agenda by 2030, include no poverty and zero hunger (United Nations, 2015). As a member state, Canada has implemented the agenda as a strategic framework towards implementation, which has led to the establishment of the 2030 National Agenda Strategy and a Sustainable Development Goals Funding Program. Many organizations also look to the SDGs to guide their strategic priorities and action plans, both in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors; however, progress and accountability regarding the implementation of these goals falls beyond the scope of this project.

The problem that this project strives to address are the unintended consequences and shifted burdens of the charitable food aid system (the system) as seen through a fundraising lens. Specifically, this project explores the different behaviours and tactics that may be contributing to a system that generally is deemed a band-aid fix to the wicked problem of food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1998).

Looking at these tactics through the frame of food aid, charitable organizations often communicate impact through relatable metrics such as how many meals have been provided or people served because of donor support. While not the only way to illustrate charitable impact, these types of metrics are common throughout the charitable food aid sector and have a reinforcing effect on transactional donor relations. Particularly, these relations reasonably contribute to potential perceived understanding by the donor and greater public that providing food to people experiencing hunger is resolving the problem of food insecurity. This approach to donor relations does not adequately prioritize addressing the root causes behind food insecurity, and ultimately misrepresents progress towards affecting systemic change (Fisher, 2017). This is compounded by the understanding that public perception is informed by public discourse, which

gives reason to question the influence donor relations tactics have on public discourse (Ramp, 2014).

With any charitable problem, language is used to convey its urgency, demonstrate the impact achieved with support, and inform perceptions and understandings of the problem (Ramp, 2014). If the language and practices used within donor relations are not facilitating long-term impact on the issue they strive to address, the system gets stuck in a cycle of behavioural patterns and ultimately reinforces the status quo of the charitable food aid model (Giridharadas, 2019; Meadows, 1999; Villeneuve, 2018). Further, such practices inform and create the imbalanced donor-beneficiary dynamic, which creates a ripple effect on the system that it exists to serve and exists within, further reinforcing the causal connections within the current state of the system (Meadows, 1999; Poppendieck, 1998).

Finally, the reality of the everyday demand and urgency of food insecurity at the individual level needs to be actively addressed by food programs, which feeds into the charitable food aid model through the continuous need for the necessary resources required to address this ongoing demand. This immediate urgency also informs charitable fundraising methods and efforts to retain donors, which further reinforces the transactional donor cycle briefly discussed above. Specifically, the reality of the everyday need for food is ever-present throughout donor relations communications, as it serves as a clear social cause to motivate donors to support with their financial contributions. However, this transactional donor cycle can potentially limit authentic relationship building with donors because of the emphasis on short-term rather than long-term impact (Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Focusing donors on short-term solutions rather than empowering donors to be a part of long-term systems solutions and, in the desired state of the system, ultimately reduce if not eradicate the everyday demand of food insecurity (Fisher, 2017; Villeneuve, 2018).

While there are government policies, association guidelines, and food security goals, there does not appear to be any discussion that combines all three elements of the problem this research project addressed: power imbalances, donor relations practices, and the role of language. This project aims to address that gap and develop recommendations that support the consideration of all three elements, by reframing fundraising practices through the lens of long-term systemic change. Long-term systemic change is necessary to support addressing poverty as the root cause of the experience of food insecurity and ultimately disrupt the status quo of, and dependency on, charitable food aid. Further, this research focuses on the Greater Toronto Area specifically, as many charitable food organizations are registered within that geographic region and therefore offered the opportunity to consider and learn from diverse food aid fundraising circumstances and perspectives.

This project report also focuses on the issues of power dynamics within fundraising, the language used when engaging with donors, and the ways in which fundraising tactics divert attention from long-term systemic change. While these issues exist broadly and in varying forms

across the charitable and nonprofit sector, for the purposes of this project, they will be explored through the lens of charitable food aid organizations to focus and frame project discussion, research, and learnings through a specific system and social cause. A necessary cost of the business of social change, fundraising plays a significant role in how society currently grapples and interacts with social problems. While the reality of this role is necessary and embedded within the current functions of the charitable system, this project strives to illustrate the opportunity for change through disrupting the status quo of fundraising and builds arguments for why charities should explore new methods to raising the necessary funds for addressing current need while simultaneously striving to implement tactics that support long-term solutions for the very causes they serve.

Project Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this project is to identify possible tactics and opportunities to change the way that food aid charities work with donors, towards transforming traditionally transactional practices that uphold power imbalances inherent within the fundraising cycle, and to reframe these relationships to improve focus on creating systems change within the charitable food aid system. As such, this project's research question was the following: how can food aid charities based in the Greater Toronto Area transform donor relations practices to promote donor relationships focused on systemic change within the charitable food aid system?

The secondary research questions the report addresses are:

- What role does language play in food insecurity discourse and what promising practices can be developed for donor communications?
- How are power imbalances inherent in traditional fundraising strategies and what tactics will help shift away from those imbalances?
- What recommendations can food security organizations implement to transform their donor relations practices and gear relationships with donors towards affecting systemic change?

Through answering these questions, the final project deliverable was developing clear and actionable recommendations that food aid charities can implement with the goal of transforming their donor relations practices. These recommendations will ideally enable organizations to mobilize their donor base to facilitate long-term systemic impact in the system, while also creating strategic opportunities to increase shared ownership over establishing systemic solutions and strengthen charitable trust and transparency in the context of the organization's mission.

To improve clarity and understanding of the lexicon used throughout the report, the key terms used throughout this project report are briefly defined below. It is important to note that some definitions were developed by others which are represented by citations, with the rest being developed by the student researcher through professional experience and analysis throughout this project and as such are not accompanied by citations.

- **Food Insecurity** The inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so (Government of Canada, 2020).
- **Charitable Food Aid & the Charitable Food Aid System ('the system')** Charitable food aid can be broadly understood as a response to the immediate need of food insecurity through a model that uses donations of or funds to provide free access to food to people experiencing food insecurity. As such, the charitable food aid system is the larger systems, structures, and institutions that charitable food programs are bound within.
- **Fundraising Cycle** The relationship between charities and donors that operates through a cycle of solicitation and donor relations with the goal of consistent and continual funds being raised for a specific cause or issue. For the purposes of this project, this refers to the relationship between food aid charities and donors which broadly include individuals, organizations, businesses, and foundations.
- **Donor Relations & Donors** Tactics used to cultivate, engage, and steward donor relationships across all giving methods, with the goal of retaining and growing financial support. As well, for the purposes and context of this project, donors can be understood as individuals, organizations, businesses, or foundations that donate funds to support food aid charities. Food donors are excluded from this definition as the context of their support provides a different utility and role within the system.
- **Systems Change** Making adjustments or transformations to policies, practices, power dynamics, and norms within a system (Meadows, 1999, Stroh, 2015). Within the context of this project, systems change refers to examining behaviours and practices within the fundraising cycle and donor relations to identify opportunities to leverage positive change within the charitable food aid system.

Project Significance & Scope

This project explores inherent power imbalances within the fundraising cycle through the lens of language and donor relations practices, exploring the role they play in donor psychology and fueling the cycle, as well as the influence language may have on public perception of the problem of food insecurity. This research is timely because the demand for sufficient food access has never been higher as argued by Nikkel, Summerhill, Gooch, Bucknell, and LaPlain (2021). Further, as highlighted in the literature review in Chapter Two of this report, this project approaches change to the problem of food insecurity from a different vantage point by exploring the potential opportunities to leverage change from a systems theory perspective. Specifically, the significance of this research is that it explores the role the fundraising cycle plays on influencing positive systemic change and strives to identify opportunities for transformation within the cycle that would support policy level systemic changes.

To help frame this research topic and bound the project, it is important to outline its scope. Within the scope of this project is the exploration and examination of the fundraising cycle within the charitable food aid model, with a specific look at language and power imbalances to support the identification of potential opportunities for facilitating change. As this research is meant to explore that potential through the transformation of fundraising practices, topics that are related to fundraising, charitable food aid, and food insecurity are outside the scope of this project. Specifically, as food insecurity, and by extension poverty, is such a complex problem that will not be solved with minor changes, solutions to this problem fall outside the scope of this project. Also outside the scope of this project is the discussion of the competitive nature of the charitable sector, which can act as a reinforcing element of the fundraising cycle, pushing charities to employ tactics that can succeed against other charities with similar missions and services.

Researcher Positionality

The role of positionality in research is important as it helps to frame the role of the researcher throughout a research project and develops understanding of how their socio-economic location may carry power and privilege that will inform their perspectives as well as the research process itself (Mosselson, 2010). As the student researcher leading this project, it is important to note my position within the context of the system. Specifically, I currently work as a fundraising professional in the charitable food aid system, responsible for donor relations practices at a food aid charity with an active influence over donor communications. As such, it is important to acknowledge that I hold a unique relationship to my topic, participants, and outcomes, and therefore must strive to be aware of how my ‘insider’ perspectives of donor relations may inform or frame my approach to project activities and the research process itself (Johnson, 2019).

Further, I recognize that my socio-economic location puts me in a place of privilege and influences my behaviour within the system as well as my perspective of it (Dugan, 2017). As a graduate student researcher that has never experienced food insecurity, I hold power and

privilege that makes me an ‘outsider’ of the lived experience of food insecurity and the greater context of that perspective within the charitable food system, creating a blind spot within my own viewpoints (Johnson, 2019).

Through my own experience as a professional fundraiser, I became interested in the resources required for donor relations practices and the ways in which these practices prioritized pleasing donors in hopes of retaining their support. Of course, this prioritization makes sense because these tactics work! The current status quo of donor relations exists because they are proven to help acquire and retain donor support, which is the primary goal; however, I found myself wondering, does it *have* to be? Even if there are more powerful avenues to make change, perhaps by exploring the behaviours of the fundraising cycle, we as fundraisers can help create opportunities to make a difference that will help build momentum towards bigger systemic change.

Organization of Report

This report is organized into eight chapters, the first of which is an introductory section providing an overview of the project and report contents, as well as contextualizing this research and the student researcher. Chapter Two then begins by discussing the current literature relevant to this topic which will examine three key themes stemming from the project research question, before then outlining the project’s conceptual framework to help situate the project approach and synthesize the components of this report. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods used for this project, as well as discussing strengths, limitations, and ethical considerations throughout the research process. Shifting into the findings from this project’s research and utilizing the conceptual framework as a guide, Chapter Four explores and assesses the current state of the system and fundraising cycle in more depth to support the identification of where change might be possible from the perspective of fundraising within the system. Then Chapter Five discusses the findings from the research survey and highlights any themes or significant results that came out of the study. Chapter Six provides an analysis of the key findings from both research methods and frames them within the context of the project’s research question and conceptual framework. Finally, Chapter Seven provides a summary of the project and outlines recommendations for fundraising professionals to consider implementing in support of this research and overall project goal, before providing a comprehensive conclusion in Chapter Eight. The remainder of this report includes all references cited throughout and any accompanying appendices.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

“Our means and mechanisms perpetuate the very problems in the world we claim to wish to solve.” (Villeneuve, 2018, p. 84)

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the existing literature and discourse regarding the charitable food aid system and the role of donor relations in facilitating long-term systemic impact, providing a contextual background to situate this research and highlight this project’s significance. The chapter begins with a summary outlining the approach to conducting the literature review and key terms and databases used in sourcing relevant literature. The chapter then examines the existing research and discourse on this topic through three primary themes that emerged during the research stage. The literature review concludes with a summary, linking the conceptual framework back to the literature and outlines how this research builds on the existing discussion. The chapter then outlines the conceptual framework used for this project, which helps frame the direction of this research and explain why it was approached in this way.

The Approach to Conducting the Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a critical summary of the charitable food aid system through the lens of fundraising and donor relations. Overall, the relevant literature focused more on food aid itself as a band-aid solution and/or the ethical challenges of philanthropy, highlighting the limited attention on the role of fundraising in achieving systemic impact in the literature. Considering the limited discussion on this specific issue, the literature review is segmented into three primary themes that together will help outline current discussions relevant to this project’s research question. Specifically, the literature review focuses on discourse regarding the charitable food aid system, the current critiques and emerging frameworks of fundraising, and the impact of language within the system. Assessing the existing literature for these topics helped provide a contextual understanding of how this project is situated within the research problem and help frame the project deliverables. Building on the ideas presented through the literature supported the project’s overall objectives, and through the lens of the conceptual framework, informed the final recommendations developed out of this project.

The key search terms used to source relevant resources for this project include combinations of ‘donor relations/fundraising/donor stewardship/donor language/donor motivation’, ‘food language/discourse’, food charity/aid/bank/nonprofit’, ‘food policy/system/security/insecurity/sovereignty’. The databases used included those available through the University of Victoria Library, with most searches occurring through JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Academic Search Complete. As well, relevant nonacademic sources were used to support this literature review to help understand the current state of food insecurity in Canada and assess the current professional sector landscape as related to the themes that emerged during the literature review.

Current State of the Charitable Food Aid System

There are numerous sources that discuss the state of food insecurity in Canada and the effectiveness of the charitable food aid model. To start, both governmental and nongovernmental organizations collect and report data on the rates of food insecurity on national, provincial, territorial, and regional levels, as well as analyzing specific demographics and food aid access points (Food Banks Canada, 2021; Second Harvest, 2021, Statistics Canada, 2022; Tarasuk, Li, and Fafard St-Germain, 2022). In addition, many publications question the impact the charitable food aid model has on addressing food insecurity and the lived experience of clients, with critiques of the charitable food model being well established throughout the literature (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Smith-Carrier, 2020; Swords, 2019; Tarasuk, Dachner, and Loopstra, 2014; Poppendieck, 1998). A common theme that emerged through the literature were the ways in which the charitable model itself was inadvertently undermining long-term impact through unintended consequences related to framing the problem, power imbalances, and decreased government accountability (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Smith-Carrier, 2020; Swords, 2019).

An important contribution to the discourse on the charitable food aid model is Janet Poppendieck's work, which examines numerous behaviours of this model in the United States and highlights the ways in which these behaviours unintentionally get in the way of the problem they exist to serve (1998). Perhaps the most relevant work to this project, Poppendieck explores the model in depth highlighting the issue of defining the problem as hunger, as doing so shifts focus away from poverty as the root cause of food insecurity and reinforces power imbalances between charity and client, donor and client, and donor and charity (1998). Also highly relevant, Fisher highlights the issues inherent within anti-hunger philanthropy, echoing Poppendieck's argument that defining hunger as the problem is a problem in and of itself, and builds on the dialogue that anti-hunger philanthropy, or the charitable food aid model, is fraught with unintended consequences that ultimately work against their food security mission (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998). Specifically, framing the issue as hunger fuels the model's dependency on donations because it simplifies the problem and perpetuates the myth that food insecurity is an individual problem and that providing meals will resolve their circumstances, rather than a symptom of poverty as a structurally systemic problem (Poppendieck, 1998; Smith-Carrier, 2020). Further, this dependency on donations places the charitable organization in a position where it is accountable to donors, diverting attention and resources from clients and the mission (Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018).

Moreover, this distraction from the root of the problem through the charitable model reinforces the public perception that clients' needs are met when accessing food banks and can ultimately result in decreased government accountability to address the problem as the charitable model is perceived to have successfully filled that gap (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998). The need for increased accountability to address the problem of food insecurity at a policy level is evident, as charitable food programs have in many ways become the primary solution to

supporting people experiencing poverty in Canada (Fisher, 2017; Tarasuk, Li, Fafard St-Germain, 2022). Building on the theme of accountability, additional authors such as Fisher (2017) and Smith-Carrier (2020) further argue that the way the model defines success, through meals and people served for example, detracts from the real issue at hand and undermines the efforts of the food aid charities themselves. Looking at these arguments in conjunction, there are commonalities around the issue of framing the problem of food insecurity and the unintended outcomes of defining that problem as hunger on accountability to systemic solutions. This argument is significant as it effectively aligns with the project's conceptual framework, highlighting processes and dynamics that can be transformed to support more positive system behaviour.

