



Food Rescue Hero · WEBINAR

Improving Equity through Targeted Distribution

Using the Community Need Index, and the data beneath it, to measure and improve equity outcomes

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THE TOOL

The Community Need Index (CNI)

A composite score, assigned at the U.S. census-tract level, that reflects food-insecurity-related need, so distribution is prioritized systematically toward need, not first-come-first-served.

- **Composite:** Four need indicators plus a food-access adjustment
- **Geographic:** Scored for every U.S. census tract
- **Actionable:** Ranks where a rescue creates the most equity
- **Shared:** Used internally and by Food Rescue Hero licensees

**“Don't ask who
reached us first.
Ask who needs
us most.”**

How 412 does it. The same approach works
with your own need data.

What the index measures

Four socioeconomic indicators, each ranked nationally into deciles, plus an adjustment for food access. Together they capture where need is deepest.

1

SNAP participation

Share of residents receiving SNAP benefits

2

Type II diabetes rate

Prevalence of Type II diabetes diagnoses

3

Disability status

Share of residents living with a disability

4

Localized median income

To identify local relative disparities



Food-access adjustment From the Food Access Research Atlas (FARA)

From four indicators to one score

1

Rank & sum

Each indicator is ranked then summed

Base score: 4 – 40

2

Adjust for access

Add the LILA food-access adjustment

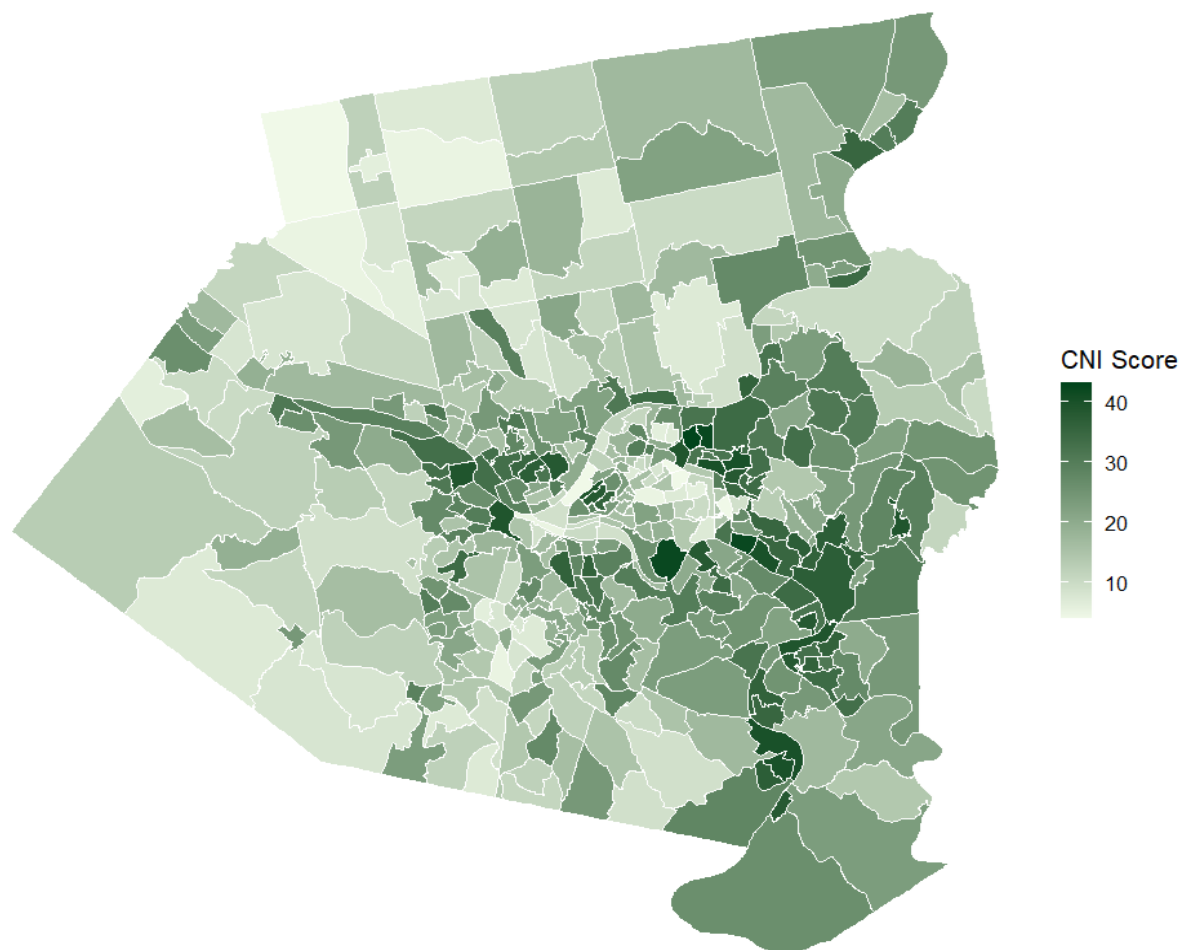
Final score: 4 – 44

$$\text{CNI} = (\text{SNAP} + \text{Diabetes} + \text{Disability} + \text{Income deciles}) + \text{Food-Access Adjustment}$$

Since we use ranking, the values of each indicator count only insofar as they relate to the other tracts.

