

Lebanon County Christian Ministries upLIFT Program 9 Month Impact Report January 2024



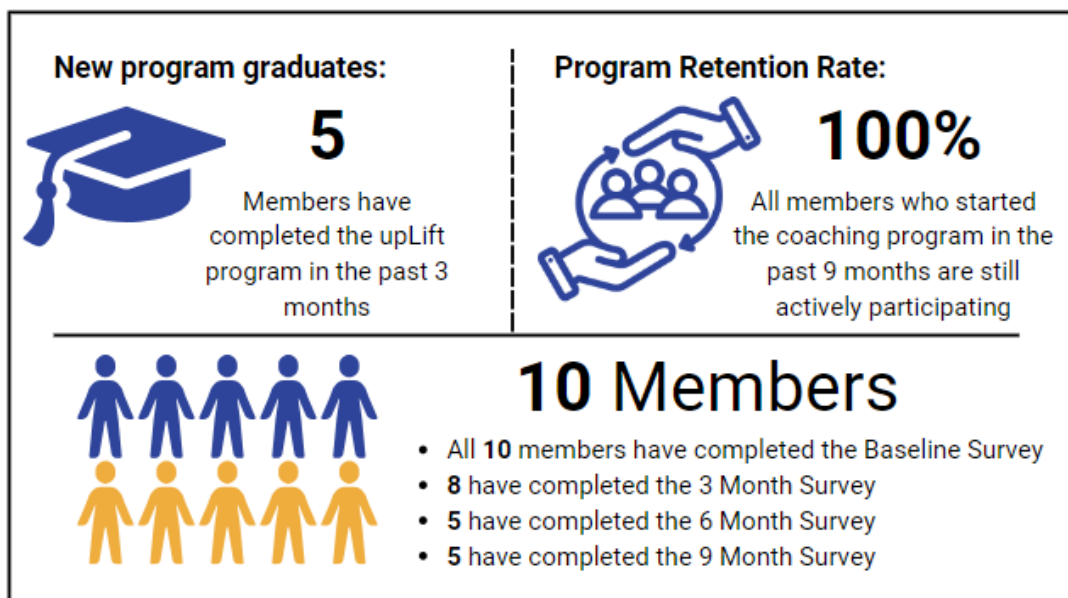
Executive Summary

In partnership with More Than Food Consulting and Urban Alliance, the upLIFT coaching program offered by Lebanon County Christian Ministries (LCCM) is designed to build the confidence, economic wellbeing, and overall life stability of those that participate. This report outlines the progress achieved through the upLIFT program during the period of September 2022 to January 2024. Starting in September 2022, LCCM identified a coach, participated in trainings with More Than Food Consulting and Urban Alliance, created the name and logo for their upLIFT program, and began recruiting participants in January 2023. Since January 2023, LCCM has onboarded an additional coach and has recruited and been working alongside 10 individuals. Five people have now completed the upLIFT program over the course of 9 months.

Program Overview

upLIFT utilizes the More Than Food framework of promoting a welcoming culture, healthy choice with dignity, and connection to community resources to address the root causes of food insecurity. upLIFT is a structured coaching program aimed at helping individuals unlock their full potential. In this program, we refer to participants as “members”. The program combines coaching with motivational interviewing to empower members to identify a set of goals and create a sustainable plan for achieving them. The program’s impact is measured through validated survey tools, including food security, self-sufficiency, and financial wellbeing of members. upLIFT coaches collect information with members when they start the program (baseline), and then at 3-month intervals throughout the coaching program to measure progress. The program is intended to last 9 months, and members graduate when they have made considerable progress in at least 2 goals.

upLIFT by the Numbers



Member Demographics and Health Information

Of the 10 members, the average age is 44 years with an average household size of 3 people. 90% of members described their ethnicity as White, and 70% identify as female. 3 out of 10 members are single and have children under the age of 18 in their household. 9 out of 10 members currently visit a food pantry, food bank, or church to get free groceries at least 1-2 times per month. 3 out of the 10 members have diabetes in their household (only 2 of which are currently getting treatment or taking diabetes medication), and 6 out of 10 members have high blood pressure (only 3 are currently getting treatment or taking medication for their condition).