Identifying causal connections, such as the impact of framing the problem as hunger on government accountability, is a primary outcome of system mapping which was an interesting learning while conducting the literature review (Stroh, 2015). While much of the literature on the model focused on factors beyond the scope of this project such as operational challenges and policy intervention, multiple authors explored causal connections and system behaviours in their discussions and while not specifically calling out systems theory in the work itself it was an interesting trend to emerge. Poppendieck's work stands out as it most closely resembles a systems theory approach discussing numerous connections and behaviours within the system. This work highlighted issues inherent with the charitable model, taking the argument beyond the fundraising cycle specifically with a major focus on operational, institutional, and program level challenges within the model, which falls outside the scope of this project (1998). Out of this analysis Poppendieck identified systemic archetypal behaviour, asserting that the model is a band-aid fix and that "the proliferation of charity contributes to our society's failure to grapple in meaningful ways with poverty" (1998, p. 5). This assertion feeds into the systems theory approach, as it parallels systemic archetypes used to demonstrate common system behaviours and causal connections, which will be further examined through the system mapping research method discussed in Chapter Four of this report.

There is an evident consensus that the charitable food aid model is fraught with issues, acknowledging the reality of addressing the immediate need of food access while calling out the need for change at the policy level such as action to support living wages, affordable housing, and improving food sovereignty (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Smith-Carrier, 2020; Sword, 2019). One weakness that emerged is the limited discussion on how to attain policy changes such as those effectively, while concurrently continuing to address the ongoing demand for food. As Fisher highlighted, as "the ability to 'feed the need' depends on the goodwill of donors, food banks are likely to take the necessary steps to preserve those relationships," demonstrating the reliance of the model on donors and ultimately fueling the fundraising cycle (Fisher, 2017, p. 54). Further, the arguments lack discussion that organizations reasonably need funding to continue operations and address the current need, providing thorough criticism of the charitable food model but stopping short of providing solutions that incorporate the need for funding. As

Poppendieck outlines, one of the most challenging dilemmas of charitable food aid, is the “tension between pursuing more fundamental solutions to poverty and meeting the immediate need” of the day-to-day lived experience of food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1998, p. 38). This tension illustrates the influence the dependency on donations and the fundraising cycle has on pursuing more effective change solutions to food insecurity due to how it restricts the behaviours of the system, emphasizing opportunity for transformation of the status quo.

Fundraising Cycle Critiques and Emerging Frameworks

As noted by several authors, a reality of the system status quo is a dependency on donations, food or financial, which was a common critique that emerged through the literature (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998, Sword, 2019). This dependency characterizes the fundraising cycle, which has faced critiques for the power imbalances inherent throughout its practices and the embedded relationship dynamics that operate within the cycle (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Described as the institutionalization of giving and receiving, charity is dependent on the continual exchange of support from those who hold wealth and in turn, are celebrated by charities for their generosity in often public and market friendly ways (Giridharadas, 2019; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). This exchange has been criticized for not only relying on the unequal relationships inherent in charity but for maintaining these unequal power imbalances as well (King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018).

Relevant to this critique of the institutionalization of charity through fundraising is the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC). The industrial complex critique has been applied to multiple sectors, from the military to academia, analyzing the structures and relationships at play within these spheres and assessing their outcomes on society (Munshi and Willse, 2017). In terms of the NPIC specifically, it can be understood as a “system of relationships between the [government], the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service and social justice organizations”, which together demonstrate the power institutional structures have through top-down processes that often reinforce imbalances favouring those with power and wealth (Munshi and Willse, 2017, p. xxiii; King and Osayande, 2017; Villeneuve, 2018). Building on this critique, Villeneuve asserted that “philanthropy is the saviour mentality in institutional form”, with Giridharadas characterizing this cycle as a process where those with power and wealth are willing to participate in the goal of positive social impact in a way that depends on them and does not upset fundamental power equations (Giridharadas, 2019; Villeneuve, 2018, p. 5). These observations are significant, because they illustrate the ways in which the interconnections of the system, such as the donor-charity dynamic of the fundraising cycle, contribute to reinforcing system behaviours and highlight an important critique about unequal power within the system that maintains that cycle.

A common theme in the literature was the discerning observation of the immense resources required to maintain the status quo, with multiple authors highlighting tactics used to

strategically maintain funding and the relationships tied to them (Fisher, 2017; King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Villeneuve emphasizes this dynamic, arguing that donations, or gifts, aren't 'free' because they are always tied to a relationship, which typically requires ongoing cultivation and relationship building through tactics like impact reporting and public recognition efforts to maintain these relationships (King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). An interesting point worth noting in this discussion is the assertion by King and Osayande that a reality of this cycle is the reliance of charities on only 10% of the donor base to fund over half of an organization's assets, which effectively demonstrates the dependency on high-value donors to sustain an organization and the efforts taken by the charity to protect those relationships (2017). This is worth noting, because it further demonstrates the uneven power dynamic between donor and charity, indicating that many charitable resources are spent on satisfying a small group of high-value, and thereby high-power, donors.

A strength in the critique of this relationship is the argument that this dynamic and the strings that are tied to maintaining it ultimately puts the burden on the charity, illustrating the lack of true partnership that exists as donors get to feel a sense of accomplishment for the impact of their generosity while the charity expends the resources to ensure donors feel that satisfaction (Villeneuve, 2018). This directly relates to Poppendieck's discussion on the relationship between donor and charity, which emphasizes the cyclical nature of the continual need for charities to repackage their work and impact for donors, placing pressure on the charity to constantly stress their own efficiency (1998). Furthermore, maintaining this status quo ultimately diverts charitable resources away from the mission to ensure that funds, and the relationships tied to them, are protected to ensure operations can continue – illustrating a vicious cycle that ultimately detracts from the very cause the model exists to serve (Giridharadas, 2019; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2017).

This power dynamic has a direct influence on the fundraising cycle and the larger system, because communicating efficiency and impact to maintain that dynamic also inadvertently communicates that this is an appropriate response to poverty, or at the very least, that this model is successful enough to diminish the urgency of finding systemic solutions (Poppendieck, 1998). While this discussion features significant critiques on this dynamic, it should also be noted that a weakness throughout the literature is a lack of discussion relating to the donor side of the cycle, highlighting opportunities for further research or exploration to support the identification of potential change from the position of the donor.

The literature effectively highlights the issues of power imbalances and the costs associated with sustaining the fundraising cycle status quo, demonstrating an opportunity for change. Currently, academic literature describing actionable ways to disrupt the status quo is limited, focusing predominantly on outlining the challenges that exist within the cycle and charitable food aid which is beneficial in determining where and what kind of change could occur. However limited, the existing discussion of a way forward to improve these challenges

consists of broad, overarching suggestions of where to go from here. Specifically, Poppendieck calls for movement building, organization, and education, to support decreased separation from those in power and those without, as well as to encourage transformation of existing charitable food aid programs and organizational practices (1998). Additionally, the seven steps to heal as outlined by Villeneuve emphasize avenues for change within the donor-charity relationship through the lens of Indigenous wisdom, highlighting the possibility for transformation through relational dialogue that helps uncover these stories of power inherent throughout the status quo, and to continue to tell them is a choice that can be changed (2018). While both discussions on ways to move forward contain beneficial guidance and information towards achieving systems change, neither provide specific actions that can be taken or frameworks that can be implemented.

Beyond academic discussion on the cycle which is limited in providing actionable steps towards positive systems change, frameworks have been emerging in the nonprofit sector itself to address various issues inherent within the cycle. Primary frameworks that should be noted are Trust-Based Philanthropy and Community Centric Fundraising. Trust-Based Philanthropy (TBP) is a project focused on redistributing power within philanthropy, looking specifically at the power imbalances between foundations and nonprofits. This is an interesting contribution to the fundraising discussion, because it shifts the burden back onto the donor to examine the role they play in perpetuating system inequalities and outcomes (Trust-Based Philanthropy, 2022). Further, this specific initiative which began in 2020, takes a peer-to-peer approach to encourage resource and information sharing among foundations and nonprofits, along with providing numerous resources on their website that outline specific actions and activities that can be taken to support a culture of trust in philanthropy (Trust-Based Philanthropy, 2022).

Another approach worth noting is Community Centric Fundraising (CCF), which is geared towards nonprofits and fundraising professionals to build a movement within the profession that reexamines everyday practices and conversations of philanthropy (Community Centric Fundraising, 2022). The primary contribution this approach has on this research is the emphasis it has on community over the individual organization or fundraiser, encouraging movement building that prioritizes equity and equality across all elements of the fundraising cycle, taking this work beyond the donor-charity dynamic and providing guidance for internal practices as well (such as salaries, board representation, etc.) (Community Centric Fundraising, 2022). Finally, a relevant example to the emerging professional initiatives is that of the Oregon Food Bank (OFB), which has actively been working towards transforming their own philanthropic processes to support just philanthropy in their community (Oregon Food Bank, 2021). The efforts of the OFB focus on decentering money from philanthropy and instead centering love through reframing fundraising goals, which supports changing the fundraising cycle from the inside out by starting with the fundraisers themselves and building a more just model of fundraising at the organizational level (Oregon Food Bank, 2021). Interestingly, each of these sector-based initiatives encourage movement building in some capacity, acknowledging

the need for change at a higher level within the system as well as recognizing the potential influence such transformations could have on public discourse and ultimately promoting systems change.

The Impact of Language

The third significant theme that emerged throughout the literature was the role of language in achieving systemic solutions, with much of the literature emphasizing the impact of language used in food aid charity and the fundraising cycle on public perception of the problem (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Smith-Carrier, 2020; Sword, 2019). As discussed earlier in this chapter, framing food insecurity as hunger simplifies the problem and inadvertently distracts from the root cause of it (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998). While creating an urgency to address the immediacy of the basic need of food access, this approach does not adequately support seeking solutions to poverty in conjunction with addressing the immediate demand.

Highlighted by key authors Fisher and Poppendieck, defining the problem as hunger is a simplistic way of communicating the real issue at hand (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998). Specifically, Poppendieck argues that the success of the charitable food aid system is dependent on the emotional and ethical impact of hunger as the issue, emphasizing the motivational side of fundraising and the influence a ‘compelling’ cause has on receiving donations (1998). This is a significant contribution to the discussion because it illustrates the ways in which the donor-charity dynamic, and ultimately the fundraising cycle, is predicated on what will motivate donors to give resulting in the continuous sales pitch of hunger. This is a crucial element of this research because it highlights the influence of donor psychology on the cycle and why donor relations practices prioritize framing the problem as hunger rather than the root cause of poverty.

Relevant to this discussion is the work of Erlandsson, Björklund, and Bäckström, in the field of psychology, which outlines the ways in which emotion and recognition motivate behaviour (2014). Also understood as the Identifiable Victim Effect (IVE), the authors demonstrate that a primary mechanism for making decisions is rooted in ones’ emotional reaction, which is often increased when distress at the individual level of the cause is communicated – such as telling the story of a local neighbour experiencing hunger (Erlandsson, Björklund, and Bäckström, 2014). Moreover, the more impact one feels their contribution will have will also result in increased donor motivation (Erlandsson, Björklund, and Bäckström, 2014). Interestingly, a common tactic used in fundraising is Donor Centricity, which centers the donor and focuses on celebrating *their* achievements and contributions, putting the donor at the heart of the work rather than the community impact (Community Centric Fundraising, 2022).

Beyond defining the problem as hunger, fundraising tactics also rely heavily on storytelling to connect donors with the mission and ultimately motivate them to give. Considering the success of IVE in fundraising tactics, storytelling practices go beyond the written word in an appeal and leverage the emotional utility of photos and videos as well, continuing to tell a story of hunger at an individual level or experience. Specifically, the utility of

these storytelling materials sends a message of reassurance that people in the community won't go hungry with the support of donors, and "reinforces the public assumption that these are people whose needs are appropriately addressed through charity" (Poppendieck, 1998, p. 303). This argument lends itself to one of the primary assertions of this research, highlighting that while the simplicity of hunger results in increased donations, an unintended outcome of defining the problem in that way is the influence that has on public perception (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998).

Language shapes the way that an issue is perceived publicly, which ultimately shapes an issues' politics and policy (Ramp, 2014). This demonstrates the role that the system, and the fundraising cycle specifically, have in shaping public perception and discourse as donor relations practices communicate the problem that donors can help solve through their support. Manipulating language in favour of retaining donors and prioritizing their relationships ultimately contributes to the cyclical nature of fundraising in the system; communicating immediate need because it is more likely to result in donations (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998). Moreover, there is a clear power imbalance in the donor-beneficiary relationship, which has an adverse effect on public perception of the beneficiary and their lived experience, further compounding the complex charitable food aid system and ultimately influencing efforts to long-term solutions to food insecurity (Martin, 2016; Smith-Carrier, 2020; Villeneuve, 2018). Further, as Fisher highlights, focusing on reducing financial risk through donor relations tactics while wholly understandable, creates a missed opportunity to educate donors on the importance of working on poverty reduction initiatives in conjunction with responding to the immediate demand for food (2017). Fisher's argument is highly relevant to this project as it calls out the opportunity for change in incorporating educational donor relations tactics, which holds the potential for actionable transformation in support of this project's objectives.

Finally, it is worth noting that throughout the discussion on language multiple authors raised the concern of accountability and the influence language focused on hunger has on decreasing government accountability to addressing food insecurity and poverty at the policy level (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Smith-Carrier, 2020; Sword, 2019). Contributing to this concern, Jarosz and Lang and Barley explore the significance of discourse in the food sector with a focus on government accountability and demonstrate some of the shifts taking place in the sector's language evolution (Jarosz, 2014; Lang and Barley, 2012). While such analyses are wholly beneficial to understanding the food security sector, they are limited in their discussion on the role charitable organizations play in influencing this language within the sector and greater public perception and discourse. The charitable food system is the only public source of food aid in Canada (Tarasuk, Dachner, and Loopstra, 2014), however the literature appears limited in its recognition of the role this major stakeholder plays in informing the language and discourse surrounding food security.

Literature Review Summary

Situating this project within the context of the existing literature demonstrates the gap that this research strives to address in this report, shining a light on opportunity for further research and discussion. The literature critically summarized here provides a foundational understanding of the current state of the charitable food aid system, fundraising critiques and power dynamics, and the role of language and donor psychology. Together, these topics frame the project's research question.

Predominant contributors to this discussion, Fisher and Poppendieck, provided insight into each theme of this literature review however as much of their work was all encompassing of the issues discussed here, they could have been strengthened through in-depth assessments of each element independently. Furthermore, despite being the most relevant works to this project, their research focuses on the system in the United States, which could be considered a weakness as this project is focused on the system in Canada. An additional weakness within the literature generally was the lack of actionable recommendations or steps that charities could take to transform the status quo, with much of the discussion focusing on unintended consequences of the system rather than distinct ways to solve it. Conversely, a primary strength of the literature was the evident discussion of issues inherent within the system, highlighting multiple unintended consequences of the status quo and ultimately supporting the project deliverables.

While these themes have been segmented for the purposes of this literature review, it's important to approach them in conjunction with each other. Considering the elements of these themes are connected to each other in the context of the system and acknowledging the complexity of the problem of food insecurity, the discussion throughout this literature review ultimately informed utilizing systems theory as the project's conceptual framework to enable the synthesis of these arguments in support of the projects overall objectives. The arguments presented here demonstrate the opportunity for change present within the fundraising cycle, highlighting that fundraising and donor relations hold the potential to promote systemic change and further demonstrate the benefit of framing the fundraising cycle as a leverage point for change within the charitable food aid system (Meadows, 1999). This research study builds on the existing literature, as it continues discussion of the unintended consequences of the charitable food aid model, reinforcing the need for change to the status quo within this system. Additionally, this project contributes new insights into the discussion through the project objectives, most specifically outlining actionable recommendations that food aid charities can implement to support transformed donor relations tactics that are geared towards systemic change.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized for this project was systems theory (Figure 1), which acted as an overarching guide throughout the project stages and helped frame the research, highlighting angles worth exploring and ultimately situating the project in its entirety. Considering the complexity of food insecurity and the specific topic this project aims to address,

it was important for the project's conceptual framework to encompass all elements of the research problem and question, connecting this research to the current state of the problem and contextualizing the desired outcomes of this project by examining the nuances of the system. Using this theory as a conceptual framework allowed the project focus to be situated through the lens of fundraising in food aid charities within the context of the complex system of food insecurity and supported the development of recommendations that are rooted in leveraging systems change.

