

HEALTHY PANTRY INITIATIVE

2024 GRANT PILOT IMPACT REPORT

OCTOBER 3, 2024



INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Healthy Pantry Initiative supports pantries throughout Virginia to be more **health focused** and **neighbor centered**. The HPI provides training and resources, connects pantries to strategic partnerships, and invests in the implementation of the **20 HPI best practices**.

The HPI Grant pilot was a huge success!

We tested our annual grant processes, including the application process, distribution of funds, and collection of outcomes data. Pantries focused on implementing practices from the **food availability** and **neighbor-centered** categories, with the most common practices being:

- offering fresh fruits and vegetables
- offering items from each of the five food groups
- offering neighbor choice

AT A GLANCE

- **12 pantries** participated across Virginia in the January-June 2024 pilot period
- Over **\$120,000** was invested in the pantry network across all seven food banks
- Grants ranged from \$2,142-\$17,142, with most pantries receiving around **\$8,500**



Funding for the Healthy Pantry Initiative pilot generously provided by Aetna CVS Health and Amerihealth Caritas

PANTRY HIGHLIGHT

Lorton Community Action Center



\$11,442

- **Purchase 3 translation devices**
- **Forge a new relationship with a Halal food vendor**
- **Purchase significant food from them**
- **Purchase a wagon and cart for clients to more easily transport their food**



"We used the earbuds last week for the first time, to facilitate speaking with an older Mongolian neighbor who is an LCAC client. We had struggled to communicate with him before and while he was always very grateful, the new experience of being able to converse with us, easily using these earbuds, brought tears of joy to his eyes. "Now you can understand me!" we were able to hear him exclaim."

"The translation devices have been phenomenal. We are now able to communicate with clients during check-in at the pantry and during the distribution itself. Clients can better explain what food they're requesting, and staff and volunteers can better communicate options, ingredients, and other information like events and partners who may be on hand."



COMMON FUNDING USES



- **Sourcing food**
 - 10 pantries
 - culturally familiar foods, foods to address dietary restrictions

- **Food storage**
 - 6 pantries
 - purchasing freezers, refrigerators, shelving

- **Create a welcoming environment**
 - 4 pantries
 - physical improvements to the space, signage in other languages

- **Other notable uses**
 - language translation devices
 - transportation kits
 - converting to a choice pantry

KEY DATA OUTCOMES

Grant funding significantly increased pantry sourcing of healthy foods

- Pantries increased sourcing of foods that meet cultural preferences and dietary restrictions by **40%**
- Pantries increased sourcing of dairy products by **54%**
- Pantries increased sourcing of fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein by around **20%**

- **All pantries** were able to serve new demographic groups or expand their reach to existing groups served
- **11 pantries** increased service to seniors
- **9 pantries** increased service to neighbors with chronic health conditions
- **8 pantries** increased service to communities of color

All grant funded pantries were able to reach more neighbors and reduce barriers to accessing food

PANTRY HIGHLIGHT

New Vision Community Food Pantry



\$8,571.43

- **Installed new shelving and flooring**
- **Created a nutrition education room**
- **Organized a comprehensive health summit**
- **Sourcing fresh fruits and vegetables**
- **Offer foods to address dietary and cultural needs**
- **Used SWAP to organize food**

“...Among them were neighbors who silently struggled with dietary restrictions for years, often feeling overlooked and judged. When they heard about our new initiative, tears welled up in their eyes. Overwhelmed with emotion, they shared how they had often felt marginalized and misunderstood. The move towards a healthy pantry, they said, felt like someone was finally listening to their needs without judgment.”



“Through this grant, we have been able to create a space that truly embodies our belief that food is medicine. Our holistic approach to food insecurity, combined with our focus on health education, has strengthened our community and provided our neighbors with the tools they need to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.”

For more information contact Sydney Sanders at ssanders@vafoodbanks.org

