



# **Co-design to translate food relief service principles into practice**

## RESEARCH MATERIALS

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## Acknowledgement of Country

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**Disclaimer**

The opinions in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Centre for Social Impact or the funder.



# ABOUT THESE RESEARCH MATERIALS

This document presents a set of research materials that were developed as part of a collaborative ARC Linkage research project between researchers at the Centre for Social Impact Flinders and five partner organisations, including three food relief service providers and two state government agencies.

The aim of these research documents is to disseminate the tailored research materials developed during the Linkage, to enrich the body of knowledge on co-design methods. The intention of sharing these materials is to better equip others, including academics and practitioners, with practical tools and guidance on conducting co-design within research or service evaluation. The authors share these materials as open access and free of charge. **Users are strongly encouraged to acknowledge and reference the suggested citation and DOI provided on page 1.**

The research materials include:

1. **This introductory document**
2. **Co-design planner** – a summary document for planning co-design sessions with teams and stakeholders. In the Linkage project, this document was used for planning the session with community sector organisation managers and volunteer coordinators
3. **Co-design session discussion guide** – detailed, step-by-step instructions and script for delivering co-design sessions
4. **Co-design ideas booklet** – a visually appealing collection of prompts and questions that co-design participants work through to sensitise participants to the topic (in the case of the Linkage, food relief service provision), and provide examples of relevant ideas and possible solutions that would stimulate their own creativity.

## Companion documents

These resources should be used in conjunction with the following documents, including a academic peer review article describing the development of the SA Food Relief Charter, which explains the five guiding principles for food relief provision (that were the subject of co-design sessions in the Linkage):

- Pettman, T. L., Williams, C., Booth, S., Wildgoose, D., Pollard, C. M., Coveney, J., McWhinnie, J.-A., McAllister, M., Dent, C., Spreckley, R., Buckley, J. D., Bogomolova, S., & Goodwin-Smith, I. (2022). A Food Relief Charter for South Australia—Towards a Shared Vision for Pathways Out of Food Insecurity. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(12), 7080 <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19127080>
- South Australian Food Relief Charter and Nutrition guidelines <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/About+us/About+SA+Health/Health+in+All+Policies/Public+Health+Partner+Authorities/Department+of+Human+Services+SA+DHSSA/South+Australian+Food+Relief+Charter+and+Nutrition+Guidelines#scrollTo=SouthAustralianFoodReliefCharterandtheNutritionGuidelinesfortheFoodReliefSectorinSouthAustralia1>

## About the project

Despite a strong economy, chronic food insecurity persists in Australia due to poverty, insufficient income support, costs of living, and social exclusion. Community sector organisations respond with food relief, which primarily focuses on providing food to meet immediate need. While this is an important function, the service model does not address underlying social and financial challenges, so does not reduce chronic food insecurity, leading to an entrenched need for food relief.

There are few guidelines in Australia to guide food relief service providers and community food retailers on how to ensure ‘good’ practice and positive client experiences and outcomes. Common challenges experienced include eroded dignity and lack of choice for clients, addressing needs ‘beyond food’ (such as social connection and reciprocity opportunities), and sourcing foods with nutritional value (Gallegos et al., 2023). In 2016, the South Australian Government commissioned research and facilitated community sector engagement to identify potential policy actions to address food insecurity. Among other actions, a *Charter* for the food relief sector was co-developed. The South Australian Food Relief Charter is a declaration of a shared vision, with five guiding principles intended to guide collective actions for system improvement. The Charter represents a commitment to working collaboratively towards an optimal food relief system (Pettman et al., 2022).

The Charter and accompanying nutrition guidelines were disseminated in 2019. At the launch, several community organisations became signatories and a community of practice (CoP) was established to provide an informal forum for knowledge exchange between Charter signatories. Subsequently, a ‘healthy nutrition environment progress checker’ (nutrition checker) (Government of South Australia 2019) was developed by state government, in consultation with the community sector, to support progress in meeting nutrition recommendations (not yet disseminated, at the time of writing).

