god's bounty

TRANSPORTATION, TRADEOFFS, & PARTNERSHIPS

god's bounty

Top left, inside the pantry office with Debra, volunteer pantry coordinator. Top right, drive-thru line on pantry day.

Bottom right, pantry volunteer hands client's order through the window to another volunteer to fulfill it. Bottom left, volunteers send a packed food box down the pantry's makeshift conveyor belt and out to the drive where the client waits in his car. God's Bounty serves 100-140 families per week using this fulfillment method.

QR Code, watch God's Bounty in action! Use the QR Code to see a video of their process end to end.

TEAM GOD'S BOUNTY

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Introduction

God's Bounty is a food pantry in Wanamaker that serves between 100-140 families per week in a somewhat rural/suburban area on the Southeast side of Indianapolis. It is run by a group of eight churches in the area and is open on Thursdays from 1-7pm. The pantry sits in between a church and a cemetery. It is housed in a former church parsonage and is administered in a drive-through style where cars line up, participants are given a choice of non-perishables they prefer from a pre-set menu of options, and their choice orders are fulfilled along with a standard box of other items like meat, eggs, bread, chips, and produce. The pantry also accommodates for food allergies and dietary constraints, so if you are a regular client with documented needs, your pre-prepared food box will not contain items you cannot use.

The 13-year-old pantry is run by a volunteer director, Debra Burke, who has been manning the facility for about eight years. Debra sources all of the food each week through multiple trips to a variety of grocery stores, food outlets,

When you pull up to God's Bounty on pantry day, it is clear something special is going on. There are cars and people everywhere in a flurry of activity.

Below, God's Bounty is located next to New Bethel Baptist Church, one of the churches that helps to sponsor the pantry.
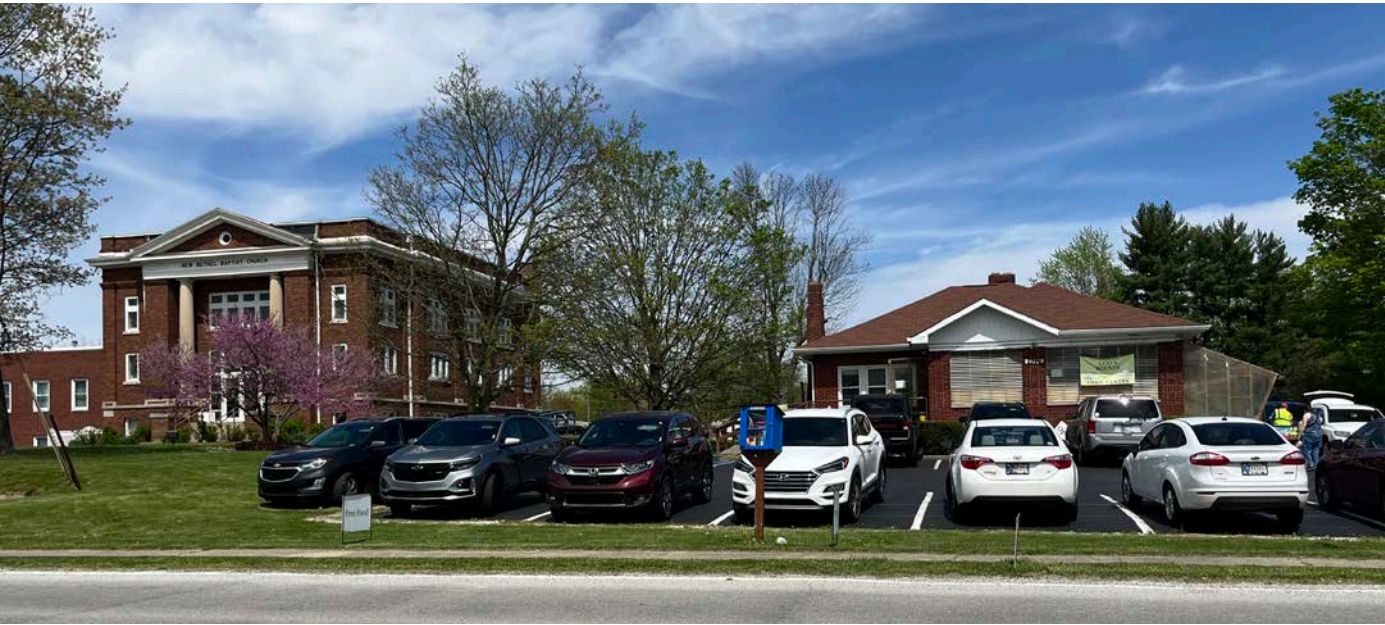
food banks, and other sources, most of which she visits in her personal vehicle, which is not adequately sized for the job. She is assisted on pantry days by volunteers from the community churches that support the pantry as well as high school groups and others who want to volunteer in the community.