As defined in Chapter One of this report, systems theory can be understood as making adjustments and transformations to policies, practices, power dynamics, and norms within a system (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015). Utilizing systems theory as the underlying framework guiding this project supported organizing the relevant literature in a way that helped frame the discussion within the context of the research question and informed the design of both research methods conducted in support of this project. Further, this conceptual approach is fitting as it enabled the exploration of the connections and processes existing within the fundraising cycle and the greater system (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015). This highlighted the behaviours that result from those interactions which ultimately help identify potential opportunities for change within the system (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015). Moreover, it provided a foundation to identify key leverage points to intervene in the system (Meadows, 1999), supporting the development of the project's recommendations towards improving the current system.

There are various tools and resources available to support the application of systems theory to societal problems; including the identification of system interactions at different societal scales (social structuration), the collective impact framework to support holistic understanding of varying perspectives of the issue and how to move forward with consensus, as well as system mapping which strives to create a visual representation of the causal connections and outcomes within a system (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016; Stroh, 2015; Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015). As this project is focused on transforming processes and connections within the fundraising cycle, systems mapping was utilized as one of the research methods for this project which enabled the visual representation of system interactions (Stroh, 2015). A significant benefit to using this tool to support the project's conceptual framework and deliverables was that it enabled the assessment of the current state of the system and the existing system archetypes or behaviours that were unintentionally undermining the system (Stroh, 2015). In conjunction with the project's research methodologies, this was an effective tool to utilize as it supported a gap analysis approach, focusing on bridging solutions between the current and desired state of the system and identifying opportunities for facilitating change (Stroh, 2015; Gap Analysis, 2012).

Furthermore, this project does not assume or attempt to discuss solutions to the problem of food insecurity itself, in acknowledgement and understanding that there are other avenues that hold significantly more power to affect change, such as policy at all government levels (Tarasuk, Li, and Fafard St-Germain, 2022). Instead, using systems theory enables this project to explore

other opportunities for change that hold the potential for positive impact on food insecurity, arguing that making transformations within the fundraising cycle holds the potential to create a ripple effect and ultimately leverage systems change (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015).

As outlined by Meadows, a predominant systems thinker, there are numerous leverage points within a system that can influence change with varying degrees of effectiveness, or power, to effect change (1999). Understanding that food insecurity is an immensely complex problem, identifying leverage points that were within reach for facilitating systems change was a primary focus for this research. In conjunction with the researcher’s background in fundraising and interest in the role of the fundraising cycle on facilitating impact, focusing on leverage points that could be influenced by fundraisers, and potentially donors, was an important consideration. Moreover, looking at the charitable food aid system from the perspective of the fundraising cycle highlighted connections and behaviours that, if transformed, could leverage positive change. These system interactions and potential leverage points will be further outlined in Chapter Four of this report, which examines the findings from the system map analysis.

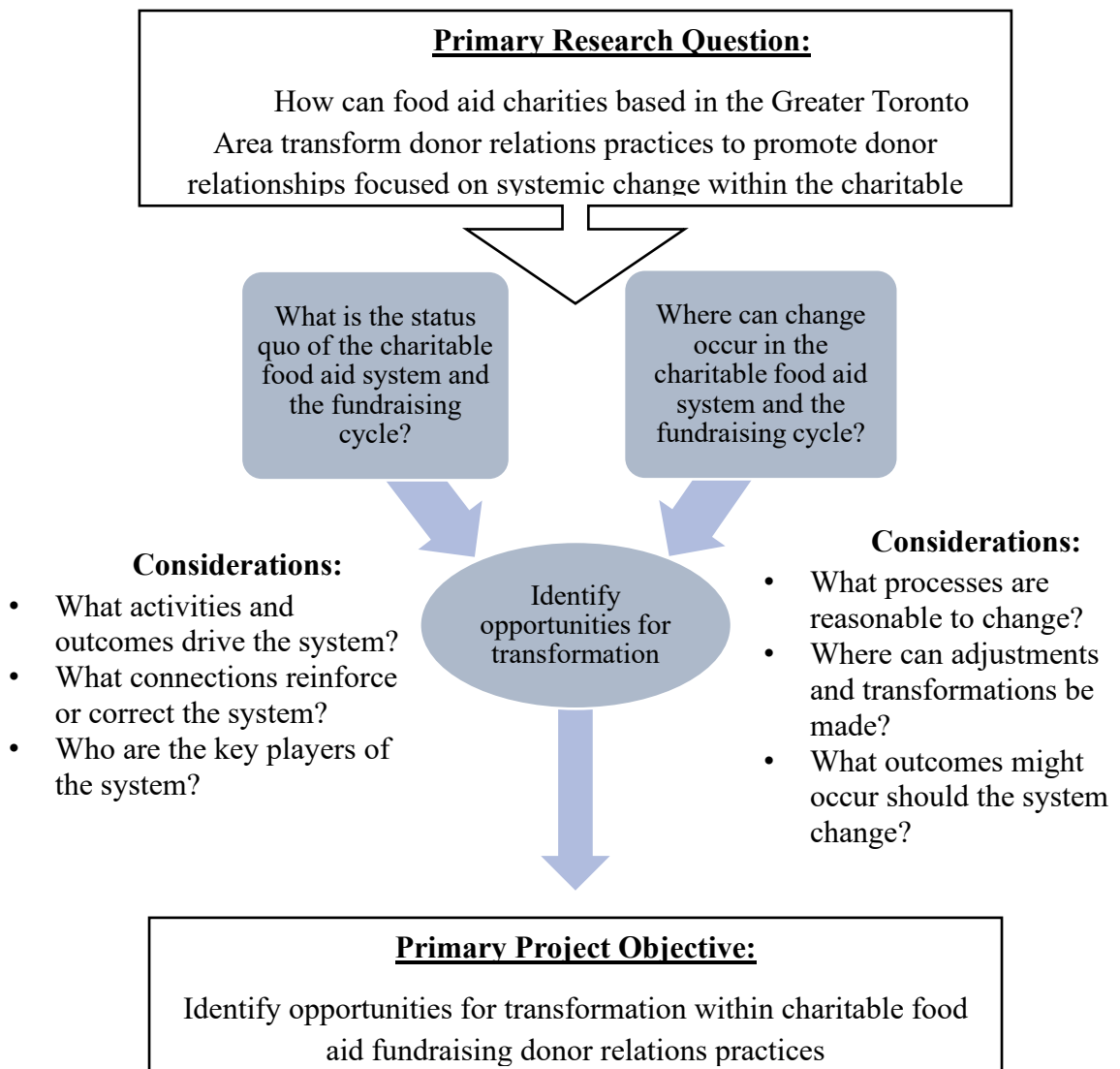


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Chapter Three: Methodology, Methods, and Data Analysis

This chapter outlines the methodology used for this research and the methods utilized for data collection in support of the project deliverables. First, the chapter begins by outlining the combination of methodological approaches used for research method design and data collection, and then shifts into a section specifically outlining the methods used to collect data. The chapter then provides a brief overview of the approval required from the Human Research Ethics Board to collect data for this project, focusing the discussion on the relevant conflict of interest issues to this project. The next section outlines the approach used for data analysis, explaining the reasoning system mapping and survey analysis were used and the steps taken to analyze the collected data. Concluding this chapter is a final section outlining the strengths and limitations to this project and its research, discussing the unforeseen challenges that arose and how they were minimized, and highlighting opportunities for further research through some of these limitations.

Methodology

This project utilized a mixed methods approach to support the study of qualitative and quantitative data. The primary research methodologies used for this project were gap analysis and promising practices approaches, with elements from community-engaged research as a secondary complementary approach. These approaches were selected during the project design and proposal stage because together they support the overarching project research question and deliverables to identify opportunities for change within donor relations and support promoting positive systemic change. Moreover, the benefit of utilizing a mixed methods approach is the ability to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, which in combination can support in depth understanding of complex issues and research problems, further underpinned using these complementary methodological approaches (Molina-Azorin, 2018). The combination of these approaches supported an exploration of food aid fundraising language and donor relations practices with the fundraising community itself, towards the goal of developing recommendations that emerged from community-based responses. The following paragraphs will provide a brief overview of each of the selected methodologies for this research and discuss the rationale behind why they were selected and ultimately, how they support the project's research question and deliverables.

The gap analysis approach was selected as one of the primary methodologies for this research because it supported the identification of current practices related to fundraising and how they may or may not support the larger societal need to develop systemic solutions to food insecurity, highlighting a gap between how things currently are, or the status quo, and the desired state of supporting longer-term solutions to the problem (Gap Analysis, 2012). Specifically, this project's research question seeks to transform the current state of donor relations practices, which broadly are transactional and donor-centric, and implement promising changes that will expand donor impact to support leveraging positive systems change. As such, the gap analysis

was a beneficial approach as it supported the exploration of the status quo of the charitable food aid model and the fundraising cycle within it through the design of the research method and approach, which will be further outlined in the next section of this chapter. Furthermore, this approach worked well with the project's conceptual framework, as systems theory seeks to understand complex issues through examining how system structures, processes, and actors cause system behaviours and outcomes, and thereby identify possibilities to make change to the system status quo out of that examination (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015).

The promising practices approach was also beneficial to help frame the research design because it supported the project objective of developing recommendations to change existing practices through the identification of common responses from the research participants, who hold contextual knowledge and experience to highlight opportunities for intervention (Fazal, Jackson, Wong, Yessis, and Jetha, 2017). Different from a best practices approach, promising practices focus on the identification of potential interventions, processes, or initiatives that hold the potential to develop into a best practice (Fazal et al, 2017). This was particularly beneficial to this research study because the recommendations and opportunities for intervention identified through this research have limited application to the fundraising cycle itself, however, may have unrealized potential particularly as the research responses came from the fundraising community directly, holding the power to implement identified interventions. Specifically, the information that emerged from data collection informed the design of these recommendations, in hopes that they can be implemented at the organization level and promote sustainable and equitable conditions within donor relations (Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010). Moreover, as these recommendations emerged in part from the research phase of this project, they may have limited known implementation and demonstrated impact, however, hold the potential to become a wise practice thus being framed as promising practices (Fazal et al, 2017).

In addition to the primary methodologies used for this research study, community-engaged research was a secondary supporting approach as this methodology further informed the design of the survey research method and thereby the fulfillment of the project deliverables. This approach is relevant to this study because it acted as a preliminary guide to the research design and data collection by focusing on the incorporation of participant responses into the project deliverables, and more specifically, the recommendations resulting from this study, so they were rooted within the contextual knowledge of the community itself (Johnson, 2019; University of Victoria, 2017). This approach further informed the design of the research method, supporting the incorporation of questions that focused on the identification of intervention opportunities based on what research participants would change if possible. A benefit of utilizing this approach is the prospective shared ownership of the fundraising community over transforming the status quo, through the preliminary assessment and consultation of opportunities for change driven by participant responses (Stroh, 2015; University of Victoria, 2017). Initially, the inclusion of this supporting methodology was meant to enable community participation throughout the project, however the engagement of participants ultimately only occurred during the singular data

collection phase indicating the consultative limitations of this contextual research design and approach, which are further detailed in the limitations section of this report (University of Victoria, 2017).

Ultimately, the combination of these methodological approaches was fitting for this study's research question as together they supported the identification of opportunities for change within donor relations practices through consulting key community stakeholders, towards the development of recommendations for food charities to implement with the goal of promoting systems change. Furthermore, these approaches complemented the project's conceptual framework and enabled the organization of project deliverables and design to be framed through a systems lens, reinforcing the systematic approach to identifying opportunities to leverage change, and bounding this project within the context of systems change as examined through these methodologies (Meadows, 1999; Molina-Azorin, 2018).

Methods

In addition to analyzing existing literature related to the project themes and research question, mixed methods research was conducted to support the deliverables of the project. Specifically, two research methods were employed to collect data in support of this research project: a current state system map analysis and a web-based survey. The system map analysis was developed by the student researcher, drawing on the project's conceptual framework and gap analysis methodological approach to support the effective and relevant analysis of the charitable food aid system through the lens of fundraising. The web-based survey was developed to capture relevant perspectives from those working within food aid fundraising, drawing on each of the methodological approaches to effectively support fulfilling the project objectives and answering the project research question. The survey consisted of a combination of multiple choice and open text questions (Appendix C). The survey was administered over a period of two weeks and targeted responses from fundraising and leadership professionals that work at food aid charities based in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), in Ontario, Canada. The GTA is a colloquial term referring to the urban centre of Toronto and the municipal regions closely surrounding it (City of Toronto, 2022). For the purposes of this project, the GTA includes the Toronto, Durham, York, Peel, and Halton regions; inclusive of 25 municipalities.

Due to the project's research question and the content of the survey, fundraising and leadership professionals were both targeted in hopes of capturing perspectives on the operations and resources required to execute fundraising practices, and of course perspectives on the practices themselves. It was important to target both participant groups as they are the context experts on this research topic and gathering responses from both groups supported gathering diverse perspectives that contributed to the development of recommendations that could feasibly be actioned and which considered both tactical execution of fundraising practices and strategic organization and operational priorities (Attygalle, 2017; Stroh, 2015).

As this project's research question focused on leveraging change in fundraising within charitable food aid, survey respondents logically had to be associated with a food aid charity that conducted fundraising efforts. To narrow the survey sample to a realistic size for this project, participants were selected based on the geographic location as listed on their charitable registration status. More specifically, using the List of Charities advanced search function on the Canada Revenue Agency's website, a list of eligible charities was compiled based on the following criteria: registered charitable status, charity type listed as 'relief of poverty', and located in one of the municipalities within the GTA (Canada Revenue Agency, 2022). This process resulted in a list of 44 eligible food aid charities for participation in this project's research survey. To encourage capturing diverse perspectives and experiences in the survey responses, the eligible organizations varied greatly in size, both in terms of the organization's employed staff (or in some cases, no paid staff) as well as the geographical reach of the organization's food aid relief efforts.

Based on these criteria and the list developed out of them, the survey recruitment list was compiled by gathering contact information directly from the charity websites, qualifying contacts based on their role either in fundraising or leadership within the organization and deferring to general email addresses when specific staff contacts were unavailable. Obtaining contact information to support recruitment efforts led to further narrowing of the sample size due to the limited availability of contact information on some of the charity websites. The final recruitment list included 31 food aid charities and a total of 41 contacts, 11 of which were in a leadership role, 10 in a fundraising specific role, and the remaining 21 being contacted through general organizational email addresses or a general fundraising email address, in hopes of getting to the right respondents. Once the list was complete, email recruitment commenced using a templated email and accompanying recruitment poster (Appendices A & B), along with a letter of informed consent as approved by the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB).

Research Ethics

This project required approval from the HREB of the University of Victoria. The project proposal received approval from the HREB on December 16, 2021, and the accompanying Ethics Protocol Number is 21-0440.

It should be noted that due to the researcher's background, the potential for researcher conflict of interest (COI) was declared to the HREB. Particularly, at the outset and through the duration of this project, the student researcher was actively employed by Second Harvest in a fundraising and donor relations capacity (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). Also, this organization was one of the eligible targeted charities for relevant staff to participate in the data collection. These circumstances created the potential for dual role COI by the researcher and could interfere with their capacity for objectivity. As such, appropriate measures were taken to mitigate this potential for COI including disclosing the dual role to participants in the letter of

implied consent that was provided to all targeted research participants during their initial recruitment and reminder communications.

Moreover, as Second Harvest provides surplus food and grants to nonprofit programs across the country, it was important to not only acknowledge that the researcher did not in any way hold any power over the participants, or by extension the organizations they represented, and confirm that Second Harvest was not a sponsor of this research project. Furthermore, the possibility of perceived interpersonal COI regarding the researcher's relationships with colleagues and community members was mitigated by acknowledging that the researcher did not hold any power or superiority over the participants, including those asked to participate from Second Harvest.

Data Analysis

Considering that this project utilized a mixed methods research approach to capture both quantitative and qualitative results from the survey, it was important for the data analysis activities to support the effective examination of those results. As outlined above, the system analysis method relied on a systems theory approach to analysis, which supported the project objectives and answering the research question. This analytical approach is further outlined in Chapter Four. In addition, this project took a thematic approach to survey analysis, which enabled the deductive identification of themes from the open text questions within the survey, and the summation of quantitative results from the multiple-choice question results. As the survey was conducted digitally the results were automatically captured into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, supporting a streamlined analysis of the quantitative results.