Other than the nutrition guidelines, there has been no systematic attempts to develop implementation support (e.g. resources, capacity building, infrastructure, policy) to accompany the Charter or translate its principles into practice. Some food relief services have commenced local action through allocating staff and volunteer time to build awareness of the principles, and implement the nutrition guidelines. To embody the guiding Principles of the Charter, the food relief sector and government can both work towards a more integrated system approach, and more coordinated responses to food insecurity (Yii et al., 2019).

The voluntary Charter, nutrition guidelines, partnerships and professional networks in South Australia provides a strong foundation to assess *how* best to translate principles into ‘good practice’ across the sector. In 2021, CSI Flinders researchers initiated a partnership research project with two state government agencies and three community sector partners, supported by [ARC Linkage funding](#) (Australian government). The project objective was **to work in partnership with the food relief sector and government to (1) assess *how* the SA Charter principles have been translated in three food relief models; (2) Identify *barriers to and enablers of* translation into service model types; and (3) Develop metrics for monitoring how well each service model translates the Charter Principles, thereby meeting client needs and pathways towards food security.**

Three food relief models are represented in the Linkage; 1) food as hamper or voucher; 2) food-hub/food pantry ‘shopping’; 3) social supermarket (open access) with low-cost food and social connection opportunities. Each of the different food relief models in South Australia serve a different need and client population, and can be complementary to each other. Importantly, pilots of the social supermarket model suggest that evolution of food relief service models is possible in SA (Pettman et al., 2023). Concurrently, a better understanding of food relief service models, and client journeys and experiences through the food relief system is needed (these are the subjects of ongoing CSI Flinders PhD research by D.Eyers-White, and S.Faghidno, both forthcoming).

Following interviews with all partners to understand how the Charter principles have been used, and the barriers and enablers; 12 service elements were co-created from interview data to operationalise the 5 Charter principles. To test the 12 elements and generate co-benefits for community partners, a co-design approach was chosen, to work to the strengths of food relief service providers, within their constraints and unique needs.

The first step was to develop and conduct co-design sessions with food relief service volunteers and staff, to generate practical solutions for practice that embodied the Charter principles. The researchers adopted a published co-design approach (Bogomolova et al., 2021) as follows:

- **Step 1: Resourcing** – the research team resourced activities through the Linkage grant
- **Step 2: Planning** –through partnership meetings/discussions a plan was developed, including agreement of topics of sensitisation with partners, and development of the discussion guide and booklet of ideas (University ethics approval was granted previously for the project)
- **Step 3: Recruitment of participants** – Food relief provider partners identified volunteers and staff internally through discussion and with a flyer co-developed with the researchers (recruitment information and materials had been approved by the ethics committee)
- **Step 4: Sensitizing during the co-design sessions** – after welcoming participants, the ‘Booklet of ideas’ was provided to each participant to first think about the topic (in this case, aspects of food relief provision) and to express their own likes/dislikes about past examples in the booklet; this process was intended to activate ideas in participants’ minds to prepare them for expression their own creative ideas
- **Step 5: Facilitation** – the researchers arranged participants in small groups (approximately 4 people, unless larger groups preferred to work together), and guided them through the task of developing their own strategies for food relief service improvement/enhancement. This process recognises the participants as experts of their own lived experience
- **Step 6: Data collation/analysis/Reflection/Evaluation** – all data was captured on chart paper, in photos of created ideas and in completed booklets. Data were entered and analysed for key themes and ideas. Researchers summarised key results in a report and discussed with food relief service management. This resulted in different innovations and practice improvements in the different services.

The sessions lasted about 90 minutes and included the following tasks (refer to associated research materials for detailed versions of each task):

- Word association and sentence completion tasks to activate relevant words and memories/experiences in participants’ minds;
- Considering examples of strategies implemented in food relief services elsewhere in Australia or Internationally, then
- Providing individual ratings on strategies from elsewhere (in this case, researchers presented at least 10 ideas covering selected broad themes, as relevant to food relief service)
- Elaborating on like/dislike of previous strategies by sharing with others in small groups;
- Creating their own ideas using chart paper, textas, highlighters, and sticky notes
- Providing demographic characteristics (in the back of the booklets).

Participants were provided with food and drinks and were free to come and go from the sessions as they needed. Across all sessions, all participants chose to stay for the duration, and contributed new ideas for service improvement.

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