ZEROW
innovations for zero food waste

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Increasing the reach of Food Banks

This research focused on identifying actionable strategies for food banks to better reach individuals who could use their help. Drawing from interviews with clients and volunteers across 8 food banks and data from 18 Dutch locations, the findings highlight barriers such as embarrassment, privacy concerns, and language issues.

To address these, food banks are encouraged to foster trust, protect privacy, and promote dignity. Simple shifts - like using positive language ("clients" not "recipients"), offering food choice, and delaying intrusive questions - can significantly improve a person's experience. Creating welcoming spaces and giving immediate support on first visits helps build trust.

Privacy is crucial. Options like discreet locations, online appointment booking, and limited data collection make access feel safer. Technology also supports outreach - translated materials, machine translation, and community-driven content (e.g., client stories) reduce stigma and normalize food bank use.

Other food banks can adopt these practices by tailoring them to their local context. Partnerships with delivery services, customised digital platforms, and community testimonials can enhance accessibility and awareness everywhere.

Finally, food banks should advocate for the legal right to food, helping to remove systemic stigma. Together, these insights offer a framework for more empathetic, inclusive, and effective food assistance ■