Improving San Francisco’s food-related information and referrals (I&R) emerged as a priority in the FSTF’s 2018-2019 strategic planning process. It was acknowledged that these efforts would have to be multi-stakeholder driven, as opposed to something that the FSTF would be able to take the lead on. The Task Force identified the following next steps for this priority in the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan:

4. Information and Referrals Next Steps

_Multi-Stakeholder_ driven next steps:

**Year 1 & 2:**

1. **Referral Advocates:** FSTF to champion the need for food to be included in all existing referral efforts and process(es) (i.e., DPH Resource & Referral), while advocating for bi-directional feedback, client evaluation, and multi-generational approach.

2. **Best Practices Analysis:** FSTF/others to research best practices from other/current information referral efforts including: Our Children Our Families Council SF (OCOF) service inventory group, 211 in San Diego, DPH’s efforts to update resources and referral around food, etc.

**Longer-Term:**

1. **Seat at the Table:** FSTF (or emergent structure) will participate in a multi-stakeholder Information & Referrals approach to:
   - **Key Actors:** Determine key actors/stakeholders to structure the initiative
   - **Implementation Plan:** Engage actors/agencies to develop a user-journey for current I&R system, develop a vision for seamless I&R, prototype & iterate, secure funding.

The FSTF Strategic Plan Implementation Work Group, established in December 2019, has begun to take these next steps. We have started to compile a list of relevant I&R tools/systems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>211 Bay Area</td>
<td>System</td>
<td><a href="https://www.211bayarea.org/">https://www.211bayarea.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DAS Benefits and Resources Hub</td>
<td>System</td>
<td><a href="https://www.sfhsa.org/services/access-empowerment/das-benefits-and-resources-hub">https://www.sfhsa.org/services/access-empowerment/das-benefits-and-resources-hub</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Food Locator-SFMFB</td>
<td>Tool</td>
<td><a href="https://foodlocator.sfmfoodbank.org/">https://foodlocator.sfmfoodbank.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Link-SF</td>
<td>System</td>
<td><a href="https://link-sf.com/">https://link-sf.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the most critical issues for I&R identified in the Strategic Plan were the need for:

1. Bi-directional feedback; and
2. Client evaluation.

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1 Kaiser Permanente is working with a group called Unite-Us to roll out a referral system in 2020. However, this system will not be able to partner with government agencies.

2 Type definitions: System = Provides information and referrals related to many needs/offerings; and Tool = I&R tool is only food related. Can find food in multiple locations.

3 FNAD = Food, Nutrition, and Agriculture Directory
Next Steps in Work Group Evaluation Phase

Possible next steps identified in the January FSTF SP Implementation Work Group were:

- Engage (i.e., survey or convene) stakeholders that provide food-related I&R to learn about their experience, what’s working, challenges, and needs
  - 211 Bay Area
  - DAS Benefits and Resources Hub
- Continue to learn about existing technology and landscape (Foodwyze, Link-SF)
- Learn best practices from other cities/organizations (211 San Diego, Kaiser—Thrive Local). What national and/or international models are available that we can leverage?
- Engage food insecure clients/individuals to promote bi-directional feedback and inform client evaluation efforts

Preliminary Thoughts on the Problems

Challenges, in addition to bi-directional feedback and client evaluation, identified by the FSTF SP Implementation Work Group were:

- People don’t know what resources exist and how to access them
- Resources are not always user-friendly for families/individuals and organizations
- There is still stigma related to food insecurity
- No referral system includes all of the food resources. The referral systems are not yet seamless.
  - Resources are not all centralized
  - Databases are not always updated
- Referral agencies/orgs have limited options
- Meeting clients/individuals where they are at is very difficult given their wide diversity (e.g., some are tech literate, others are not)
- I&R system(s) cannot always answer questions like: Where is the cheap food around me? Where can I use my EBT card?
- No shared definition of success for referrals and way to track success across I&R system(s)

Preliminary Thoughts on the Solutions

Once the challenges with the existing I&R system(s) are identified, possible solutions can be discussed. The FSTF SP Implementation Work Group has begun a list of possible solutions:

- Create a backbone technology solution for I&R that includes a feedback loop (Code for America may help)
- Introduce food navigators
- Use a coordinated entry model

Any I&R solution must include the ability to track referrals made to understand whether people get food as a result