FALL 2023 RESEARCH PROCESS & FINDINGS

During the fall semester of 2023, our team of Collaborative Action Research in Design (CARD) students at Herron School of Art + Design worked at three pantries in Indianapolis to understand their processes and map the experiences of the staff and volunteers using a human-centered design approach. Human-centered design requires leading with empathy, so we started the process by observing, interviewing, and documenting the experiences that the humans who encounter the pantry and its systems have as they interact with one another and with the system as a whole.

The Herron School of Art + Design team did not work at God's Bounty during this process, but we were privileged to witness the work of our colleagues from the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering, and the Purdue School of Engineering & Technology at IUPUI, who mapped the information and material flows at God's Bounty, made observations, and created resources that we used to build on during our work in the spring of 2024.

Reviewing our colleagues' research helped us realize that although God's Bounty was not a pantry we reviewed in the fall, the discoveries we made about the commonalities among the pantries we did research seemed to apply. God's Bounty serves as a welcoming hub in the Wanamaker community on Indianapolis's far Southeast side, providing not only food but a connection point for staff, volunteers, and community members that creates a social safety net. Neighbors of all ages help other neighbors with little distinction between the giver and receiver. It seemed clear that the values we identified among the other pantries were also important to God's Bounty:

- **Efficiency**
- **Caring Community**
- **Agency**
- **Serving Effectively**

Debra with a member of our team, reviewing research from the fall semester.

SPRING 2024 RESEARCH PROCESS & GOAL

During our first trip to God's Bounty in the spring semester of 2024, Debra Burke, the pantry director told us she had been working to decrease the wait time at the pantry and had gotten it down to seven minutes. She had also increased the number of families served weekly from 100 per week in the fall of 2023 to 120-140 in January of 2024. Among the top concerns she mentioned at our meeting were being able to serve more families, accommodating for growing language barriers in the community, and providing a welcoming and safe environment for people who were facing challenging life circumstances, including domestic violence. These conversation points helped to reiterate that God's Bounty was similar in scope and spirit to the other pantries we had worked with in the fall, embodying the shared values we had identified.

Members of our team meeting with Debra for the first time this semester.

As our work began in the spring, our teams reconfigured into interdisciplinary ones, and the team working at God's Bounty was made up of two Master of Design (MDES) students, two undergraduate Engineering students, and one Master of Business Administration (MBA) student from the Kelley School of Business at IU Bloomington. We started the spring semester by reviewing the fall team's work with Debra. One engineering student from our team had served on the God's Bounty team in the fall, so he helped to bridge the gap in understanding.

The fall semester's research suggested that increasing the number of families served was the top priority for the pantry and that cost-effective and timely transportation of food from food banks to God's Bounty was the number one challenge. Our goal throughout the spring semester was to address this challenge at the pantry together and deliver one or more design solutions. Our team used the CARD Model as our framework for the design process.

Methodology
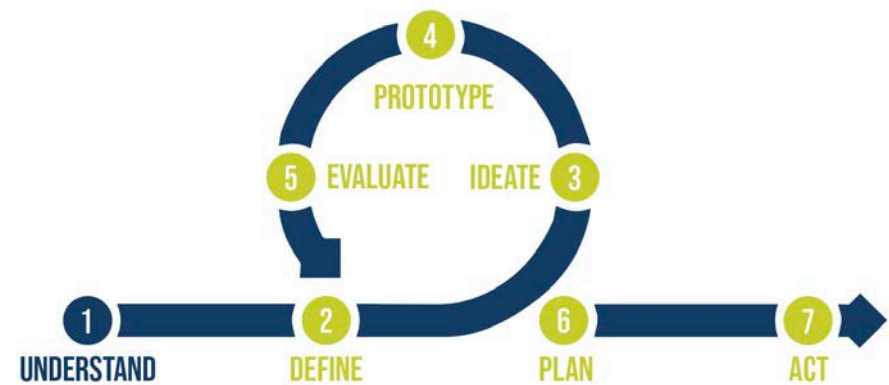
The CARD Framework has seven phases: Understand, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Evaluate, Plan, and Act. As the diagram indicates, the Ideate, Prototype, and Evaluate phases may be repeated in cycles before Plan and Act begin. During the fall 2023 semester, our teams were all in the Understand phase, which was full of information discovery. We started the spring semester by working with Debra, the pantry director at God's Bounty, to define a problem statement. Then we were able to continue working with her to ideate about potential solutions, prototype and evaluate those solutions, and create a plan the pantry could use to act, ultimately delivering a design solution that addresses the identified priorities and barriers.