Once data collection was complete and the results exported, questions were segmented into open text and multiple-choice response groups. From there, each question was analyzed individually, leveraging Excel formulas and pivot tables to summarize quantitative results for each question, and then deductively identifying emergent trends and themes that arose from each question. The themes that supported the deductive categorization of the research results were as follows: status quo of the system, donor relations practices and tactics, and affecting systemic change.

Survey Findings

As outlined above, a web-based survey was conducted to collect data in support of this project research. The survey was distributed to participants on the recruitment list on May 17, 2022, and was left open for completion for two weeks, closing access on May 31, 2022. All 41 contact emails on the recruitment list were emailed requesting participation in the survey, with a reminder email being sent in the middle of the two-week period. Upon closing the survey, only seven contacts in the recruitment list had completed the survey. The survey consisted of 23 questions, three of which were identifier questions to gain insight into who responded to the survey, 17 questions were multiple choice with the option to provide additional comments, and

the final three questions were open text in hopes of garnering detailed commentary from the respondents about this research (see Appendix C for survey questions).

Respondents to the web-based survey ranged from fundraising professionals at various levels of management and executive level leadership staff, with some respondents indicating roles that consisted of both fundraising and leadership responsibilities (Figure 2). Of the seven respondents, six represented organizations that were predominantly comprised of paid staff with one representing an organization that was primarily volunteer run. At the time of survey submission, respondents were working with food aid organizations ranging from 0-10 employees to over 100, with 57% of participants working with organizations that have 50 or more employees.

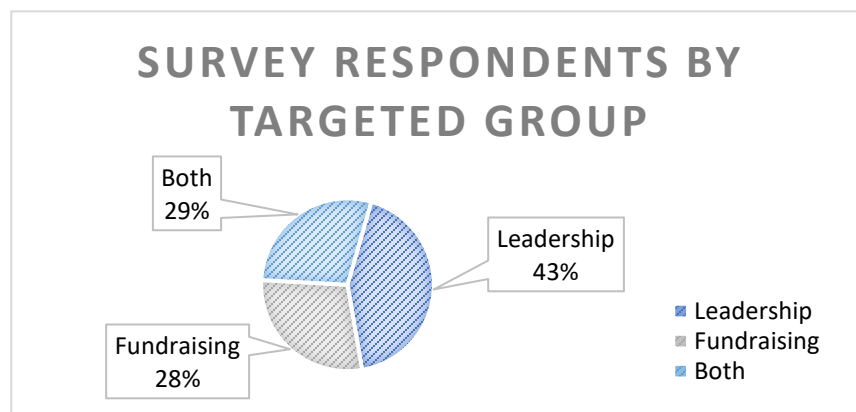


Figure 2: Survey Respondents by Targeted Group (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Looking at the responses overall, there were many commonalities throughout the results as well as unique individual responses to some of the questions. As such, the findings presented here do not represent the views of all the survey participants, but rather demonstrate areas of commonalities and consensus from the group. The commonalities were deductively identified and categorized within the following themes: status quo of the system, donor relations practices and tactics, and affecting systemic change. Moreover, the final three questions of the survey were open text questions to gain further insight into the perspectives of the respondents in relation to facilitating systemic change through fundraising practices. While each of these responses were unique, commonalities were deductively identified and are summarized in each of the following theme sections. Significant or predominant results are highlighted in Chapter Five and then summarized before moving into a discussion and analysis of the synthesized project findings in Chapter Six.

Strengths and Limitations

With any project there will be strengths and limitations to the research itself, and experienced throughout the project stages, which will be further discussed in the below two sections of this chapter.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this project, which were due to both external factors of the project as well as elements of the project itself. First, the limitations that occurred due to external factors primarily include the impact of COVID-19 on project activities and participant participation. The unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic brought with it many challenges that impacted each person uniquely. In the context of this project, data collection methods were executed digitally to adhere to COVID-19 safety measures. While this could be a strength in terms of expanding participant access beyond the bounds of geography, it could also have been a limitation in terms of technological accessibility. As well, the pandemic may have impacted participant participation in the project due to factors such as lack of availability of respondents due to the increased demand for funding and a limited response uptake due to fatigue with online engagement or activities. Further, due to personal time constraints and challenges imposed on the researcher by factors of COVID-19, and the intended timeline of degree completion, data collection methods were limited from more in-depth methods such as interviewing and focus groups.

Second, as this project was approached through a fundraising lens it is important to acknowledge relevant factors to the charitable food aid system that fell outside of the intended project scope were also limitations due to the additional contextual functions they hold within the system (Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015). While excluded from this project intentionally to support the bounding of the system and thereby a clarified approach to mapping it, their absence could be seen as a limitation on the discussion in this report. A brief overview of the factors that were excluded from the system is provided in Chapter Four of this report.

Further, additional limitations were experienced during the survey data collection phase of this research project, specifically sample selection and recruitment, and the data collection survey itself. During the proposal phase of the project, the sample size was based on number of organizations that had active charitable registration status through the Canada Revenue Agency that were categorized as focusing on relief of poverty and whose registered address was based in the GTA. This was a limitation because it assumed that every organization that held charitable status was actively fundraising, which did not fit with the reality of some of the organizations that were eligible to be recruited for participation, which contributed to low participant response rates. Moreover, the research survey ended up with only a 17% participant response rate, which limited the survey results and in turn impacted the project deliverables. Many targeted organizations had layers of gatekeeping that further made it challenging for participant recruitment, as in some cases only general email addresses were available rather than to specific addresses to a staff member or volunteer, which also created a barrier to recruitment and response rates.

An unforeseen limitation ended up being the survey itself, as despite the best efforts of the researcher in terms of the survey design, some participants expressed that some questions were too vague to adequately provide meaningful answers. This highlights an opportunity both for improved research design, as well as increased participant engagement opportunities in the research to ensure a shared understanding of the study's objectives. Also, while nine people responded to the web-based survey, only seven completed to the point of official survey submission, which raises the question of survey accessibility and the experience of the respondents. Moreover, while the purpose of this project is to develop promising practices to support donor relations transformation, these recommendations have had limited application in the real world of fundraising, and thus are a limitation in terms of proven outcomes. Furthermore, the exclusion of donor perspectives from this project acts as an additional limitation, as the success of these promising practices are to some extent dependent on the willingness and attitude of donors, who are directly impacted by the implementation of each of the recommendations developed from this project.

Initially, one of the goals of this project as identified during the conceptualization and design stage was to incorporate more community-engaged and participatory research methods, however over the course of the project this evolved into a consultative approach through a digital survey which limited participant engagement. As engagement and co-creation of information supports effective ownership and accountability of stakeholders (Stroh, 2015, University of Victoria, 2017), incorporating participatory methods may have helped uncover more opportunities to leverage change that held stronger potential for application in a real-world setting, as they could have provided increased opportunities for participant narratives, trust-building, and tactic ideation (Attygalle, 2017; University of Victoria, 2017). Finally, it is beyond the control of the researcher whether these recommendations are applied to the fundraising cycle within the food aid system, and thus limit the impact, testing, and takeaways from the potential implementation of them.

Strengths

An unforeseen strength of this project was the timing, as due to the global COVID-19 pandemic the state of food insecurity in Canada has been rapidly increasing, with food programs across the country facing demands they've never seen before (Food Banks Canada, 2021; Nikkel, Summerhill, et al, 2021). As such, the urgency for positive systemic change is undeniable and thus makes this project relevant to the current landscape of charitable food aid. Further, it is clear from the survey responses and the literature review that the status quo must be changed, highlighting that many authors and respondents agree that the current state of the system is not effective. This could also be characterized as a project strength, as it demonstrates a consensus that change must occur, and offers a potential pathway to achieve it from a different vantage point.

Chapter Four: Findings – Current State Systems Analysis

“Perhaps the primary function of emergency food, is, after all, symbolic.”
(Poppendieck, 1998, p. 298)

To continue to build on the contextual landscape of this research through a systems theory lens, this chapter will examine the charitable food aid system itself by employing a current state system analysis as a research method. The primary goal of this chapter is to effectively outline the connections and behaviours of this system to help illustrate not only the role of the fundraising cycle within it but the potential for change it has as well. Utilizing systems theory as the conceptual framework underpinning this project enabled the exploration of system interconnections and outcomes, which in conjunction with the literature demonstrate the unintended consequences of the system (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015). Beginning with a discussion of the system and its behaviours, the chapter then highlights the limitations and scope of the system as bound for the purposes of this project and concludes with an assessment of the status quo by highlighting system archetypes and potential leverage points to help demonstrate the opportunity for change.

Charitable Food Aid System

To help understand why a system behaves the way it does and results in certain outcomes, it is important to understand the context and connections of the system (Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015). The model emerged in response to a decrease in government provided social services and a rising demand for food programs, which are dependent on donated funding and food to sustain operations (Poppendieck, 1998; Tarasuk, Dachner, and Loopstra, 2014). As described in Chapter Two, this dependency on donations creates an imbalanced power dynamic between those providing donations and the organizations in need of funding, which results in prioritizing practices that retain funding (King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Charitable organizations are accountable to their donors through funding requirements, partnership agreements, and federally regulated tax receipting. Not only do these require organizational resources to fulfill, but resources are directed towards maintaining and ideally growing relationships with donors to ensure continued funding, resulting in a prioritization of donor relations activities (King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). This dynamic is compounded by the consistent demand for community food programs to alleviate the everyday reality of food insecurity, creating a cycle of unmet demand and funding dependency. Considering this cycle, the charitable food model seemingly exists within a system that functions to sustain food aid, rather than operating to address the root causes that incur the experience of food insecurity.

Utilizing systems mapping to identify the relationships, behaviours, and outcomes of the system, a visual representation was created (Figure 3) to highlight causal connections and behavioural feedback loops operating within the system (Stroh, 2015). The system itself is bound around the relationships and ripple effects of the fundraising cycle, which also acts as a key driver of the system.

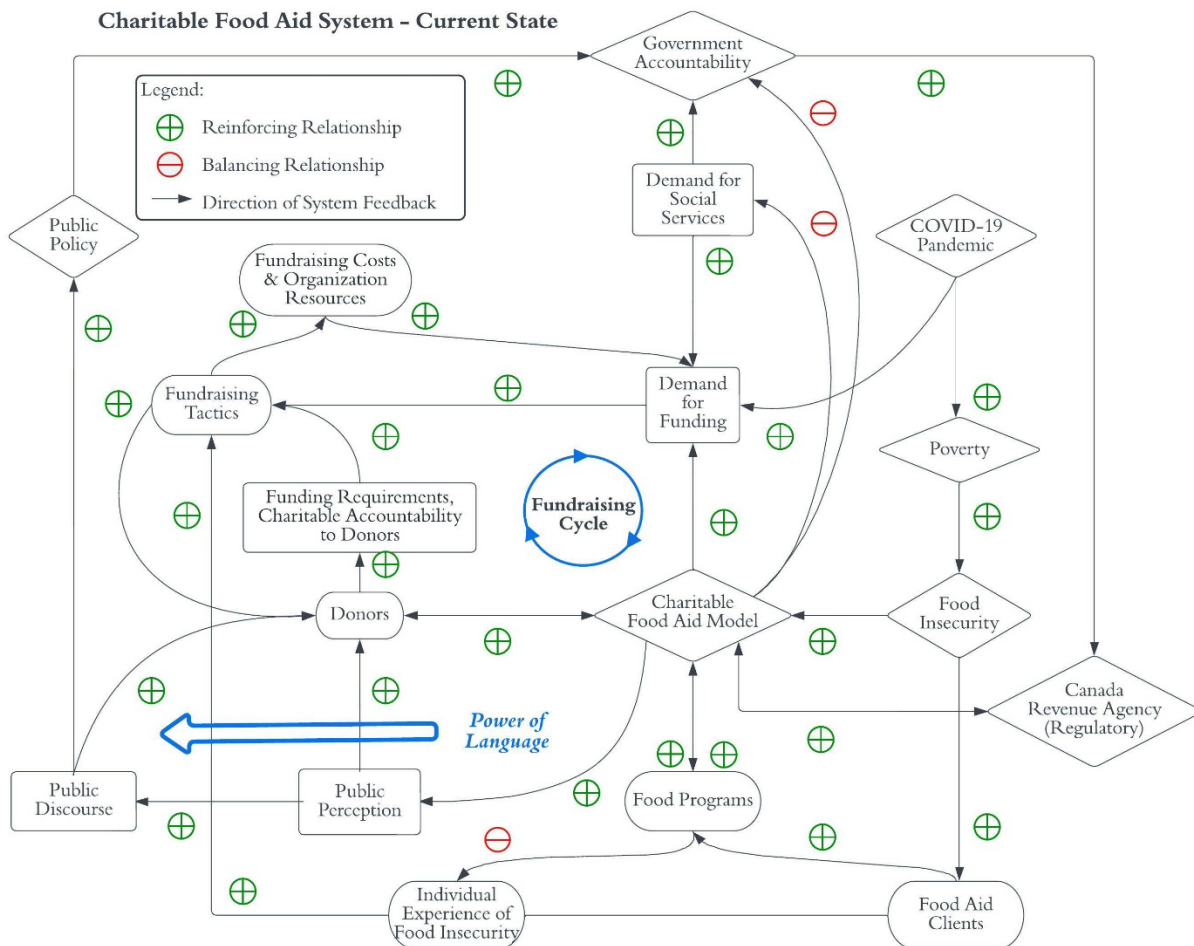


Figure 3: Charitable Food Aid System - Current State (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Before examining the system, it is important to first describe the components of the system map. The different shapes of the system components represent their scale; with diamonds representing macro scale system factors like poverty, policy, and the global COVID-19 pandemic; while rectangles represent components that are situated within the meso scale of the system such as funding requirements, public perception, and accountability to donors; and lastly the oval shapes represent micro scale elements such as local food programs, fundraising costs, and donors (Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015). The visual representation of scales helps to illustrate the ways in which system components are entrenched

within the system, demonstrating where change may be more feasible through smaller scale components. System relationships are illustrated with arrows connecting the components, demonstrating the direction of power or movement within the system. Additionally, causal connections and feedback loops are depicted with green plus icons representing producing (reinforcing) behaviours and the red subtraction icons representing balancing (correcting) behaviours of the system. These icons are of particular importance because they highlight at a high level the ways in which the system perpetuates its own existence through reinforcing behaviours as well as the ways in which system outcomes are balanced or corrected.

The charitable food aid model, funding programs, and food insecurity are key drivers of the causal connections demonstrated within this map. Throughout the system are connections that interact with one another through varying behaviours that are informed by the interactions of the system itself, creating either producing or balancing feedback loops throughout the system (Stroh, 2015). Specifically, poverty has a producing effect on food insecurity which in turn has a producing effect on food aid clients, all of which reinforces the demand for food programs which demonstrate a balancing feedback connection on the individual experience of food insecurity. The reinforced demand for food programs ripples through the system, creating increased demand for funding which results in a producing effect on fundraising tactics and donors, ultimately fueling the fundraising cycle. As shown in the map, the fundraising cycle is comprised of producing and reinforcing behaviours, representing a system that perpetuates its own existence through the continuous need for donors and thereby the ongoing accountability to donors and tactics used to maintain their relationships. The demand for funding leads charities to leverage fundraising tactics to attract and retain donors, some of which have funding and accountability requirements that require, these practices cost organizational resources which diverts funding away from the mission and ultimately contributes to the need for more funding.

Furthermore, as charities continue to operate to respond to the urgency of food insecurity, the demand for government run social services decreases leading to reduced government accountability to address the problem, demonstrating a balancing feedback loop in the system. Further, as food programs provide food aid, they have a producing effect on public perception that the problem is being addressed, which ultimately informs public discourse and policy through decreased urgency, which then has a reinforcing effect on the current government accountability behaviour within the system. As shown in the system map, each of these components and variables are connected, and together result in alleviating the symptoms of food insecurity without addressing its root causes (Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015).