Where need actually concentrates

Community Need Index — Allegheny County



Reading the map

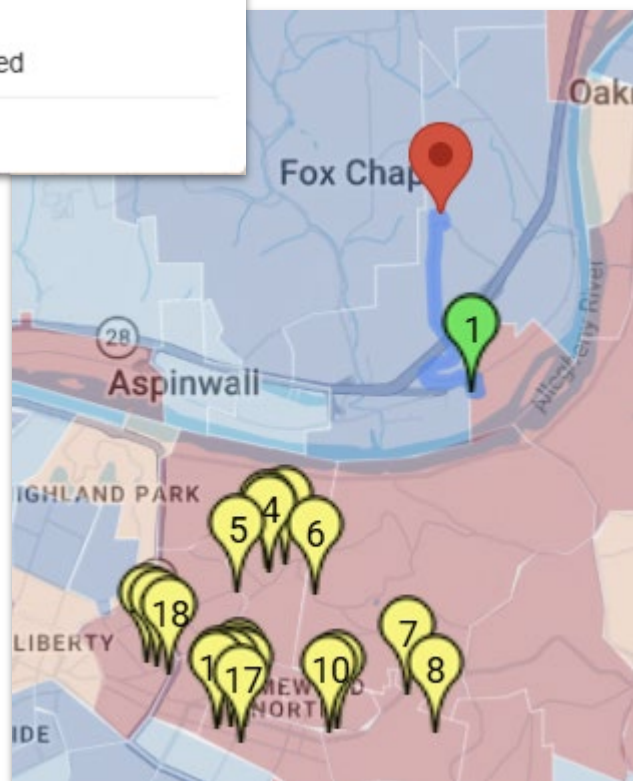
- Darker green = higher CNI (greater *assumed* need).
- Higher concentration in the city with many pockets of need
- This surface helps us be strategic and intentional with routing decisions

Equity is built into the suggestion engine

Community Need Index Score (local rank) ⓘ

- Top 25% — Highest need
- 50–75% — High need
- 25–50% — Moderate
- Bottom 25% — Lower need

[What is this score? →](#)



1 ACHA (Blawnox Apartments) ⓘ

📞 [Redacted Phone Number] 1

🕒 Mon-Sun 24h

🚗 Distance 1.3 mi

🕒 Last Received 2 days ago (07/20/26)