In order to provide direction for our work, our team met with Debra in January to review the fall semester's findings and develop a Problem Statement. We created a Challenge Map *(See VOL 2, Fig 2)* that identified multiple opportunities for improvement at the pantry and classified them in three categories: Caring Culture, Mobilizing Resources, and Process Improvement. We also mapped each opportunity along a continuum from strategic <——> tactical so that our team and Debra could examine the options together in a systematic manner and take care to select one that would help focus our work for significant impact.
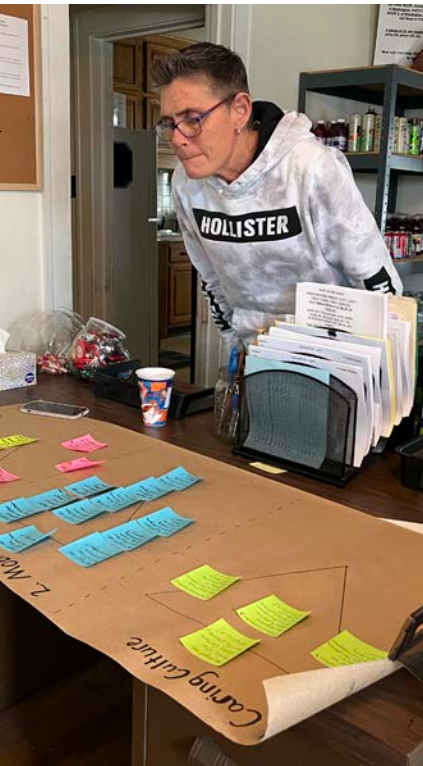
Above, Debra from God's Bounty reviews the Challenge Map during our first meeting of the semester.

DEFINE PHASE

Our team studying the Challenge Map with Debra (second from left) inside the pantry at God's Bounty.

Debra had already been working to optimize her workflow at the pantry recently, so she identified opportunities in two areas that she wanted to consider—Caring Culture and Mobilizing Resources. Together, we isolated three Problem Statements from the Challenge Map and generated two additional ones. After further conversation about our scope of work and capacity, along with the pantry's priorities, we decided to focus on one problem and shift our thinking to *opportunity*.

FINDING OUR FOCUS

- How might we limit barriers (language, transportation, etc.) to client engagement through pantry services?
- How might we effectively delegate tasks among volunteers to distribute the workload?
- How might we achieve cost effective and timely transportation from food banks to God's Bounty?
- How might we identify & procure culturally appropriate foods?
- How might we resource salary dollars for Debra?

OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

"How might we achieve cost effective and timely transportation from food banks to God's Bounty?"

IDEATION PHASE

Ideation Session 1
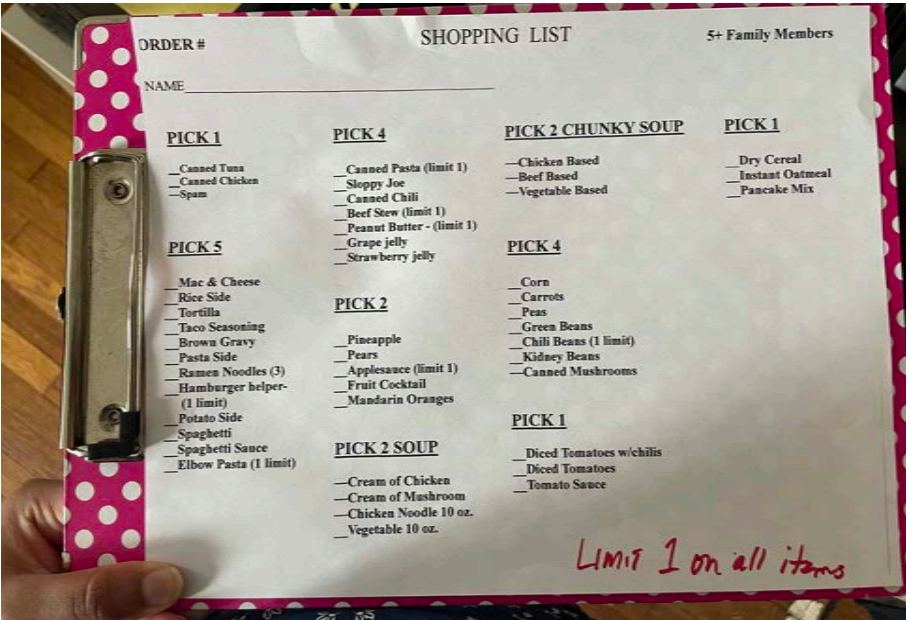
As neighbors come to pick up food on pantry day, God's Bounty has them complete this choice request form. Then, their order is fulfilled as they drive through the line. The pantry fills orders in about seven minutes.

In early February, we were joined by Jamie Bonini, the Vice President of Toyota Production System Support Center, a non-profit division of Toyota that consults on process improvement. Jamie has worked with many food pantries across the country to optimize their workflows; he visited God's Bounty to share his knowledge and help our team ideate with Debra.