Limitations & Scope of the System

The purpose of this system map (Figure 3) is to demonstrate the system behaviours that arise from the causal connections stemming from the charitable food model. The primary components of the system include the charitable model, food programs, funders, government,

and the public. Variables of the system include food insecurity rates, demand for funding, public discourse, and policy. To focus the project on the potential for change through a fundraising lens the system was bound around the fundraising cycle, and therefore some system elements were excluded and thus exist outside the bounds of the system (Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015). Defining the context of the system are culture, employment, healthcare, government policy and jurisdiction, and poverty, and as such exist outside the bounds of the system (Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015). Specifically, poverty is generally recognized as a primary driver of the system, however, to focus on the purpose of the system map the complexities that comprise and contribute to poverty exist outside the system perspective.

Furthermore, it is important to note that numerous leverage points hold the potential for increased effectiveness for positive systemic change, as outlined in the conceptual framework section of this report, however, fall outside of the scope of this project (Meadows, 1999). Particularly, the ability to leverage the most powerful avenues for change within the system to address poverty as a key driver of it lies predominantly with governmental institutions to implement innovative policy initiatives and interventions (Tarasuk, Li, and Fafard St-Germain, 2022). This paper does not intend to assert that the fundraising cycle is accountable to solve the complex problem of poverty, but rather the scope of this project intends to highlight the fundraising cycle as a leverage point accessible to non-governmental actors to influence possible systemic change.

System Archetypes & Leverage Points

The primary strength of using systems theory as the conceptual framework for this project is the emphasis on considering all parts of the system, including the structures, actors, connections, and behaviours within that system, to help understand system outcomes and identify ways to change them (Meadows, 1999; Stroh 2015). Just as the make-up of a system dictates its interactions and outcomes, the design of organizational processes and sector structure dictate where power is held, the relationships to resources, and how success is measured, which comprise an organization's effectiveness and success (Villeneuve, 2018). As this project is focused on supporting systemic change through transforming donor relations practices, which exist within organizational processes, it is pertinent to assess the common behaviours and outcomes of the fundraising cycle within the system to help understand the status quo and identify opportunities to change it. This section will begin by outlining archetypes exhibited within the system before shifting into a discussion about key points within the system to leverage change.

As outlined by Stroh, system archetypes illustrate common behaviours and systemic outcomes and support the identification of pitfalls of the system, or ultimately, why complex problems are so difficult to solve (2015). The primary system archetype exhibited throughout the system is the shifting the burden archetype, which demonstrates drifting goals and success to the

successful behaviours in the context of the charitable food aid system. Charitable food is a vital response to the everyday demand of food insecurity; however, this demand-based model is a band-aid fix in response to a symptom of a complex problem, resulting in unintended dependency. This shifting the burden of the problem occurs due to the complexity of addressing root causes, which require significant resources to develop and implement systemic solutions (Stroh, 2015). Developing solutions to the complex problem of poverty would be immensely challenging, whereas the experience of food insecurity can be addressed by the provision of food aid, a temporary relief to hunger which is a symptom of the bigger problem of poverty. By focusing on the symptoms of a problem, like food insecurity as a symptom of poverty, charitable food aid provides a temporary solution that ultimately shifts the burden away from finding a systemic solution (Stroh, 2015).

Further, this system behaviour undermines both the motivation and capacity to find a more permanent solution to the problem (Stroh, 2015). Specifically, this behaviour enables stakeholders to perceive reduced accountability to long-term solutions and supports the funding dependency cycle. As the charitable food aid system actively addresses the continued need for social support through the temporary solution of food aid, the demand for government institutions to address the problem either short-term or long-term is reduced, reaffirming pressure on the system to carry the burden and demand for a band-aid fix. As Poppendieck asserts, perhaps food charity “with its ubiquitous collection mechanisms for food and money, its high visibility...has reassured the *public* that no one will starve, and thus given [the government] tacit permission, if not enthusiastic support, to dismantle the federal guarantee of minimum support” (1998, p. 299). Charitable food aid as a quick fix to poverty that ultimately reduces government and societal accountability to developing a long-term solution to address the root causes of food insecurity, and thus enables dependency on the quick fix itself (Stroh, 2015).

This in turn creates a cycle of dependency that is reinforced by the components of the system, such as government, charities, and donors. This dependency leads to a deference to low performing solutions; because the symptomatic quick fix is an easier alternative to the resource investment required for problem solutions; to reduce the gap between the goal and the current reality, corrective action is taken by lowering the goals of the system itself (Kim, 2000; Stroh, 2015). Considering the causal relationships within the fundraising cycle and the dependency inherent in them, this cycle further distracts from a systemic solution as the goals within the fundraising cycle are structured to reinforce the status quo as opposed to challenging the system it exists within (Kim, 2000; Meadows, 1999).

Moreover, because shifting the burden enables reduced accountability to long-term solutions and supports funding dependency, a success to the successful loop appears throughout the fundraising cycle (Stroh, 2015). For example, donors hold power through wealth and resources and influence functions of the system by defining funding and accountability requirements, operating within the fundraising cycle that fulfills goals as defined by actors of the system, both maintaining the status quo of the system as well as the key mechanisms that drive it

(Meadows, 1999; Stroh, 2015; Villeneuve, 2018). The fundamental donor dynamic that characterizes fundraising operates on a one-way flow of resources, from those with to those without, funneled through mechanisms that ultimately perpetuate system dependency on symptomatic solutions (Kim, 2000; Villeneuve, 2018). Understanding the system archetypes through a fundraising lens helps explain why system outcomes occur, and ultimately supports the identification of potential leverage points within the system (Meadows, 1999).

As this project is focused on intervention within the fundraising cycle specifically rather than more direct opportunities for systems change, which fall beyond the scope of this research, it is important to identify leverage points within the arm of influence of fundraisers themselves. By approaching this project problem through the lens of fundraising, opportunities for system intervention become focused through the fundraising cycle with donor relations as the primary opportunity to leverage change. Given the project research question and objectives, the following three leverage points to facilitate system intervention were identified utilizing Meadows' leverage points for change framework; the structure of information flows, the rules of the system, and the power to evolve or self-organize the system (1999). Specifically, the structure of information flows leverage point focuses on adding a new feedback loop to the system with the hope of improving how information about the problem is communicated and to whom it's communicated towards the goal of improving accountability to the problem (Meadows, 1999). Additionally, the rules of the system as a leverage point emphasizes the current processes and functions within the fundraising cycle itself, and points to adjusting or transforming how those processes inform the system and how it operates, and potentially maintains itself. Lastly, the power to self-organize the system is fitting for this project topic, as it highlights the importance of relationships and movement building to affect high level systemic change.

Summary of Findings: Current State System Analysis

As emphasized throughout this report, food insecurity and poverty as the root problems causing it are complex social problems that are entrenched within societal structures and institutions. To help identify where change, and ideally transformation, are possible within the issue of food insecurity it is wholly important to understand how the charitable food aid system itself functions. In line with the project questions, the purpose of this current state system analysis was to illustrate the unintended consequences of the fundraising cycle and the ways in which donor relations may contribute to maintaining the status quo through visual mapping of the system through the lens of fundraising. Furthermore, as system theory is the conceptual framework guiding this project, it logically follows that approaches to answering the project research question align with that framework, which demonstrates the relevance of this analysis and the importance of identifying leverage points that support affecting systemic change within the fundraising cycle.

In the context of this topic, changing the structure of information flows could be incorporating new feedback loops that ensures the root cause of food insecurity, and any relevant

policy initiatives, are effectively communicated to donors and the public, influencing public perception, discourse, and ultimately, policy. Building on that leverage point, changing the rules of the system focuses more on the fundraising cycle itself, seeking opportunities for intervention in the way that decisions are made, the purpose of processes, and ultimately how the system operates (Meadows, 1999). This leverage point holds promising potential to influence systems change because it uncovers how system archetypes like the success to the successful feedback loop generate reinforcing feedback loops and focuses on redesigning the system, so they do not favour those in power (Meadows, 1999). Finally, the power to evolve or self-organize the system is the third leverage point holding potential for intervention in donor relations, as it highlights that the system as it exists does not have to remain and that stakeholders of the system can self-organize and evolve existing system structures or processes (Meadows, 1999). More specifically, this could be through self-organizing at a professional and sectoral level for fundraisers working within charitable food aid, implementing creative innovations to the status quo, or adding entirely new approaches in hopes of seeing different outcomes (Meadows, 1999).

While each of these leverage points hold the potential for system intervention in the context of this project, it is important to assess these opportunities in conjunction with the collected data for this project. As such, the three leverage points that have been briefly summarized here will be further explored in Chapter Six of this report during the data analysis discussion, which will revisit the project's conceptual framework in line with the research outcomes of the system map analysis and the web-based survey.

Chapter Five: Findings – Survey Results

“Transformational change will always require challenging conversations about ‘us’” (Villeneuve, 2018, p. 129)

This chapter outlines the key findings from the web-based survey conducted with fundraising and leadership professionals working in charitable food aid in the Greater Toronto Area. This chapter begins by summarizing the survey format and distribution before providing an overview of the survey respondents and outlining any contextual identifiers of the participants and their organizations. The chapter then shifts into discussing the survey findings which were thematically analyzed and deductively categorized based on the project’s research question; how can food aid charities based in the Greater Toronto Area transform donor relations practices to promote improved relationships focused on systemic change within the charitable food aid system? To support this discussion, commonalities in the findings have been highlighted within each theme by first discussing the results from the multiple-choice questions and concluding each thematic section by highlighting any commonalities in the open text survey questions. A discussion and analysis of the survey findings and any interpretation of the results will be provided in the following chapter of this report.

Survey Themes

Status Quo of the System

Many of the questions in the survey were geared towards understanding the current state of the system from the perspective of the participants. Specifically, when asked how they felt about the current state of fundraising practices in charitable food aid and whether things could be improved, 71% of respondents felt that some things could be improved with 29% indicating that things should change. As well, most respondents agreed to some extent that donors play a role in creating systemic change beyond financial donations.

Looking at the status quo of the fundraising cycle specifically, when asked whether impact communications focused more on demonstrating long-term or short-term impact, 57% of respondents indicated communications focused more on short-term impact. Relevant to this finding is the response to whether participants thought the language used in donor communications had any influence on public perception of the problem and the experience of food insecurity, with all participants selecting yes (Table 1).

Do you think the language used within donor communications has any influence on public perception of the problem and experience of food insecurity?	Total	%
Yes	7	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
Other (please explain)	0	0

Table 1: Survey Question 11 Findings (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Relevant to the discussion of findings related to the status quo of the system are some of the individual responses to the open text questions at the end of the survey. Specifically, in response to the question ‘from your perspective, what are the biggest barriers to transforming fundraising and donor relations to support positive systemic outcomes on food insecurity?’ multiple participants discussed the fundraising cycle’s role in maintaining the status quo highlighting the shortcomings of funding short-term impact with one participant specifically calling out the “nonprofit industrial complex” in their response. Moreover, there were commonalities in the responses generally, with multiple participants identifying the challenge between addressing the immediate need and focusing on systemic solutions with one response stating, “if organizations focused on developing the solution and spent less on maintaining the status quo funding, support from dynamic sources will follow.”

Donor Relations Practices & Tactics

To support the identification of opportunities for change within fundraising, many survey questions focused on donor relations practices, giving respondents the option to indicate their perspectives around donor relations practices generally as well as exploring specific tactics commonly used in the cycle. Regarding general viewpoints towards fundraising tactics, participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement ‘donor relations tactics always prioritize long-term systemic impact’, which 85% of participants disagreeing with the statement to some extent. When asked to what extent they agreed with the statement “donor relations and retention tactics have unintended consequences” the responses were split, with 43% of respondents agreeing to some extent and 29% indicating a neutral perspective.

The results from the more specific tactical questions in the survey focused on topics such as language and imagery used in donor relations tactics and gift agreement and donor engagement practices. Specifically, the participants were asked if they thought that food aid charities could improve the use of language and imagery to empower and protect the dignity of the communities they serve, to which 86% responded yes. Further, when asked whether they thought a donor-specific language policy the prioritizes ethical storytelling would be beneficial when engaging with donors, 86% responded yes (Table 2).

Do you think a donor-specific language policy that prioritizes ethical storytelling would be beneficial when engaging with donors?	Total	%
Yes	6	86
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
Other (please explain)	1	14

Table 2: Survey Question 12 Findings (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Building on that question, participants were asked if they thought there was any benefit to collaborating with the communities their organizations serve to develop language used with donors and the public, with 86% responding yes. Continuing to examine specific tactics, survey respondents were asked if they used an internal checklist that focuses on addressing systemic solutions to food insecurity and empowering food aid recipients when building a partnership agreement or launching a new campaign. 57% respondents indicated no, however this question resulted in some open text responses as well, with multiple respondents indicating the use of their organization’s values when assessing new partnerships and campaigns.

From a resource perspective, when asked about reallocating staff time and effort spent on recognition and donor impact reporting into other tasks without risking the loss of funding, the results were ultimately inconclusive with varied answers across the group. However, when asked which specific tactics they would prioritize discontinuing to save on staff resources if it wouldn’t risk losing funding, 71% of participants indicated restricted funding and 86% indicated marketing and recognition benefits for donors as top priorities to discontinue (Figure 4). As well, multiple participants commented on the utility of some of these tactics for policy interventions when indicating low priority tactics to discontinue, with highlighting both lived experience and statistical impact being the most identified as low priority.

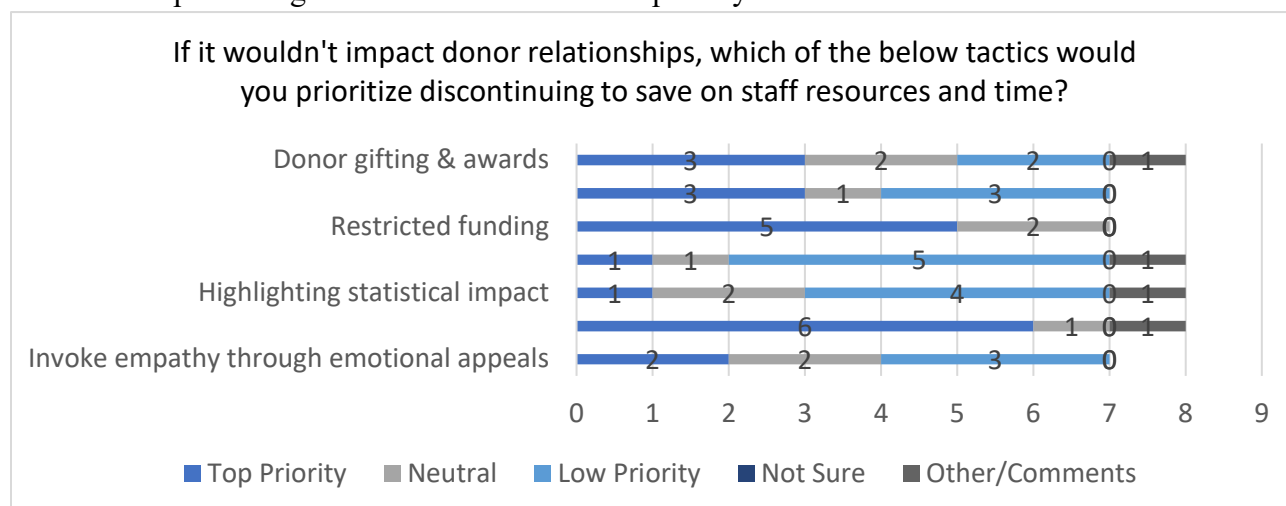


Figure 4: Survey Question 18 Findings (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Participants were also asked which tactics they would prioritize transforming to support systemic solutions for food insecurity, with 71% of respondents indicating that marketing recognition tactics and communications language and imagery were the highest priority to transform (Figure 5). Also, a unique response in terms of high priority tactics was the importance of partnerships with other organizations and a focus on public policy education and action, which were included in the participant comments.

