

Mobile Market Program Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 2023



► Program Synopsis

The Maryland Food Bank's (MFB) Mobile Markets are 26-foot vehicles that travel to targeted locations to offer a no-cost food shopping experience in communities where residents have limited access to grocery stores and nutritious food. They are MFB's response to the realization that its network of brick-and-mortar community partners will not be able to reach all Maryland communities where geography and a lack of transportation are persistent barriers to food access.

Leveraging MFB's Maryland Hunger Map and extensive data, the food bank's Regional Program Directors actively pinpoint and direct Mobile Markets toward unserved and underserved areas. These vehicles provide the agility that's required to meet the need for food assistance as it emerges and persists in communities outside the MFB network, while removing transportation and limited mobility barriers.

Beyond providing nutritious food, Mobile Markets welcome a wide range of local service providers to share critical resources with neighbors in need, referring them to social service agencies and offering wraparound services, or complementary supports like free health screenings that help address the root causes of hunger. MFB also utilizes Mobile Market distribution events to connect qualifying neighbors to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), ensuring that access to food assistance continues after the vehicle departs.

► Evaluation Background

In March 2023, the MFB Strategy Group evaluated the Mobile Market Program to assess its effectiveness and impact on neighbors in areas of high need. The evaluated service period took place

from Nov. 1, 2021 to Oct. 31, 2022, when visitors received one 15-pound or 30-pound box of shelf-stable food and an additional 20-pound box of fresh vegetables and fruits at no cost.

The evaluation found that Mobile Markets offer significant relief to Marylanders who may feel forced to purchase the least expensive and often less healthy food items in an effort to decrease household expenses. The research group's complete report includes a detailed analysis of costs, benefits, community and neighbor impacts, as well as recommendations and findings, literature review, methodology, tables, infographics, maps, photos, and appendices.

► Evaluation Highlights

MOBILE MARKET REACH:

- MFB's two Mobile Markets served **11,266 households** across Maryland or an estimated **29,742 Marylanders** in need over 12 months.
- The vehicles distributed **401,497 pounds of food**, enough to provide **334,581 meals**.
- The team organized **152 distribution events**, with the help of **62 community partners**.
- **75% of Mobile Market distribution events** reached vulnerable Marylanders living in remote areas in 16 of the 22 jurisdictions MFB serves.

MOBILE MARKET IMPACT:

- Mobile Markets' in-kind contribution of free food translated to a market value of **\$1.3 million dollars**.
- The program generated a return on investment of **\$4.20 for every \$1 invested**.
- Based on the analysis of visitor statistics, a family **saved up to \$594 on groceries** by visiting a Mobile Market.
- The program leveraged volunteers to plan and host food distribution events at an **in-kind value of \$59,864**. It also contributed to the local economy through wages, employees' tax contributions, and local food purchasing, valued at **\$183,874**.

► Evaluation Summary

Based on this evaluation, it's clear that the Mobile Market Program is an effective tool in the Maryland Food Bank's fight against food insecurity. The food bank will continue to invest in this program and expand it in FY24 with the addition of a third vehicle so that Mobile Markets can be on the road more frequently, delivering hope to more Maryland communities.

The full evaluation report is available upon request.

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