When Jamie visited, Debra gave us a tour of the pantry and showed us how she had organized the pantry shelf stock, workflow, manpower and resources the pantry uses to fulfill orders on pantry day. Debra and Jamie discussed ways to improve the pantry's organization and operations, but Debra shared her confidence that she and the other volunteers had devised a strategy that was efficient and working well for the pantry. So, Jamie ideated with her about alternative transportation resources. Others in attendance at the meeting shared knowledge of a cargo van owned by Shepherd Community Center that might be underutilized. Our team noted this information for further study.

After the session, one of our design team members contacted a friend who works at Shepherd Community Center to ask about the availability of their van and was told that God's Bounty would be welcome to borrow it on a regular basis if needed. Shepherd staff also ideated other ways to contribute to Debra's transportation dilemma, including trying to coordinate food pickups and having Gleaners deliver God's Bounty's food to Shepherd's facility as they deliver Shepherd's order. We added made note of these ideas.

Ideation Session 2

In February, our team met with Debra to better understand her transportation issues and converge on an idea to help improve the movement of food from food sources to God's Bounty.

We had a guided discussion about Debra's weekly workflow, and one of the design students helped document the conversation by creating a storyboard of Debra's daily activities at the pantry and the related transportation needs. The group began to ideate potential solutions as we identified the needs.
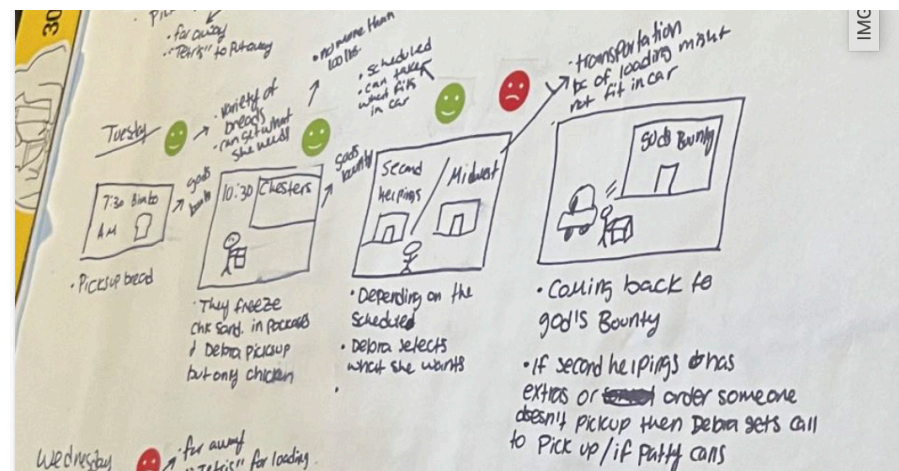
Along with the storyboard documentation of Debra's workweek, we generated a comprehensive list of ideas we could consider as potential design solutions to address the transportation needs of the pantry. After reviewing these ideas, we decided to move forward with prototyping a design solution we named **"Transportation, Tradeoffs, & Partnerships"** that combined many of the ideas together into one.

Above: A designer on our team documents Debra's workflow using a storyboarding technique to help the group visualize the process. Below: We used emoticons to help Debra prioritize which parts of the workflow most needed new forms of transportation.

IDEAS CONTRIBUTING TO OUR DESIGN SOLUTION

- **Borrow a van from Shepherd Community Center** for some of the larger pickups

- **Coordinate pickups with Shepherd Community Center** if any of their pick-ups overlap

- **Have Gleaners deliver God's Bounty's food to Shepherd** with their delivery, then use the van to transport it the rest of the way

- **Hire Nine13 [offers contract logistics for food pantries] to pick up the Gleaners & Midwest orders**, allowing the pantry to source more food at a lower cost?

- **Reallocate some funds from current food purchases** toward transportation costs

- Ask Gleaners if they would deliver to God's Bounty if the pantry's order size was larger

PROTOTYPING & EVALUATION PHASE

In late February, we with Debra to prototype a design solution on paper. We used a toolkit of resources to facilitate the discussion and help us visualize what was happening on a weekly basis at the pantry as we considered building a new workflow and identifying new resources together.

Prototyping Session: Paper Prototype of "Transportation, Tradeoffs, & Partnerships"

Debra interacts with the toolkit the one of our designers made to help her better visualize the tradeoffs she could make in a new workflow for the design solution.

The goal of our session was to review the storyboard we had created during the ideation session and determine if there were places Debra could make tradeoffs in her resource allocation to be able to pay for transportation from the food banks to God's Bounty.

We created a paper prototype of "Transportation Tradeoffs & Partnerships." Starting with the routing information Debra provided to us during the ideation session, we helped her identify the financial cost associated with each trip she makes as well as the ideal type of transportation that trip required. We used Post-it notes to represent each food source and laminated cut outs of various types of vehicles and money to associate with each trip. This activity helped Debra visualize what she is doing now and what might be possible.