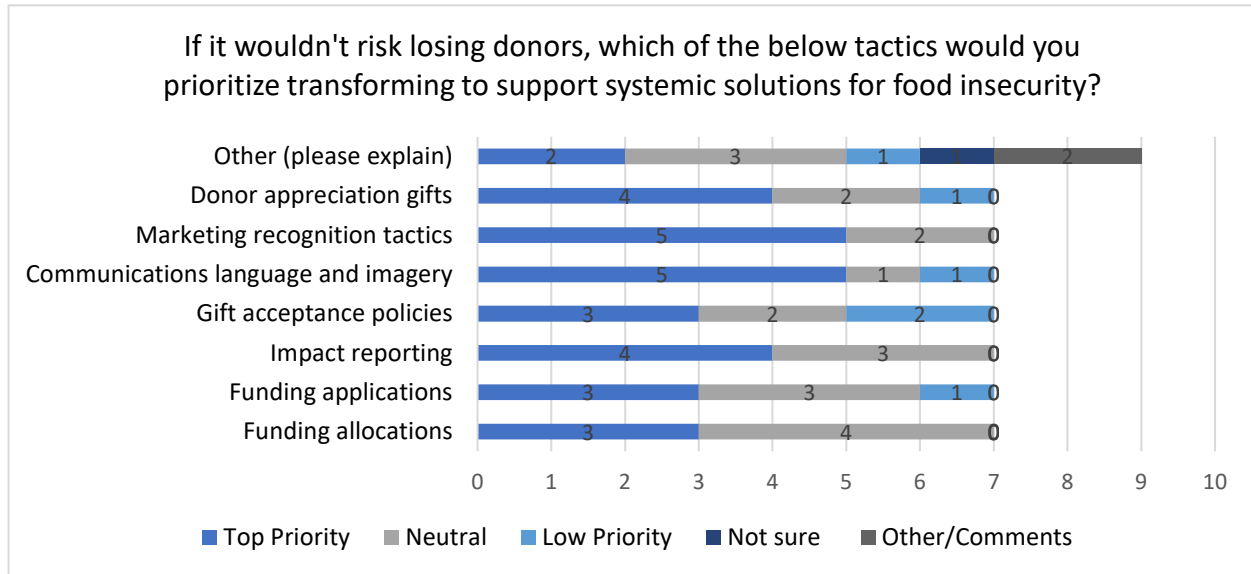


Figure 5: Survey Question 19 Findings (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Most of the open text responses to the final three survey questions fit within the donor relations practices and tactics theme, as they discussed specific tactics or activities within the fundraising cycle. In response to the question ‘how do you think donors can be mobilized to facilitate long-term impact on food insecurity, beyond the immediate impact of funding?’, 71% of responses emphasized the importance of engaging donors in advocacy work and civic engagement activities, specifically highlighting tactics such as letter writing, education, and voting. Further, when asked if they could change anything within fundraising and donor relations without risking loss of funding, 71% of responses discussed the burden of completing funding applications and fulfilling requirements, highlighting the high cost in resources that are necessary to deliver results but ultimately take away from funding programming.

Affecting Systemic Change

To support answering the project’s research question, multiple survey questions were designed to gain insight into potential opportunities to facilitate positive systemic change on the charitable food aid system from the perspective of fundraising and leadership professionals. Particularly, participants were asked whether their organizations trained staff about how to talk about topics such as food aid recipients, the experience of food insecurity, and systemic solutions to food insecurity. In response to this question, 71% of participants selected yes.

Building on that question, participants were also asked whether they educated donors around talking about the same topics, to which the responses were ultimately split with 43% indicating yes and 43% indicating no, with the remaining 14% indicating that it depends on the donor. Further, participants were asked whether they addressed the donor’s role within the current food security system when completing gift agreements, to which 57% of respondents said no. Interestingly, when asked which type of donors have the most untapped potential to create systemic impact the results were primarily split between corporate and individual donors (Table 3), with one participant stating “none of these – rich donors benefit from the system, and individually them or orgs can’t make an impact through giving on programming – impact must be made through legislation.”

In your opinion, what type of donors have the most untapped potential to create systemic impact?	Total	%
Corporate donors	2	28.57
Foundation Donors	1	14
Individual Donors	2	28.57
Other (please specify)	2	28.57

Table 3: Survey Question 20 Findings (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Regarding the open text questions concluding the survey, many responses related directly to the theme of affecting positive change within the charitable food aid system. An interesting commonality within this theme was the emphasis on relationship and partnership building, which appeared in multiple open text responses throughout the survey. Specifically, when asked what the biggest barriers to transforming fundraising and donor relations to support positive systemic outcomes, one participant highlighted the importance of “creating ownership in the solution as opposed to a supporter of the solution” through partnership building. Additionally, when asked what they would change within fundraising and donor relations without risking the loss of funding, 43% of respondents emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration and community-centric fundraising efforts. Further demonstrating the importance of partnerships in affecting change, many participants highlighted the significant role of the government in achieving positive systemic outcomes through legislation, which was a common theme in the open text responses throughout the survey.

Summary of Findings: Survey

In summary, there were numerous commonalities identified out of the findings from the web-based survey, with many responses specifically identifying priorities for change within fundraising tactics, as well as common perspectives around the status quo of the system and possible methods to affect systemic change. The responses represent the perspectives of fundraising and leadership professionals in charitable food aid that responded to the request for

participation in this study, which as outlined in Chapter Three was a limitation due to the low participant response rate. The figures and tables shown throughout this chapter demonstrate key findings from the survey in relation to the project's research question and objectives. These findings and response commonalities will help guide the discussion in Chapter Six, which delves into the analysis of the findings from both the system map analysis and survey results and connects relevant outcomes back to the literature in support of answering the project's research question and the development of recommendations.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Analysis

This chapter builds on the findings as outlined in Chapters Four and Five by applying an analytical lens to the results, framing them within the project's research question and conceptual framework. To start, a summary of the research findings and relevant themes is provided, linking key findings from both the current state analysis and the survey results with relevant insights from the literature. Building on this discussion, the chapter then specifically highlights if and how the research answers the project research question. Next, any unexpected results or new ideas that emerged from the findings are outlined before moving into a discussion on any strategic or research implications of the findings. Continuing this chapter, the discussion then shifts into an overview on limitations of the analysis and highlights any areas for further research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the analysis and revisits the project's conceptual framework.

Connecting Key Findings with the Literature

The key findings presented in both Chapters Four and Five connect directly with many arguments reviewed in discussion of the relevant literature in Chapter Two of this report. Particularly, there were consistencies across the findings and the literature in terms of the themes as identified for this project, and together support answering the project's research question and objectives. To provide a cohesive analysis of the findings and relevant literature, this discussion examines connections through the following themes: current state of the system, donor relations tactics, and emerging frameworks and affecting systemic change.

Current State of the System

Many connections were identified regarding the current state of the system during data analysis. To start, as noted in Chapter Five findings from the survey indicated that the current state of fundraising practices in the charitable food aid system could be improved, supporting the findings regarding the current state system analysis in Chapter Four and echoing multiple arguments from the relevant literature which highlighted some of the issues fraught within the cycle and system it exists within (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). More specifically, findings from the survey indicated that the current state of donor relations focuses predominantly on communicating short-term impact, despite all respondents agreeing that donor communications have an influence on public perception of the problem. This calls to the burden archetype as discussed in the system analysis, demonstrating the ways in which the current state of the system shifts the burden of long-term solutions to temporary ones that are more attainable.

Moreover, almost all respondents indicated that the language and imagery used in these communications could be improved. This is highly relevant as the current state analysis revealed the ways in which donor relations and the fundraising cycle influence public perception and discourse on the problem of food insecurity and its root causes, illustrating reinforcing

connections within the system that have a causal connection with public policy and ultimately government accountability. Together these outcomes relate directly to the impact of language as emphasized by both Fisher (2017) and Poppendieck (1998), who highlighted how focusing on short-term impact or the simplification of hunger as the problem ultimately distracts from addressing poverty as the root cause. Pertinent to this argument is the discussion of donor psychology and the motivations behind donating, which as Poppendieck emphasizes relies on emotional responses to framing the issue as hunger and celebrating the short-term impact of meals served, which inadvertently communicates that the issue is being effectively addressed (1998, p. 303). As the problem that funds are raised to address along with the impact those funds have are framed as short-term, unintended consequences can be found through the causal connections and behaviours of the system which is demonstrated through the continual need for funding and the reinforcing impact this framing has on the connection between public perception, discourse, and policy as shown in Figure 3. Together, these findings emphasize the opportunity for change within the structure of information flows, which aligns with the identification of this as a primary leverage point holding potential for systemic change.

Building on this argument is the issue of dependency, which was a consistent topic throughout the literature and findings. Specifically, many authors raised the issue of cycle dependency through the continual reliance on funding and thereby the donors providing that funding, which creates an inherent power imbalance between charity and donor that ultimately reinforces the status quo of the system (King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Directly supporting this discussion are the findings from both the current state system analysis and the survey, with the current state system analysis demonstrating the cycle of dependency through reinforcing feedback loops represented throughout the system and highlighted with the fundraising cycle specifically. As well, there were minimal balancing or correcting feedback loops identified in the system analysis, demonstrating an imbalance of the system behaviours that favour reinforcing outcomes (Stroh, 2015; Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, 2015). Further, the findings from the survey demonstrated acknowledgement from some of the participants of this dependency through highlighting the NPIC and the focus on maintaining funding that reinforces the status quo in the open text responses. This emphasizes the arguments of multiple authors, which assert how the nonprofit status quo maintains itself through structures and top-down processes that favour those who hold power and wealth, such as funders, through the prioritization of donor relations and fundraising practices (Giridharadas, 2019; King and Osayande, 2017; Munshi and Willse, 2017; Villeneuve, 2018).

Considering that the current state of the system is structured in a way that reinforces the status quo, as examined in the literature and research findings, it is pertinent to discuss the role of accountability in the system. The current state system analysis highlighted the reinforcing connections throughout the system and the fundraising cycle specifically, which ultimately influence public policy and government accountability as briefly outlined above. This finding is

supported by authors such as Poppendieck (1998), Fisher (2017), and Sword (2019), who emphasize the impact of language on achieving positive systemic solutions and highlight the distraction from the root of the problem by focusing on the symptom. Interestingly, when asked whether donors play a role in creating systemic change beyond financial donations most participants said yes, with additional further responses emphasizing the importance of advocacy and civic engagement to support policy intervention at the government level. Together, with the system analysis and relevant literature, this finding highlights a general acknowledgement and need for accountability and the role of advocacy and civic engagement to facilitate policy intervention. However, if the current state of the system is structured to reinforce the status quo through practices such as donor communications, the system is not designed to balance this seeming band-aid fix towards systemic outcomes (Stroh, 2015). This further emphasizes the potential for long-term impact by changing the rules and structures of the system and its information flows, building on the discussion of leverage points as identified in the system map analysis.

Finally, before moving on to the next theme in this discussion it is important to note the consistent acknowledgement of the tension between addressing the immediate demand for food aid while actively seeking long-term systemic solutions, which was found throughout the literature and research findings. Specifically, the system analysis acknowledges the continual demand for funding, which is reinforced through causal connections such as poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic, with the experience of food insecurity being addressed, or corrected, through the provision of food programs sustained by funding. Further, addressing the immediate need was highlighted by multiple respondents who emphasized that organization focus is often on maintaining funding to fulfill that immediate need rather than focus on long-term solutions.

Donor Relations Tactics

This section draws connections between the findings and the literature regarding donor relations practices and tactics, highlighting commonalities and specific tactics where there may be opportunity for change. First, the most predominant trend throughout the findings and literature was the emphasis of the resource cost of fundraising practices and donor relations, which ultimately detracts from the ability to focus on the cause and reinforces the status quo. This was highlighted in the survey responses, specifically emphasizing the burden that rigorous funding applications, funding restrictions, and other donor directed requirements ultimately impose on the charity. Further, central to the fundraising cycle as depicted in Figure 3 are the causal connections among donors, funding requirements, and the cost in organizational resources, which are reinforcing in nature across their connections in the same and comprise much of the fundraising cycle specifically. This discussion of the cost in resources to fulfill donor directed activities and the burden they impose are echoed throughout the literature, with both Poppendieck (1998) and Villeneuve (2018) emphasizing the continual nature of maintaining funding and the relationships tied to them. Moreover, this connects directly to the shifting burden archetype revealed by the system map analysis, which emphasizes the ways in which the burden

of the system is shifted towards temporary and in some cases self-maintaining system behaviours.

Building on this discussion, multiple authors highlighted the conditions that are typically tied to relationships with donors and ultimately their funding, emphasizing the requirements for charities to maintain these relationships through ongoing cultivation and retention efforts (King and Osayande, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). This argument supports numerous survey findings which generally indicated that tactics focused on benefiting the donor, such as marketing and recognition benefits, were the top priority to discontinue if it wouldn't impact funding. As discussed by King and Osayande (2017) and Giridharadas (2019), these relationship maintenance activities ultimately benefit the donor, often through market-friendly methods that reinforce fundamental power dynamics, ultimately maintaining the status quo of the system. This is further demonstrated by the survey finding that indicated donor communications language was a top priority to transform, which as examined in the literature typically is framed in ways that rely on short-term impact and centering the donor over the work (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998).

Moreover, the literature highlights the reliance of charities on their higher value donors which is consistent with the findings from both the survey and system analysis (King and Osayande, 2017; Giridharadas, 2019). Particularly, findings from the survey indicated that the current system benefits those with power, such as donors, which is consistent with the literature and the system analysis which identifies the success to the successful archetype with this system behaviour. Further, this demonstrates the potential for change by looking at the rules of the system as a leverage point for systemic change, as it emphasizes the consequences connected to maintaining the existing power structures and processes of the system.

Continuing the theme of specific tactics, the survey findings indicated potential promising practices that could support transforming the status quo of the fundraising cycle. For example, the findings demonstrate that there is a consensus that a donor specific language policy that prioritizes ethical storytelling would be beneficial, with many respondents further expressing potential benefit to collaborate with the communities' charities serve when developing such a policy. This finding is interesting as it builds on the arguments of many authors who highlight how philanthropy is the institutionalization of saviourism, relying on centering the achievements made possible because of the donor while simultaneously depicting the lived experience of food insecurity in a way that will effectively motivate continued donor support (Fisher, 2017; Giridharadas, 2019; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Considering this discussion in the literature in conjunction with these survey findings, an ethical language policy would be worthwhile to explore further and assess its potential to support system transformation.

In addition, it is worth discussing tactics that support advocacy as they align with the emphasis on government accountability which was highlighted throughout the research findings and supported by relevant literature. Specifically, as noted in Chapter Five numerous survey

responses emphasize the importance of policy intervention and the role of the government in facilitating systemic change, with many responses raising the importance of engaging donors in advocacy work. Some specific tactics that were mentioned in open text responses were the use of letter writing, policy education, and voting. These findings are supported by Poppendieck's work, as the arguments presented highlight ways in which key stakeholders of the system can support policy intervention through grassroots advocacy and engagement efforts (1998). Of course, discussion of government and policy interventions was limited throughout the literature review as those topics fall outside the initial scope for this project and pose opportunities for further exploration regarding the donor's role in support such interventions. Further, while this did not appear in the literature review, it is worth noting the survey findings indicated that highlighting statistical and lived experience impact is beneficial in supporting policy interventions and were therefore a low priority for respondents to discontinue or transform. Also, discussion of potential practices was excluded from the current state system analysis as it was a high-level assessment of the current state of the system and as such potential behaviours fell outside the scope of the system analysis. This discussion of potential tactics that hold promise to transform and affect systemic change leads directly into the next section, which highlights commonalities in the findings and literature regarding emerging fundraising frameworks and opportunities to affect positive change.

Affecting Systemic Change & Emerging Frameworks

Opportunities to affect systemic change and emerging fundraising frameworks are the final theme examined in support of this analytical discussion. When assessing the findings from the research in conjunction with the relevant literature connections to collaboration, relationship building, and accountability were predominantly identified in affecting change. As well, these connections relate directly to some of the emerging fundraising frameworks that were previously discussed in Chapter Two of this report.

Looking first at collaboration, the findings from the survey demonstrate the importance of relationship building not only with donors but developing strong networks with other organizations to support improved community outcomes. This response occurred more than once in the survey results, and is a concept supported by Poppendieck's work which calls for movement building and self-organization (1998). Moreover, this connects directly to the system analysis findings that identified the power to self-organize as a primary leverage point holding opportunity for change. As well, the CCF framework was included in the participant responses as a relevant and important approach to transforming fundraising practices, which as highlighted in the literature review champions collaboration and movement building to affect positive change within fundraising (Community Centric Fundraising, 2022). Relevant to this analysis is the survey finding that collaborating directly with the communities' charities exist to serve regarding the development of a donor-specific language policy would be beneficial. Together with the relevant literature these findings demonstrate an awareness that collaborative efforts could be beneficial, and in line with CCF could facilitate the implementation of more ethical practices.