Key Outcomes

This section of the report highlights the personal advancements made by the 5 initial upLIFT members that have completed all 4 surveys (baseline, 3 month, 6 month, and 9 month) and have successfully graduated from the program. The following sections document key program outcomes that focus on changes in food security, self-sufficiency, financial wellbeing, social support, and self-efficacy over the course of the past nine months.

Food Security

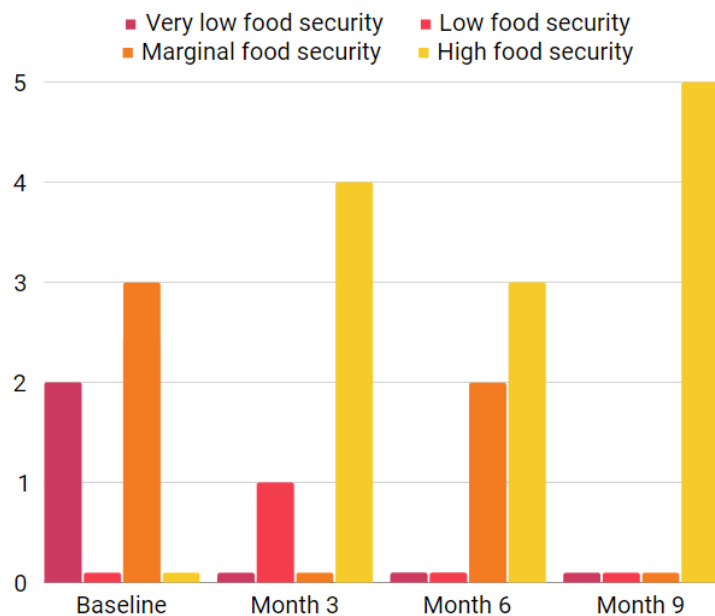
According to the US Department of Agriculture, food security is classified into four levels:

- high food secure, and marginal food secure (which combined are considered food secure)
- low and very low food secure (which combined are considered food insecure)

At the initial baseline survey, 2 out of the 5 members (40%) experienced very low food security, where families cut back on the quality *and* quantity of their food. The other 3 members (60%) experienced marginal food security where they worry about their food running out before they have money to get more. After three months, one member (20%) experienced low food security, and the other four members (80%) experienced high food security, a very significant improvement.

After six months, two members (40%) experienced marginal food security, and the other three members (60%) experienced high food security, which means that at the six-month mark, all members identified as food secure. Upon the nine-month mark, all members experienced **high food security**, meaning all members report that they are in situations where they have little or no anxiety about consistently accessing adequate food for their household.

CHANGES IN FOOD SECURITY



Contributing Factors

Several potential factors could contribute to the increase in overall food security of the members. At the beginning of the program, 3 members were receiving SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) or WIC assistance. At three months, one additional member received SNAP benefits, and at six months and nine months, 4 out of 5 members were consistently receiving either SNAP or WIC benefits. In comparison, for [Lebanon County](#) overall, SNAP participation among people who visit food pantries is less than 30%.

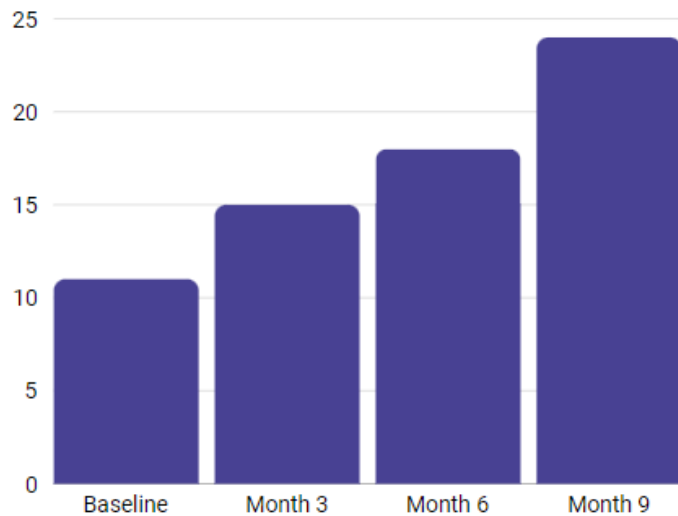
At baseline, 3 members were receiving food from the pantry, at three months, all 5 members were receiving food from the pantry, and at six months and nine months, all 5 members continued to receive food from the food pantry. Among other factors, these consistent federal and local food supports may help explain the increase in food security and provide members with the opportunity to focus on other personal goals that affect their economic mobility besides accessing food.