WHAT'S IN A TOOLKIT?

- A design research toolkit includes Interactive materials for co-creation that are meant to promote understanding, spark ideas, or assist with visualization.

- In this case, our toolkit included paper cutouts of a variety of vehicles, denominations of money, Post-its, markers, and other items that could be important to the pantry workflow.

Toolkit in use, identifying financial tradeoffs that could be made to gain appropriate transportation for weekly food sourcing pickups.

While co-creating the prototype, we discovered that Debra spends about $1,000 per week ($4,000 per month) shopping for groceries at Aldi. We also discovered that she is unable to get all the food she would like to get from Gleaners and Midwest food banks and from Second Helpings due to inadequate transportation capacity. Since Midwest and Second Helpings are both free food resources, prioritizing transportation from those sources to gain maximum benefit is important. Additionally, Gleaners is a low-cost food source with many free food items (like produce) that Debra has not been able to fully utilize due to her transportation constraints regarding weight and bulk. We discussed reallocating the $1,000 per week the pantry spends at Aldi to spend some money on food acquisition at Gleaners and some on transportation costs to achieve an overall increase in food acquisition and decrease in food sourcing trips for Debra. Debra was interested in investigating this solution further, so our team reached out to community partners to begin the work of planning.

Midwest and Second Helpings are both free food resources, and Gleaners offers some food for free and other food at very low cost. Prioritizing transportation from those sources to gain maximum benefit is important.

Value Proposition Statement ———————————

After prototyping with Debra, our team worked to consider the elements needed in a workable design solution for God's Bounty. We used a Value Proposition exercise to help us think through the pantry's needs and what actions could need to be taken to ameliorate those needs.

During this exercise, we identified:

- **The end user**—*Debra/volunteers at God's Bounty*
- **The job they needed to do**—*Transport large quantities of food to the pantry in a cost effective manner*
- **The gain or benefit they hoped for**—*Less time spent sourcing food*
- **The pain point we wanted to lessen**—*Inefficient food sourcing*
- **What our design solution should offer**—*Reallocating resources & connecting to community partnerships*

Our **resource reallocation & partnership connections** help **volunteers at God's Bounty** who need to **transport food in large quantities** by **creating efficiency,** resulting in **less time spent sourcing food.**

At left, volunteers prepare food boxes and unload food off a truck at God's Bounty. In addition to purchasing food from grocery stores and working with area food banks, the pantry receives donations through Direct Agency Pickup from the Feeding America Program. They also receive a regular supply of gift cards through Meijer's Simply Give campaign that is a sustaining support, as well as donations from local churches and community members.

PLAN & ACT PHASES

We continued on with the final phases of the design research process to Plan & Act. During this Phase, we tried to connect God's Bounty to resources in the community that could help to implement the design solution once our team's work was complete at the end of the semester. Our hope was to ensure that the pantry would be able to succeed by developing partnerships to support its work.

Planning Meeting 1: Shepherd Community Center

In early March, our team met with Debra and leaders from Shepherd Community Center to discuss the viability of God's Bounty borrowing their cargo van. We brought an early draft of our concept map and Debra's pick-up schedule, and shared the times that would be ideal for the pantry to borrow the van. Conveniently, God's Bounty's early pick-up times worked well with the later times of day the community center typically uses the vehicle, and they said they would be happy to share the use of it with her. They could even accommodate the infrequent afternoon trips Debra makes to Second Helpings as well. Shepherd said they would coordinate a plan for Debra to access keys to the vehicle, and they asked her to acquire a certificate of insurance for God's Bounty's usage of the van.

Shepherd distributes food via a drive-thru pantry, a shop-in person model, and through home delivery. They are willing to share their van with God's Bounty to assist with pick-ups.

Planning Meeting 2: Nine13

Later that same day in March, Debra and our team met with Nine13, an organization that does transportation logistics in the food pantry space. Our goal was for Debra to reallocate the funds she was using to buy groceries at Aldi to maximize her purchasing power and transportation resources by buying more food in larger quantities, sourcing more free food in larger quantities, and finding a transportation resource to deliver it to the pantry. We wanted to see if Nine13 would be able to help Debra pick up large orders from Gleaners and Midwest to make this solution work for her.

Nine13 indicated that they would be able to help and that making the run to Midwest would be the easiest thing for them to start doing. Making the Gleaners runs might prove more challenging for them logistically, but they were willing to consider it and would work up a quote for Debra.

