



A HKU project supported by The Hong Kong Jockey Club

The Food Bank

“The Food Bank” is a case for introducing process analysis, mapping, and service improvement thinking to students. The case can be used to teach on process design, service delivery, public value creation, and logistics management.

When teaching the case, the professor can follow these steps: identify the mission of the organization, map and flow the processes, identify inefficiencies, redesign the processes based on the resulting analysis, and critique alternative solutions.

Students will need to analyze the application process, food ordering and food distribution procedures, inefficiencies, and other common variables in process analysis. Through the exercise, students can quickly find and assess possibilities for immediate improvements in service delivery. They are expected to work out ways that can optimize inventory management, raise efficiency of food distribution, and increase the likelihood that clients will actually get the services they demand and continue to access the resources available to them. By suggesting improvements to the way things have always been done, students learn that it is possible to obtain major gains in efficiency and outcome with the available resources. In the end, as learning outcomes, students will be able to capture and review the processes, understand the capacity-demand relations, discover potential problems and provide solutions.

Sketch of the Case

In 2009, as the financial tsunami hit the economy severely, the government announced a scheme which allocates 100 million dollars to provide food bank services in five main areas in Hong Kong. The case is set in a local community center in one of the poorest districts in Hong Kong. The Food Bank runs two programs: one government funded and one self-financed. The Food Bank has experienced a surge in demand for services. Moreover, the financial resource from the government funded program might be cut by 2014. The manager of the Food Bank needs to re-think about ways to improve the efficiency of their service designs in order to overcome the upcoming challenges.



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The central parts of the case describe the daily routines of the social workers who delivery and manage food bank services. The social workers schedule food deliveries and handle other tasks including notifying clients, transporting and sorting the food. Currently the Food Bank has fifteen staff and they are heavily engaged with daily tasks from reviewing applications to managing food delivery and inventory.

The case will demonstrate the importance of good service design. For example, due to an inefficient inventory management system, the Food Bank sometimes has to deal with food becoming rotten, or fails to respond promptly to client requests. This leads to a waste of resources and human labor. Such scenarios can be easily detected in other public service centers which care little about work division and inventory management. Therefore, the case allows a reflection on efficient service provision and appropriate inventory systems to optimize limited resources.