Self-sufficiency is measured on a scale from 11 – 55 by asking about 11 key areas including education, employment, childcare, transportation, physical health, and others. Lower scores indicate more crisis and instability, whereas higher scores indicate more stability. From baseline to three months, self-sufficiency increased from 36 to 39. From three to six months, the average self-sufficiency scores remained the same, and at nine months, the average score increased from 39 to 42.

Financial wellbeing measures a household's control over their finances, their ability to handle a financial shock, and being able to make ends meet. Scores can range from 0 – 40. At baseline, scores were very low and over three months, average scores improved from 11 to 15. From month three to month six, the scores continued to increase from 15 to 18, and at month nine, scores increased by 6 points from 18 to 24.

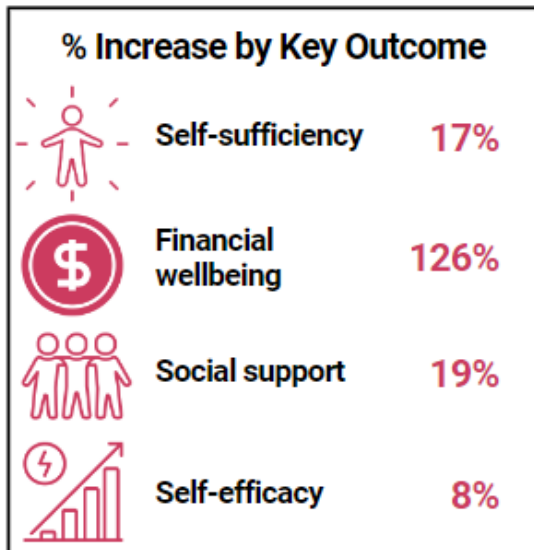
Social support measures a members' perceived level of support with family, friends, and significant others. Scores range from 0 – 60. From baseline to 3 months, social support scores improved from 37 to 42. From month three to month six, scores increased slightly from 42 to 44, and remained consistent at 44 from month six to month nine. **Self-efficacy**, a person's belief in their ability to make changes in their life, was high at baseline (34 points out of 40) and continued to increase by one point every 3 months. At nine months, members' perceptions of self-efficacy rose to 37 points out of 40.

OVERALL INCREASE IN FINANCIAL WELLBEING



Program Impact Summary

With new 9 month data available to support the evaluation of the coaching program’s impact over time, upLIFT has demonstrated steady progress in enhancing the livelihood and wellbeing of members during this reporting period. Although the level of member’s social support remained the same during the past 3 months, there were increases in all other measurable outcomes, especially in terms of self-sufficiency, financial wellbeing, and self-efficacy.



“Life today is so much different than when I first started the upLIFT program...I am so grateful for the gifts this program has given us to better our lives that will help us to continue to succeed and improve our future.” – upLIFT member

Note. Percent increase is determined from baseline to month 9.

A Note of Caution

While promising, these results should be viewed with caution because they represent a very small sample and shouldn’t be generalized to the larger population of people visiting the food pantry.

Recommendations and Future Directions

upLIFT program coaches will continue to conduct and submit surveys to measure changes and progress over time. With the addition of a second coach, and as more members begin to graduate from the program, we anticipate the number of members and graduates to continue to increase. More Than Food Consulting looks forward to supporting LCCM as they continue to grow their coaching program and make positive impacts in Lebanon County. More Than Food Consulting will continue to monitor data collection and provide routine data evaluation and impact summaries on key outcomes.

LCCM is part of a cohort with several other food pantries around the country that are offering coaching with motivational interviewing using the More Than Food framework. As the pantry cohort grows, and pantries enroll more members and conduct surveys, we will aggregate the data to measure the collective impact of the programs over time.

For questions or more information about these results, please contact Katie Martin at kmartin@morethanfoodconsulting.com