Workers at Nine13 help local food pantries and other area non-profits with transportation logistics.
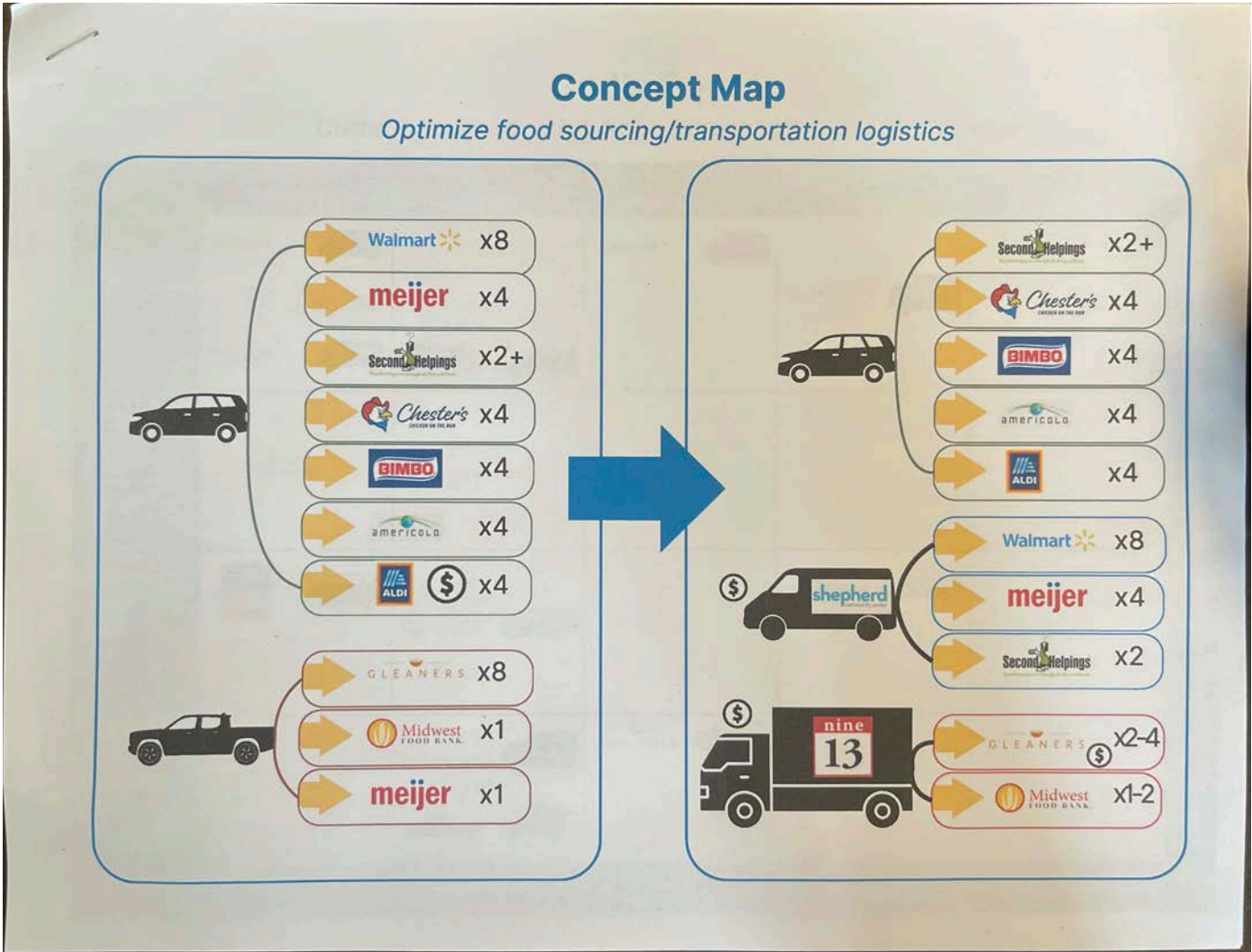
An early draft of our concept map that we shared with God's County, Shepherd Community Center, & Nine13 during the Plan & Act Phase.

Design Solution

We called our design solution **Transportation, Tradeoffs, & Partnerships** because of its focus on finding sustainable transportation solutions to get food to the pantry. The path we found to accomplish that was through reallocating funds in the pantry's budget and making partnerships in the community to gain access to new transportation resources.

During the ideation and prototyping sessions, we learned that Debra had been making 39-40 trips per month to procure food for the pantry, mostly in her personal vehicle. She was borrowing pick-up trucks and had the help of an additional volunteer to make the weekly run to Gleaners and the monthly run to Midwest. Every 5-6 weeks, she would also borrow a truck to take to Meijer for an additional, larger order she placed from their warehouse. Debra was spending $4,000 per month on trips to Aldi to purchase carloads of groceries.