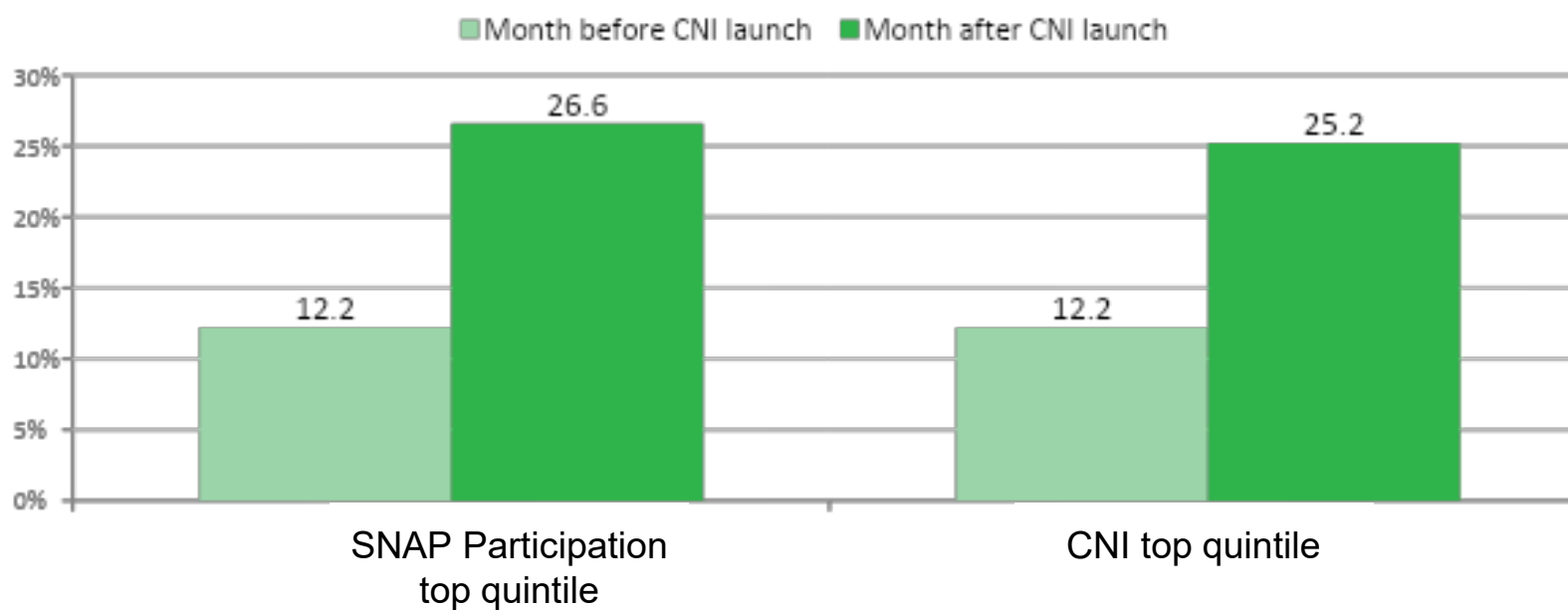
📊 Need Highest (36) ⓘ

🍴 Accepts Produce, Meat & Protein +7 more

Select

Reaching high-need areas after CNI launch

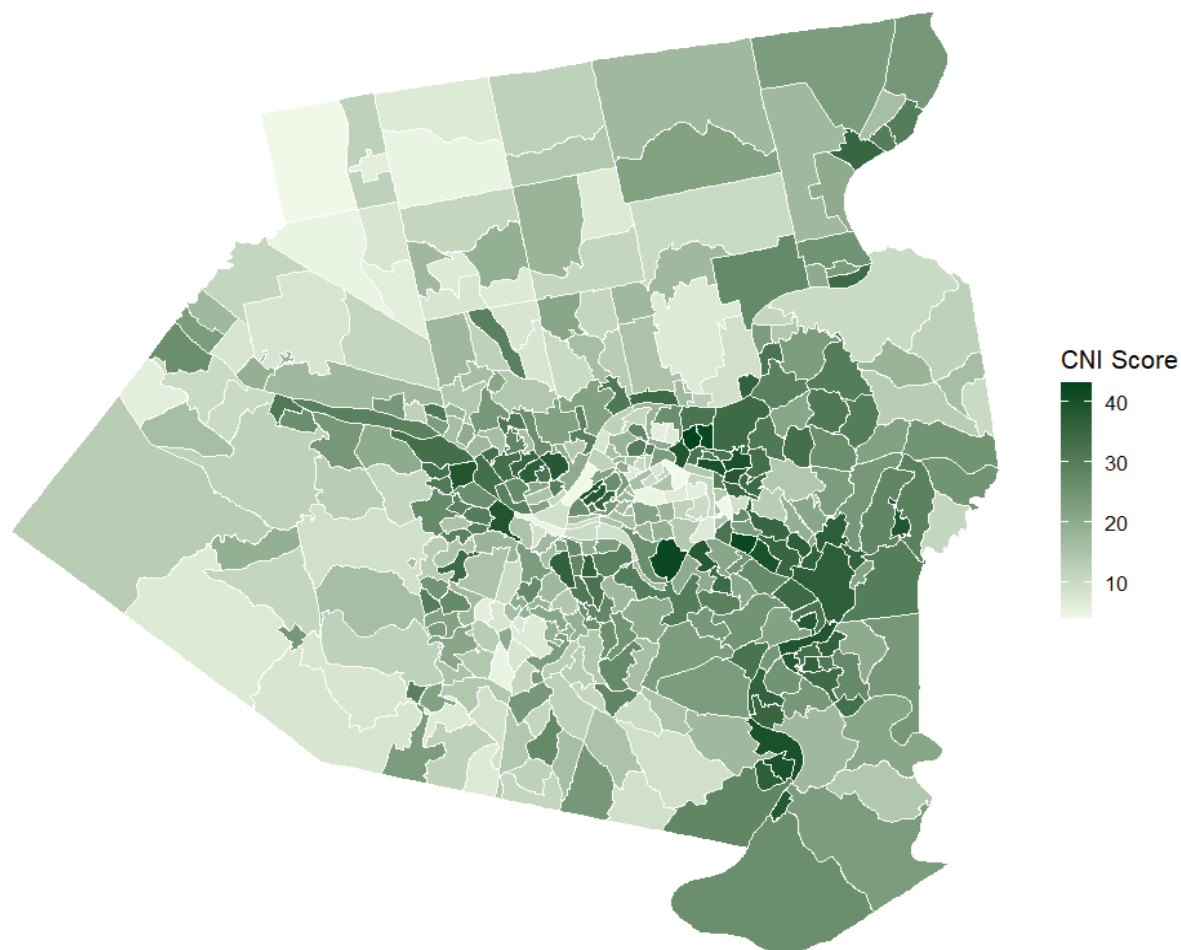
After launch, the highest-need quintile's share of ad-hoc rescues roughly doubled on both SNAP participation and the CNI.



Share of ad-hoc rescues (by count) landing in the top-need quintile of tracts, month before vs. after launch. Counts are the conservative measure. The shift is larger by weight.

What's Next?

Community Need Index — Allegheny County



Enhancements

- Vehicle access indexed against distance to food providers.
- New economic indicators and notable changes in current ones.
- Incorporating FARA updates