Interestingly, relationship and movement building were not represented in the system analysis beyond the identified leverage point, and therefore highlights a potential opportunity to explore what impact those efforts may have on system behaviours and outcomes.

Building on this discussion of movement and relationship building is understanding the role the donor plays within that movement and ultimately facilitating systemic change. The survey findings demonstrate that the consensus believes donors play a role beyond financial support in facilitating systemic change, however most respondents did not currently acknowledge or define that role within gift agreements. Highly relevant is the unique participant response emphasizing the importance of building partnerships that create ownership over systemic solutions, indicating that donors can help affect change beyond funding it. This connects directly to the discussion of accountability as outlined above, aligning with arguments from Fisher (2017) and Poppendieck (1998) who discuss the role donors can play both in terms of their own practices and actions to reduce poverty, but also in supporting policy intervention. This discussion of the role of the donor is in line with the consistent connection to accountability and relates directly to the findings from the system analysis. As noted previously, the system map illustrates the reinforcing behaviours that ultimately maintain the status quo and highlights the dependencies of the system which shifts the burden to symptomatic band-aid fixes and diverts accountability away from sustainable solutions to the complex root of the problem (Stroh, 2015). Moreover, this highlights the opportunity to empower and engage donors beyond funding, aligning with the survey finding that donors do play a role beyond financial support and reinforcing the need for increased accountability as depicted in the system map analysis.

Furthermore, advocacy and policy intervention consistently appeared in the survey results, emphasizing the benefit of highlighting impact for policy intervention and engaging donors with advocacy education and action. This is an interesting connection to the discussion of OFB's transformative approach to reporting, reframing success and impact by decentering money from the language used in practices and focusing on building relationships that steward a movement (Oregon Food Bank, 2022). Moreover, as highlighted by multiple authors the institutionalization of philanthropy is comprised of top-down processes that maintain the status quo (Giridharadas, 2019; King and Osayande, 2017; Munshi and Willse, 2017; Villeneuve, 2018). As such reframing fundraising practices through a transformative approach, such as OFB's approach to reframe language, poses potential to build on the utility of highlighting impact as indicated in the survey by changing the feedback behaviours of the system. The system analysis revealed the structure of information flows as a promising leverage point to affect change, connecting directly with the discussion of transforming how impact and success is communicated and ultimately developing improved relationships that are geared towards systemic change.

Answering the Research Question

The primary research question this project sought to answer was: how can food aid charities in the Greater Toronto Area transform donor relations practices to promote donor relationships focused on systemic change within the charitable food aid system?

This question was developed through a systems theory lens and guided the entire project towards uncovering promising practices and recommendations to support disrupting the status quo of the system. A literature review was conducted first, highlighting the complexity of the project topic and benefit of utilizing systems theory as the project conceptual framework. Specifically, literature focusing on existing fundraising practices and the current state of food aid charity brought forward supporting topics such as language, donor psychology, unintended consequences of the charity food aid model, and emerging frameworks within the fundraising sector, as examined in Chapter Two. To build on the relevant literature, two research methods were conducted: a current state system analysis utilizing system mapping and a web-based survey garnering insights from fundraising and leadership professionals working in food aid charity regarding specific tactics, opportunities, and the status quo. In combination, these methods have provided insight into the current state of food aid fundraising and highlighted opportunities for change worth exploring, in support of answering the research question.

The research done in this study highlighted multiple opportunities for transforming donor relations practices to focus more on systemic change, directly supporting answering the project research question. In combination, the findings presented in both Chapters Four and Five emphasize the challenges with the current state of the system that could be changed as well as potential methods that could be transformed to support that change. Further, the conceptual framework enabled identifying opportunities for change by illustrating the ways the system maintains the status quo, emphasizing potential to transform causal connections and feedback behaviours within the system from the perspective of fundraising. With the conceptual framework guiding the project research, the highlighted findings were connected to the identified leverage points opportune to support change. These findings, as showcased in the discussion and analysis of this chapter, were utilized to develop recommendations for fundraising professionals to support transforming donor relations towards systemic change. The following table (Table 4) demonstrates the primary takeaways from this research study, which were used to support the development of recommendations which are outlined in Chapter Seven.

	Literature Review	System Analysis	Web-Based Survey
Current State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charitable food aid maintains the status quo Language has an impact on policy Fundraising tactics misrepresent the problem and solution Dependency on funds Lack of accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviours and connections maintain the system Fundraising cycle consists of reinforcing behaviours Fundraising cycle influences public perception Reinforcing behaviours create cycle of dependency System behaviours distract from accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor relations could improve Communications focus mostly on short-term impact Communications influence public perception Language & imagery could improve Donors play a role in the system
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressure to continually maintain funding and donor relationships Fundraising favours those with wealth and power Institutionalization of saviourism Importance of policy intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of fundraising reinforces demand for funding The rules of the system Success to the successful archetype 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource cost of donor relations Marketing/recognition benefits could be discontinued Donor specific language policy Engage donors in advocacy work Utility of highlighting impact
Affecting Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movement building and self-organization Community-Centric Fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The power to self-organize The structure of information flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership & network building Collaborate with communities Create ownership over the solution

Table 4: Key Research Takeaways (created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

The above table indicates the ways this study has answered the research question by highlighting opportunities for transformation within food aid fundraising with the objective of accomplishing positive systemic change. Continuing with the themes of status quo, specific tactics, and affecting change, the takeaways highlighted in Table 4 outline the basis for which the project recommendations were developed. While this study has answered the research question in some ways, the extent to which this project answered the research question in its entirety is

limited to some extent as well. Specifically, discussion and assessment regarding promoting improved relationships that are focused on systemic change was limited. The research conducted focused predominantly on the system and donor relations practices, demonstrating a gap in adequate exploration of that aspect of the research question. While this project did not fully answer the research question, the findings that were highlighted support answering the question regarding the aspects of transforming donor relations with a focus on systemic change. Ultimately, this study has helped uncover consistencies throughout the literature and research findings and supported the identification of possible opportunities for systemic change through fundraising, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Unexpected Findings and New Ideas

While much of the research conducted in this study aligns with the findings in the literature review, there were some results that were unexpected and offer opportunities for further exploration and discussion. Specifically, some questions in the web-based survey resulted in split responses from the participants, presenting opportunities for clarification through further research. As noted in Chapter Five, when asked whether they educated donors about topics such as how to talk about food aid recipients, the experience of food insecurity, and systemic solutions to food insecurity the responses were evenly split between yes and no, with one respondent indicating it depends on the donor. There was limited discussion in the literature regarding the active education of donors, so this finding was unexpected and poses an opportunity for further exploration. For example, it could be beneficial to research any potential outcomes from food aid charities who educate donors on those topics, and if there was any influence of those outcomes on the behaviour of the system. Additionally, the responses were relatively split when asked what type of donors have the most untapped potential to create systemic impact, as highlighted in Table 3 in the previous chapter. Reflecting on the literature review, this outcome is consistent in terms of the opportunities for change within different donor types as discussed in some of the literature (Fisher, 2017; Poppendieck, 1998; Villeneuve, 2018). Unexpectedly was the framing of donor potential as setting an example, such as corporations paying a living wage as commented by one participant. Viewing donor potential in the light of example setting would be an interesting exploration through the lens of accountability to the problem of food insecurity and poverty, and therefore could be worth further research.

An approach in the findings worth noting is the incorporation of organizational values into partnership agreements to ensure funding relationships were aligned with the strategic and mission priorities of the organization. While this approach is possibly leveraged by many charitable organizations, it did not emerge in the literature review and should be noted as an approach that poses utility in support donor relations that align with an organization's mission, and potentially systemic change should the values align with that end goal. Also, worth noting here is the unique participant response, highlighting competition between charities flooding donors with requests as a barrier to systemic change. As previously stated in Chapter One of this

report, this consideration falls outside the scope of this project however is worth further attention and potential exploration.

Strategic and Research Implications

Given the findings presented here, it is pertinent to discuss any strategic or research implications that arose from this research study. Specifically, as this research is focused on identifying opportunities for donor relations to promote systemic change, the findings presented in this project pose strategic implications for donor relations beyond those directly related to charitable food aid. For example, should the findings presented here demonstrate feasible utility and implementation of the recommendations developed out of this study, they pose the potential to become promising practices that can support promoting positive long-term change on causes outside the scope of charitable food aid, food insecurity, and poverty. While this strategic implication emerges from the overall goals of this project, the remaining implications emerged during the discussion and analysis of the research findings and therefore pose opportunities for further research.

Limitations of Analysis and Areas for Further Research

Through data analysis of the findings, some limitations of the analysis were identified as well as areas for further research. Before moving into this discussion, it is important to note that due to the small sample size of the web-based survey the results are limited in their utility to provide generalizations out of this research. It would be beneficial for further research to include a larger sample size in the data collection to support capturing consistencies and trends across a larger participant population.

Regarding the analysis specifically, areas for improvement in the survey collection method emerged during the examination of the results. As the survey sought to gain insights into the perspectives of both fundraising and leadership professionals, the questions could have been improved and better segmented to support identifying any distinctions between the two groups' responses, as well as any contrasting trends between the two groups. Perhaps if drop down menus were leveraged instead of open text in response to the title identification question, it would have been easier to identify any distinctions between the two groups' responses. Additionally, as a common result from the survey was the emphasis of the role of the government it is worth considering whether the responses would be different had the survey and research topic been framed differently to the participants. Specifically, perhaps participants would have provided different insights and perspectives in their answers had fundraising been more heavily framed as an alternative approach in support of leveraging change at the government and policy level, providing more clarity on the research topic and survey questions. Further, these limitations indicate that the phrasing and design of the survey could have been improved. For example, the phrasing of some of the questions themselves could have inadvertently restricted responses such as the specification of certain tactics like gift agreements within the question and thereby narrowing the possible findings of alternative tactics in the

participant responses. Considering the limitations of the survey data collection method, it would be worthwhile for future research to design more participatory methods, as noted in Chapter Three, to support more engaged participant outcomes and mitigate some of the limitations experienced in this study.

In addition to the limitations of the survey analysis, the current state systems analysis was limited due to its high-level nature, excluding analysis of specific tactics and outcomes from the map. Furthermore, approaching the system map at such a high level led to generalizations about the system and its behaviours, limiting discussion of existing unique efforts by organizations to disrupt the status quo and create systemic change. It should also be noted the considerations and connections that fell outside of the scope of the system as bound for the purposes of this project, such as healthcare and government jurisdiction, which were briefly outlined in Chapter Four of this report. Additionally, future research should explore the system behaviours and outcomes resulting from incorporating more balancing feedback loops into the system, and thereby examine the potential outcomes of the desired state of the system.

Additional areas for further research were identified throughout the synthesized analysis of the research findings. Specifically, as changing the structure of information flows was a predominant leverage point identified for this project, it would be worth researching the impact having an ethical language policy or reframing impact and reporting metrics may have on the system. Building on that, future research could explore the role of sectoral policies and frameworks in affecting systemic change, with a look at the effectiveness of sectoral fundraising policies and guidelines to understand whether those pose benefits to promoting systemic change. Conversely, further research could examine specific tactics, exploring the cost-benefit of high-cost donor relations in the context of systemic change, as well as the implications of donor psychology on transforming fundraising tactics to promote systemic change. Lastly, it is worth noting that this project was predominantly approached within the context of dominant ways of thinking, and therefore poses opportunities for future research to focus on other approaches outside of traditional academic approaches.

Revisiting Conceptual Framework

This chapter synthesized the research findings through a thematic discussion focused on the current state of the system, donor relations tactics, and affecting system change. Utilizing the conceptual framework as a map enabled the examination of the findings from the literature, current state analysis, and the survey to come together in a way that supported identifying opportunities for change in the system. Through this analysis, the highlighted findings demonstrated the potential for change in the current state of fundraising within food aid charity which formed the foundation for the development of the recommendations outlined in the following chapter. Considering how the findings were synthesized and the rationale used to identify opportunities for change, utilizing systems theory as the conceptual framework for this

project was a significant benefit in organizing the research and ultimately supporting the fulfillment of project objectives.

As briefly defined in Chapter One, and further outlined in Chapter Two of this report, systems theory as the conceptual framework for this project enabled the exploration of the behaviours and connections of the system from a fundraising perspective (Stroh, 2015). Specifically, this theory supported the organization of the learnings from the literature review, which highlighted the complexity and nuances of the research problem. As demonstrated throughout the literature review, numerous factors and topics emerged relevant to the project research problem, including criticisms of the current state of the system, the unintended consequences of fundraising tactics and the ways in which charity itself reinforces the system, and the layered impact of language within this context on the accountability to find long-term system solutions. Considering the breadth of relevant topics in support of answering this research question, a systems theory approach to this project was an appropriate choice as it effectively aligned with the complexity of the problem and enabled the research to seek less obvious opportunities to leverage systemic change (Figure 6).

To build on the relevant topics in the literature, systems theory enabled the mapping of the system which supported examining its current state and highlighting where change could potentially occur through visual representation of system nuances. In addition, systems theory supported effectively synthesizing the results from the system analysis and the web-based survey through the identification of potential leverage points opportune for change based on the survey findings and the current reinforcing system behaviours. Ultimately utilizing systems theory as the conceptual framework underpinning this project was an appropriate approach as it supported making sense of the relevant discussion and takeaways from the literature and research methods. Furthermore, this framework directly informed how the research problem was answered through the examination of system leverage points from the perspective of fundraising and the development of recommendations based in this theoretical approach.

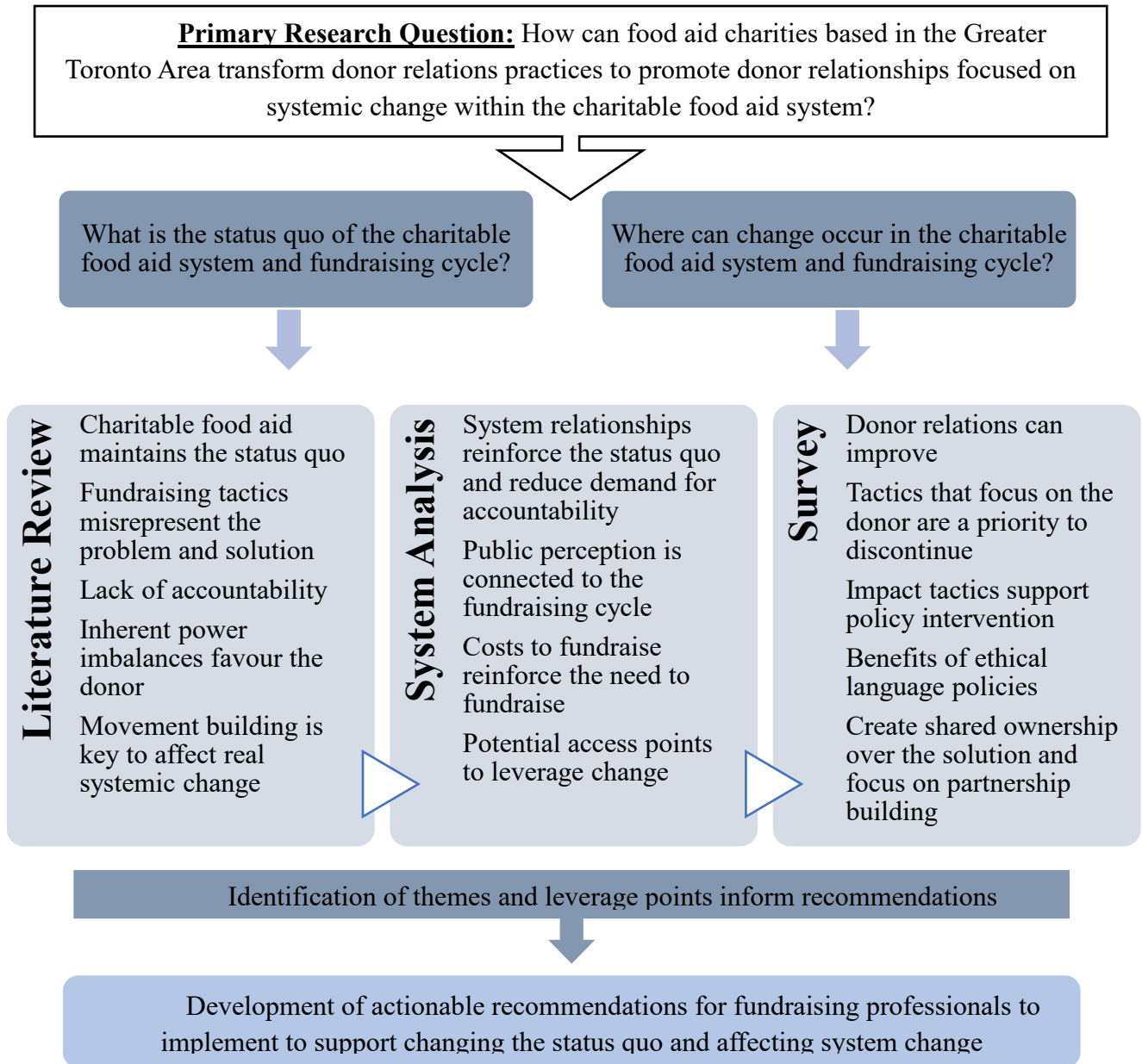


Figure 7: Revised Conceptual Framework (Created by Emily Barrie, 2022)

Chapter Seven: Recommendations to Consider

Introduction

This project sought to identify opportunities to transform donor relations to support improved relationships that focus on systemic change within the charitable food aid sector. The key findings from the system analysis and the survey indicate that there are opportunities to transform donor relations to focus more on systemic change, building on the relevant discussion in the literature. To support answering the research question and the project objectives, this chapter outlines recommendations for fundraising professionals on how to transform donor relations practices to focus on affecting positive systemic change. These recommendations were developed from the synthesized findings discussed in Chapter Six and are intended for fundraising professionals and charitable food aid organizations to consider implementing to promote systemic change.