For the new concept, we wanted to reallocate the $4,000 from Aldi trips to maximize food acquisition and transportation efficiency. Wal-mart is a very distant and unreliable food supplier for the pantry, so a good option seemed to be to let go of the relationship with Wal-mart in favor of pursuing other food sourcing opportunities. Using a combination of Shepherd's van and contract services from Nine13, Debra can reduce the number of trips she takes in her personal vehicle to 19 each month. By taking the van to Second Helpings and her larger Meijer run, she can maximize her food acquisition and minimize trips. **Contracting with Nine13 will allow the pantry to source up to 5X more free food monthly from Midwest (from roughly 2 pallets currently to up to 10 pallets) and order additional food for free or at low cost from Gleaners that they have previously been unable to pick up in the trucks they were borrowing.**

Produce is free at Gleaners, among other items, and $1000 will purchase approximately 5 pallets of food, far more than Debra can purchase at Aldi for the same cost, leaving room to allocate part of the funds previously used for food purchasing to transportation. *Under this solution, the pantry may have to trade off some of the items they have been able to offer on a regular basis, as Gleaners and Midwest do not have consistent stock for purchase like Aldi does.*

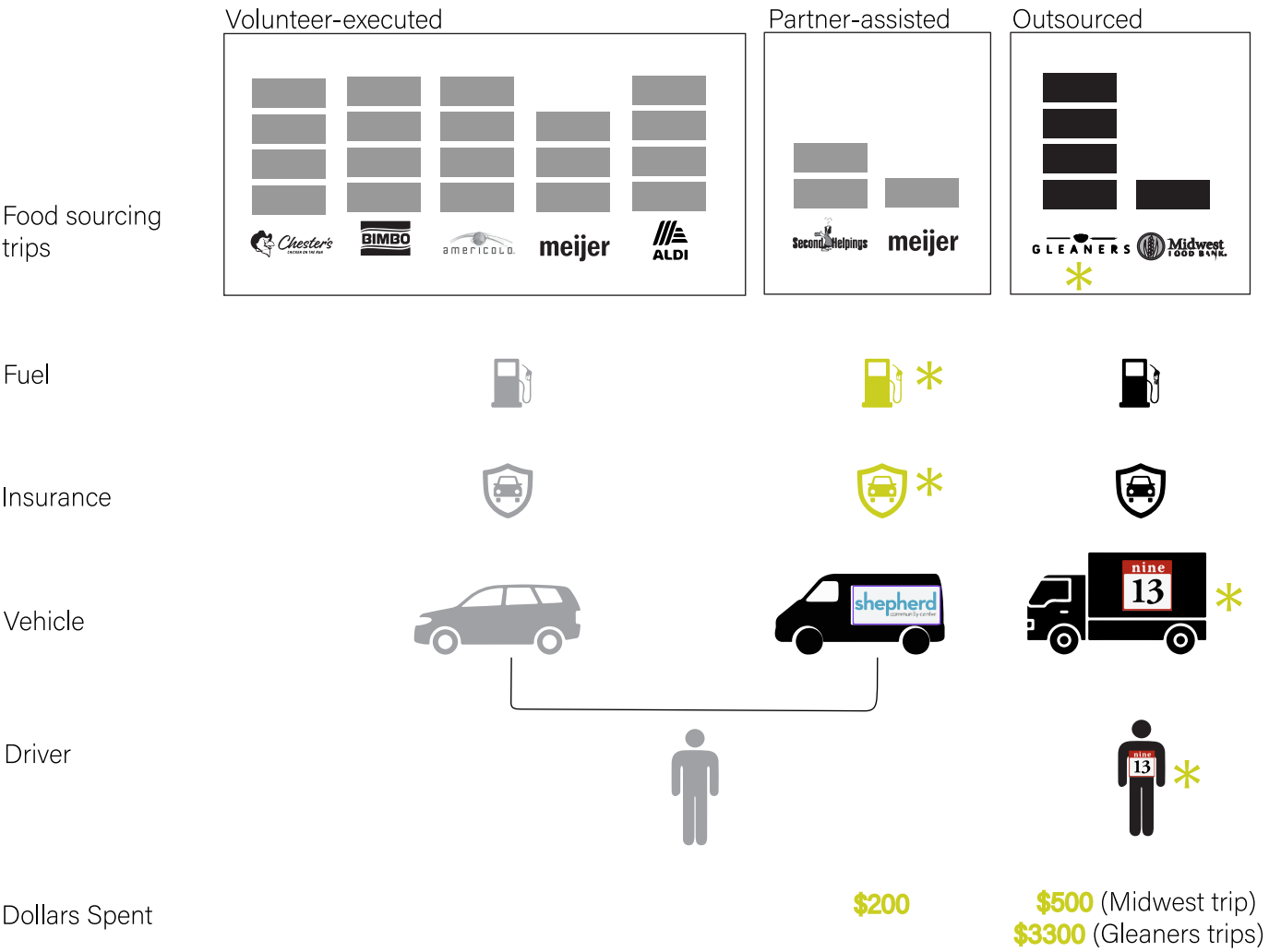**CONCEPT MAP**

God's Bounty Monthly Food Sourcing BEFORE

God's Bounty Monthly Food Sourcing AFTER

This Concept Map shows a side-by-side comparison of God's Bounty's food sourcing plan before and after implementation of our proposed design solution. Debra's pick-ups would be reduced from 39-40 to 19 using her vehicle and 23-24 in total.

