

Equity Research Fellow—Potential Research Projects

The Equity Research Fellow will carry out at least one original research project with either original data collection and/or original data analysis. Fellows are welcome to use existing data collected by Feeding America and external datasets (e.g., census data, WBNS, etc.).

The project should be achievable in 12 months from project design to presenting results—although final publication in scholarly journals or similar venues will likely take longer. If necessary, fellows may be eligible to extend the fellowship period for up to 6 months to complete any deliverables, although this would not come with additional funding. Fellows should use funds from the fellowship award (\$150,000/year) to fund research activities.

Below you will find a list of potential research projects that support Feeding America's strategic equity goals and initiatives. For their application, Fellows can choose among these projects, suggest changes to these projects, or propose their own research project that furthers the same goals.

Note: Fellows would work with Feeding America staff to refine a clear research project in the first 1-2 months of the fellowship. This gives time to acclimate to the Feeding America network, connect with network members to understand the type and amount of data available, and more.

Project: Evaluating the effect of advocacy engagement on empowerment

Feeding America is building a network of neighbor advocates through training, networking, and power building convenings and opportunities. This research project would include developing an evaluation framework for tracking the empowerment of neighbors through grassroots, neighbor-led advocacy and community organizing work. It could measure elements such as confidence in leadership and advocacy skills, connection to other leaders, and actions taken at a community level to drive policy change.

Project: Community-Based and Systems-Change Evaluation Work

Feeding America has invested in community-based work to create systems change towards more equitable food systems and/or economic mobility. A fellow would review the community-based initiatives including the narratives of the initiatives and data collected by the community organizations, understand the inequities these initiatives are attempting to address, and help develop an evaluation approach to define and track outcomes of systems change towards equitable food systems and/or equitable economic opportunities within the community. This evaluation approach should include elements that structure the tracking of equitable outcomes for individuals, organizations, and communities.

Project: Product Equity—Accessible and Inclusive Design for Neighbors and Agencies

Over the past few years, Feeding America has started developing digital platforms that are used directly by neighbors to find and access food and other services, and by partner agencies and food banks to manage the intake process, distribute food, etc. Feeding America is also starting to use data from these platforms to better understand neighbors (e.g., demographics, visitation patterns, household characteristics, etc.) and improve their experience. For neighbors, these digital platforms may be the first point of contact they have with the Feeding America network. This project aims to critically evaluate the design and usability of these digital platforms through the lens of accessibility and inclusivity – both from the perspective of the current designs and

data architecture as well as the roadmap and vision for products to be developed in the future. Our intention is to make product development and data analysis decisions that consider the full spectrum of gender, race, age, ethnicity, ability, culture, and all other human differences. The Fellow will lead research to help Feeding America build a core competency of inclusive practices and create scalable solutions to eliminate bias and reduce harm, abuse, and misinformation while increasing equitable access to food, incorporating the voice of the neighbor, and improving equitable outcomes.

Project: The “Benefits Cliff” and Economic Mobility Supports

As Feeding America invests in efforts to support neighbors in achieving economic security, more information is needed in how to develop programming that avoids the pitfalls of “the benefit cliff”—especially as neighbors progress through reskilling and upskilling in workforce development (WFD) initiatives. The Research Fellow will devise a project to investigate the inequitable consequences of the benefit cliff and WFD programs including which populations are most impacted by the benefit cliff, the prevalence and consequences of when WFD programs target particular demographic groups (e.g., the ‘carpet vs. the concrete’ disparity), and estimate the support (funding or programmatic) needed to equitably support individuals during their time “on the cliff”.

Project: Comparing Access Points as a Driver of Nutrient Density

Across the United States, few survey respondents are meeting the federal vegetable intake recommendations – in fact no state in the country has more than 16% of respondents who meet the vegetable intake recommendation. In all but two cases, Black Americans are intaking less vegetables than White Americans. The Feeding America Network has made a concerted effort over the last decade to increase the nutritional value of the food supply so that it is of overall higher nutritional value than the average grocery store. Feeding America is interested in a project that answers two key questions:

- Does the higher nutritional value provided by food banks increase the recommended vegetable (and other healthy foods) intake of neighbors who visit food banks/pantries multiple times throughout the year compared to similar neighbors who do not access charitable food? Is this benefit seen equitably among diverse communities?
- Does the food provided by food banks align with the preferred foods of diverse communities to ensure equitable food distribution? What gaps are there in terms of providing nutritious *and* preferred foods?

The Research Fellow can either find national data sets that include this information or design and carryout a research study at select sites to determine if charitable food access increases the likelihood that neighbors meet the federal vegetable (and other nutritious food) intake recommendations in a way that aligns with their culturally preferred diet.