Recommendations to Consider

The primary purpose of this report was to develop actionable recommendations that professional fundraisers could employ in their donor relations activities. The findings presented throughout this paper demonstrate that there are ultimately two options that professionals can take, maintaining the status quo or engage in adjusting and evolving the status quo of donor relations practices to support transformation of system behaviours, and ultimately promote systemic change.

The following recommendations are organized based on the leverage points identified through the project research, with the first recommendations representing opportunities for change that may be more feasible for implementation, building towards recommendations that may be less feasible but ultimately hold power to influence change within the system. The recommendations have been organized this way to enable fundraising professionals to assess which actions may be more feasible for implementation within the context of their specific organization's funding needs, as well as emphasizing which recommendations require the lowest resource investment of the organization to implement. Furthermore, outlining the recommendations in this way effectively aligns with the project's conceptual framework ultimately supports answering the research question and supporting the project's overall deliverables.

The Structure of Information Flows

Recommendation 1: Develop Ethical Communications Practices

Develop an internal language policy that outlines how communications should be framed when shared with donors and the wider public, to align language with ethical considerations and ultimately support promoting systemic change. Communications used with donors should

prioritize ethical language, imagery, and storytelling. Fundraising professionals should implement internal language policies that specifically outline what terms are appropriate as well as defining ones that are not appropriate. This is important to help ensure that donor and public facing communications use language that supports an accurate understanding of the problem, rather than simplifying discussion to focus on the symptom of the problem. In line with this recommendation, it is crucial to reconsider how donors are referred to in communications, to ensure that communications do not reinforce power imbalances within charitable food aid and center the impact and communities central to why funding is necessary.

Recommendation 2: Incorporate Long-Term Impact Communications

Focus on communicating long-term impact in conjunction with short-term impact. Incorporating long-term impact into donor communications is important because it supports building a narrative focused on creating impact that extends beyond the symptom of the problem. While achieving impact is a predominant motivator for donors, it is crucial to demonstrate the unintended consequences of focusing on the symptom of the problem rather than the problem itself. Fundraising professionals should explore new ways of communicating impact beyond the simplified short-term impact language focused on hunger meals and develop tactics that celebrate that immediate impact while continually building towards long-term change and impact. As well, it would be worthwhile to explore reframing impact metrics to allow opportunity to discuss progress towards systemic solutions in conjunction with necessary short-term impact on the symptom of the problem, to support building donor relationships that promote systemic change.

The Power to Self-Organize the System

Recommendation 3: Develop Community and Movement Building Opportunities

Develop opportunities for community and movement building with your supporter base, as well as engaging in collaborative efforts with the communities served by charitable food aid and other organizations working within the charitable food aid space. This recommendation is important because it enables self-organizing within the system and promotes collaborative partnerships that create shared ownership over the solution and increased collaboration from diverse stakeholders. Empowering donors to join in solution building will help uncover new opportunities for change, and support shifting away from the traditional and transactional nature of funder and funded dynamics, engaging donors as participants in the solution rather than supporters of it.

Recommendation 4: Incorporate Policy Education and Awareness

Incorporate advocacy and policy education into donor relations practices to build awareness of the current state of the problem and support ongoing discussions of opportunities and possible actions that can be taken to support systemic change. Consider providing donors with informative resources focused on advocacy and policy change, outlining specific actions

donors can take to promote systemic change at the government level. In line with this, engage in discussions with donors about how they can champion systemic change by demonstrating a commitment to addressing the root cause of poverty through their own actions, beyond their financial donations which traditionally revolve around immediate relief and impact.

Changing the Rules of the System

Recommendation 5: Engage in Transparent Conversations About Resources

Engage in transparent conversations with donors about the high resource cost of donor driven practices like marketing and recognition benefits as well as funding applications and requirements. Work with donors to develop innovative opportunities to reduce the internal costs of these activities, while still maintaining mutually beneficial relationships to maintain funding. This recommendation is challenging due to the role these tactics play in obtaining funding partnerships, however, is important in building honest and transparent relationships that acknowledge the realities of the status quo and pave the way for uncovering new possibilities that enable reallocating resources traditionally spent on benefitting donors into programs and community work.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The demand for food continues to rise at a rapid rate, with the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic contributing to the emergent state of food insecurity in Canada. Operating on a cyclical need for funding, charitable food programs actively address the immediate need of hunger relief; however, unintentionally maintain the status quo of charitable food aid and food insecurity. Now more than ever it is crucial to disrupt the status quo of the charitable food aid system and develop actionable steps that can be taken to support the implementation of meaningful systemic solutions to poverty as the root problem of food insecurity.

This study sought to identify opportunities for change within the charitable food aid system from the perspective of fundraising. The research conducted throughout this project demonstrated that opportunities for change within the fundraising cycle exist and hold the potential to support behavioural change within the system and ultimately promote long-term change. Framing systemic change through fundraising is a unique approach, which builds on the relevant literature by discussing opportunities for change within donor relations to support achieving change at higher levels of the system, such as policy intervention. Given that the status quo maintains the current state of the system, approaching systemic change from the angle of fundraising enabled the identification of less obvious leverage points for change that pose the potential for influencing systemic behaviours to better promote the higher-level change necessary to develop long-term solutions to the problem.

The findings in this study illustrated multiple opportunities for change when framing donor relations as the leverage point for affecting change. Specifically revealing that donors play a role beyond their financial support, and that there are tactical activities such as communications and recognition benefits that can be transformed to promote partnerships focused on long-term impact. The recommendations developed from this research outline a feasible starting point for fundraising professionals to begin transforming and reframing their donor relations practices. Ultimately, the recommendations pose an opportunity to empower donors to be engaged in the solution rather than supporters of it, demonstrating new ways to build authentic, transparent, and systemically geared partnerships.

As noted in this report, this research could be continued by expanding the scope of the study to capture perspectives from a larger sample size, as well as from other stakeholder groups such as donors themselves and charitable food aid recipients. It would also be worth expanding this research to assess the impacts of the unexpected findings from this study, such as actively educating donors about relevant problem topics, on the behaviours of the system. In line with this, future research should consider examining the opportunities identified in this study to further highlight and detail where change is possible in the system, and how donor-charity relationships can continue to expand impact beyond financial support.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Participant Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Emily Barrie, I'm a graduate student at the University of Victoria working towards a Master of Arts in Community Development.

I'm currently working on my final capstone project under the supervision of Dr. Kimberley Speers and am conducting some research about food aid charities and donor relations. For this study I am looking to recruit participants with experience in fundraising who work at food aid charities based in the Greater Toronto Area, to gain sector-based insights into how donor relations can be transformed towards improved relationships with donors that are focused on addressing systemic solutions to food insecurity. I've attached a poster with more information about the study for reference.

I've also attached the **Letter of Information for Implied Consent**, which further details all of the information you need to determine if you'd like to participate. Please ensure you read through this document so you understand all of the details relevant to your voluntary participation and **note that this letter and the completion of the below linked survey act as your implied and informed consent to participate.**

Here is the link to the web-based survey: <https://questionnaire.simplesurvey.com/f/s.aspx?s=9262ac04-2f2e-409f-966c-9d45c00339ab>

Please note that completion of this survey is entirely voluntary and can be done at any time according to your schedule. The survey will be closed as of **May 31st, 2022**, and you will not be able to participate after that date. A reminder email to complete the survey will be sent 3 days prior to this above noted deadline.

Of course, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at any time with any questions, I'd be happy to chat with you! My contact information is included in both attachments.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I greatly appreciate it!

Kindest regards,

Emily Barrie, Graduate Student, University of Victoria

Appendix B – Participant Recruitment Poster

Transforming Charitable Food Aid Donor Relations Towards Leveraging Systems Change

Student Researcher
 Emily Barrie
 Master of Arts in Community Development
 Graduate Student
 School of Public Administration
 University of Victoria

Contact Information
 emilybarrie@uvic.ca
 416-884-6191

Key Participant Information

Overview

Time: Up to one hour
 Data Collection Method: 1 survey, 30- minutes

When, Where, and How

The survey will be conducted in May 2022.

The survey will be distributed to participants as an internet link via email using a web-based survey tool, Simple Survey.

Complete at your own convenience before the specified deadline.

Confidentiality

All participant names and data, and the respective organizations they work for will be kept confidential and held in the researcher's confidence.

Limitation to protecting confidentiality: during the selection process participant confidentiality may be compromised as participants are being sought based on the organization they work for, with two participants ideally being recruited at each organization.



Project Description

This project is focused on identifying opportunities to leverage change within the charitable food aid system, to support improving donor relationships that are focused on addressing systemic solutions to food insecurity. The overarching goal is to explore the role of charities in supporting systems change by examining discourse, power imbalances, and donor relations practices. Data collection is focused on surveying and interviewing two staff from approximately 30 food aid charities based in the Greater Toronto Area in Ontario, Canada.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can food security charities based in the Greater Toronto Area transform donor relations practices to promote improved relationships focused on systemic change within the food security system?

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a set of recommendations geared towards leverage systems change
- Examine the evolution of language in food security discourse & donor communications
- Discuss power imbalances in fundraising and identify tactics to shift away from them

METHODOLOGY

Gap analysis with a focus on promising practices, current and desired state analysis, and change management strategy. Theoretical foundation in systems theory and community-based research.

Why Participate?

Contribute to a discussion based within the charitable food aid community about how donor communications and stewardship practices can transform to support long-term mission impact.

Voice your perspective to support the development of realistic recommendations that emerged from the community itself, that can be implemented to support transforming donor relations.



Additional Information

Further details regarding participant consent, confidentiality, and a detailed outline of participant steps have been sent with this information sheet.

An Executive Summary of this study will be shared with participants upon completion of the project.

For any questions, concerns, or clarifications please contact the student researcher directly (contact information at the top of this document).

Appendix C – Web-Based Survey Questions

Respondent Identifiers

1. What is your current title?
2. Does your organization have paid staff, or is it primarily volunteer run?
 - a. Paid Staff
 - b. Primarily Volunteer Run
 - c. Other/Please Explain
3. How many people are employed at your organization?
 - a. 0-10
 - b. 10-25
 - c. 25-50
 - d. 50-100
 - e. 100+

The Current State of Fundraising in Food Aid Security Charities

4. In your opinion, what is the current state of fundraising practices in the food aid charity sector?
 - a. It's perfect, I wouldn't change a thing!
 - b. It's okay, but I think some things could be improved
 - c. It's not great, there are things that should change
 - d. It's bad, I would change a lot of things if it wouldn't risk losing donations
 - e. It's bad, I would change a lot of things whether it risks losing donations or not
 - f. Not sure
 - g. None of the above
 - h. Other (please explain)
5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement; “donors play a role in creating systemic change to address food insecurity, beyond their financial donations”?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
 - f. None of the above
 - g. Other (please explain)
6. To what extent do you agree with the following statement; “donor relations and retention tactics have unintended consequences”?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Neutral

- d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
 - f. None of the above
 - g. Other (please explain)
7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement; “donor relations tactics always prioritize long-term systemic impact”?
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
 - f. None of the above
 - g. Other (please explain)
8. From a leadership perspective, if you could reallocate the staff time and effort spent on recognition & donor impact reporting into other tasks without the risk of losing funding, would you?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Depends how much time and effort are being reallocated
 - e. Other (please explain)

Donor Communication & Language

9. When communicating impact because of financial support, are communications focused more on short-term or long-term impact?
- a. Mostly short-term impact
 - b. Mostly long-term impact
 - c. Both
 - d. Neither
 - e. Other (please explain)
10. Do you think that food aid charities can improve the use of language and imagery to empower and protect the dignity of the communities they serve?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)
11. Do you think the language used within donor communications has any influence on public perception of the problem and experience of food insecurity?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

- c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)
12. Do you think a donor-specific language policy that prioritizes ethical storytelling would be beneficial when engaging with donors?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)
13. Do you think there is a benefit to collaborating with the communities you serve to develop language used with donors and the public?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)

Food Insecurity Awareness

14. Do you train staff about topics such as how to talk about food aid recipients, the experience of food insecurity, and systemic solutions to food insecurity?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)
15. Do you educate donors about topics such as how to talk about food aid recipients, the experience of food insecurity, and systemic solutions to food insecurity?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)

Donor Relations, Fundraising Tactics, and Systemic Change

16. Do you address the donor's role within the current food security system when completing gift agreements?
- a. Yes, and donors have been very receptive to it
 - b. Yes, but it hasn't been received well by donors
 - c. Yes
 - d. No, because donors wouldn't be receptive to it
 - e. No, it wouldn't be beneficial
 - f. No
 - g. Not sure
 - h. None of the above

- i. Other (please explain)
17. Do you use an internal checklist that focuses on addressing systemic solutions to food insecurity and empowering food aid recipients when building a partnership agreement or launching a new fundraising campaign?
- a. Yes (please share)
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Other (please explain)
18. If it wouldn't impact donor relationships, which of the below tactics would you prioritize discontinuing to save on staff resources and time?
- a. Invoke empathy through emotional appeals
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - b. Marketing & recognition donor benefits
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - c. Highlighting statistical impact
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - d. Highlighting lived experience impact
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - e. Restricted funding
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments

- f. Low administrative costs
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - g. Donor gifting & awards
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
19. If it wouldn't risk losing donors, which of the below tactics would you prioritize transforming to support systemic solutions for food insecurity?
- a. Funding allocations
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - b. Funding applications
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - c. Impact reporting
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - d. Gift acceptance policies
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - e. Communications, language, and imagery
 - i. Top priority

- ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - f. Marketing recognition tactics
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - g. Donor appreciation gifts
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
 - h. Other (please explain)
 - i. Top priority
 - ii. Neutral
 - iii. Low priority
 - iv. Not sure
 - v. Other/comments
20. In your opinion, what type of donors have the most untapped potential to create systemic impact?
- a. Corporate donors
 - b. Foundation donors
 - c. Individual donors
 - d. Other (please specify)
21. How do you think donors can be mobilized to facilitate long-term impact on food insecurity, beyond the immediate impact of funding? Please specify donor types and tactics where applicable.
22. From your perspective, what are the biggest barriers to transforming fundraising & donor relations to support positive systemic outcomes on food insecurity? Please explain your answer.
23. If you could change anything within fundraising and donor relations without risking loss of financial support, what would you change? Please explain your answer.