DESIGN APPLICATION

GOD'S BOUNTY FOOD SOURCING SCHEDULE

TIME	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
	FOOD SOURCE	VEHICLE NEEDED	FOOD SOURCE	VEHICLE NEEDED	FOOD SOURCE	VEHICLE NEEDED	FOOD SOURCE	VEHICLE NEEDED	FOOD SOURCE	VEHICLE NEEDED
7:00AM	meijer	🚙	BIMBO	🚙			GLEANERS	🚚 nine13		
8:00AM										
9:00AM										
10:00AM	ALDI	🚙	Chester's	🚙						
11:00AM										
12:00PM					americold	🚙				
1:00PM			Midwest FOOD BANK 1	🚚 nine13						
2:00PM			Second Helpings 2	🚐 shepherd						
KEY	🚙 Volunteer Vehicle		🚐 Van borrowed from Shepherd Community		🚚 nine13 Truck contracted through Nine13		1 Midwest trip occurs once per month. 2 Second Helpings trip occurs twice per month.			

Above, proposed food sourcing schedule for God's Bounty utilizing new transportation partnerships and streamlined workflow. A larger copy of this document is available in the Appendix.

The design application we developed was schedule the pantry would use to source food under the new concept. It illustrates the days of the week and times of day that Debra visits each food source and shows which vehicle she will use. Using this schedule and concept could streamline Debra's workflow considerably and provide additional food to the pantry for no additional cost, particularly free produce the pantry has not been able to transport previously due to its weight. By working with community partners, the burden of sourcing all the food for the pantry does not fall only to one person but is shared by others as well.

Above, Nine13 staff load a truck to deliver food to a pantry. How did a bicycle education program become a transportation resource in the food pantry system? Scan this QR code to learn more.

ABOUT OUR PARTNERS:

Founded by champion cyclist Tom Hanley, **Nine13** teaches Indianapolis area schoolchildren the love of cycling with a program focused in the public school system.

Below, select vehicles from Shepherd's fleet.

Located on Indy's eastside, **Shepherd Community Center** exists to break the cycle of poverty on the near eastside of Indianapolis by engaging and empowering the community to cultivate healthy children, strong families, and vibrant neighborhoods through a Christ-centered approach that meets the physical, emotional, spiritual, and academic needs of their neighbors.

Discussion

Working with Debra at God's Bounty was an excellent learning opportunity for our team. It was a privledge to witness the work that the Wanamaker community does to serve its neighbors.

Our team developed an implementation plan for God's Bounty that illustrates the action steps needed to put the design solution in place and indicates the stage of implementation we acheived for each step by the end of the semester.

Below, the Implementation Plan our team developed for God's Bounty to execute our design solution.

God's Bounty Implementation Plan

Responsible Party

Acion Steps to Implement Design Solution	God's Bounty	Shepherd Community	Nine13	IUPUI/ IUB Team
1. Arrange to borrow vehicle from Shepherd Community Center				●
2. Arrange meeting between pantry & Nine13				●
3. Coordinate schedule for vehicle usage	●	●		
4. Discuss plan with board and seek approval for changes	○			
5. Obtain insurance	○			
6. Arrange key/vehicle access		○		
7. Produce quote for services thorugh Nine13			○	
8. Contact Gleaners about possibility of delivery	○			
9. Contract for delivery services with Nine13	○			
10. Change food sourcing to order more from Gleaners & Midwest & prevent trip to Aldi	○			

Status: ○ Incomplete   ● Complete

God's Bounty has not yet pursued implementation of this design solution, so we did not have the opportunity to test it live and make any modifications or improvements to the concept. Our team has engaged in follow-up communication with both Shepherd Community Center and Nine13 to ensure that the pantry has connections to these resources should they decide to move forward.

If the pantry does decide to pursue implementing the solution, it will be necessary to determine the impact of the new food sourcing plan on food distribution. Will the pantry be able to continue to offer the same or similar foods that it has been? Or will a new mix of groceries be required? Will the neighbors who visit the pantry be frustrated by a change, or will they welcome it?

One limitation we found hard to overcome is that the pantry is completely volunteer run with no employees at all. This fact made it challenging to ask the volunteers to go beyond what they were already doing. We hesitated to push the pantry workers too far out of their comfort zone to reimagine their work and reengineer it, even if the results would be beneficial for them.

Regardless of whether our design solution is utilized, we know that God's Bounty will continue to do great work feeding the people of Wanamaker and its surrounding area!

Volunteers lead cars through the drive-thru on a pantry day at God's Bounty in the spring of 2024.