

# A Practical Guide on How to Start a Food Bank

Developed by Food Banks Canada



With support from:



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## Intro

### Purpose

This manual intends to give you an introduction to how to start a food distribution program. It is intended for individuals or groups, who have already identified a potential need for a food bank in their community and who are ready to take the next steps in starting one.

A food distribution program is a community-based response to addressing the immediate needs of people who are food insecure. These programs may take the form of a food bank or pantry that collect and store food and household products for free distribution, and sometimes include community kitchens or gardens, and other resources. In this manual we will use the general term “food bank” when referring to these programs.

Though it is not a comprehensive how-to guide, hopefully it will introduce you to the necessary steps and resources needed to achieve your goal of assisting people in your community that need basic food support.

## Assess the need

Look closely at your community; is there a need for a food bank or food related organization? Contact your provincial association (Appendix A) and local organizations to find out what programs already exist, and ask to visit or volunteer with them to learn about the work they do. A template is provided in Appendix B for this purpose, called “Needs Assessment: Local Organization Interviews”. Through these connections you will be able to better understand any unmet needs in your community, and whether or not starting another food bank or food related organization is necessary. You also may find that you can better meet the community’s needs by working with an existing organization instead of duplicating their programs. If, after evaluating the existing programs in your area and understanding the needs of your community, you find that there is a gap that would be best fulfilled by the creation of a new food bank, it’s time to get started. A good first step is to contact your provincial association. They will review your request and let you know if they will be able to add your food bank to the group of agencies that they support. This is very important because if they cannot support your new food bank it may make the process more difficult. If they are able to add you as an affiliate then they can provide you with resources and support with starting and operating a food bank. The list of provincial associations is found in Appendix A.

### Questions to ask your provincial association:

- What are the requirements to become an affiliate member?
- What support can you provide in terms of starting a food program?

### Questions to ask existing programs (in addition to those questions listed in Appendix B)

- Are there food banks operating already?
- What services are they providing?
- What are their hours of operation?
- Do they have specific geographic boundaries?
- How much food do they give to a family requesting help?
- How many times in a month, quarter, year will they serve the same family?
- Have they ever had to close their doors because they ran out of food?
- Do the pantry staff or volunteers know of unmet needs in your community?
- Are they physically accessible to people with disabilities?
- What successes and advice can they share with you?
- Do they have any trouble finding enough volunteers?
- Do they have paid staff?
- What are the intake requirements – ie. What documents do people needing food support require to provide?

### Questions to ask yourself:

- Are all food pantries in your community generally open at the same times?  
For instance, do all the pantries have Monday through Friday hours and all close at or before 5:00? If that is the case, what happens to people who may need food but work the same hours the pantries are open? What about people who may need food on the weekends?
- If the pantry restricts the number of times they will serve the same family, what happens when that family needs food but have exhausted the number of times they can get help from that pantry?
- Are the pantries you visited unable to meet increasing requests for food?
- Are there specific dietary considerations that are not being met by existing resources, such as halal, kosher, or vegetarian foods?

## Organize your services

### Structure

Though one person's energy and commitment usually gets the ball rolling, efforts to address food insecurity require broad-based community involvement and support. Not only is there a great deal of work to be done, but there are also a great number of decisions to be made.

For the food bank to operate, you will need a group of dedicated people. This group can take the form of a collective, steering committee, or a board of directors. Including representatives from various public and private social service agencies will link your food bank with other members of the assistance network. Think, too, of the kinds of expertise the food bank may need to draw on and try to include people who will bring that knowledge or experience.

No matter what your group is called, ensure that your responsibilities as a group and as individuals are clearly defined. For starters, you may want to assign the following roles in your group:

Name or Title	Responsibilities	Number of People
Chair / Central Coordinator	Organize meetings; operate as spokesperson for the group.	1
Secretary / Minute Taker	Takes meetings notes and keeps record of decisions made.	1
Treasurer/ Finance Coordinator	Keep accurate financial records.	1
General Director / Member	Participate in decision-making and subsequent actions.	3+

The basic functions of this group are planning, policymaking, and resource raising. Sometimes those tasks are best accomplished by dividing into smaller working groups. Among other things, the group will need to:

1. Decide whether the food bank will be a stand-alone independent organization or an affiliated agency.
2. Determine if you will incorporate and/or register as a charity.
3. Conduct a needs assessment to determine who is hungry
4. Set policies and operating procedures
5. Find a location
5. Draft a budget
6. Set hours of operation
5. Recruit volunteers
6. Raise seed monies
7. Stock shelves
8. Spread the word <sup>i</sup>

### Stand-alone or Affiliated Agency

When getting started, you may have used your place of worship, shelter, or another organization to support you in creating your board of directors. You can choose to formalize a relationship with your food bank and another organization, or you can choose to be completely independent. Generally it will be easier to start a food bank under the umbrella of an established charity or not-for-profit organization. Involving several organizations in sponsoring one food bank has the added advantage of

greater cost effectiveness and offering a larger pool of resources and volunteers. However, there are resources available to you if the food bank prefers to be independent from other organizations.

### **Charitable Status**

In order for your food bank to be exempt from income taxes authorize official donation receipts it must register as a Charity with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).<sup>ii</sup> If you are located in Alberta or Québec you must register both federally and provincially as a charity. If you are located in PEI and choose not to register with the CRA, you must still register with the provincial government. Information on how to register as a charity at the federal and provincial levels is contained in Appendix C.

### **Incorporation**

Food banks are encouraged, but not required, to incorporate as an organization with the federal or their provincial government before requesting charitable status. Doing so will offer you an easier chance at gaining charitable status from the CRA. If you intend to operate in more than one province, you should register at the federal level. Otherwise, you can choose between the provincial or federal level, depending on what works best for your organization. Basic information on incorporation is summarized by province in Appendix D.

### **Vision, Mission, and Values**

One of the first tasks your governing board should complete once you have decided to start a food bank is to create vision, mission, and value statements for the organization. It would also be appropriate to determine a name for your food bank at this point as well.

The vision statement should tell in one short sentence what your food bank wants to accomplish. An example of a generic vision would be “Our vision is a community in which no one is hungry or food insecure.”

The mission statement should explain how your food bank plans on working towards making your vision a reality. Here’s an example mission statement, from The Calgary Food Bank: “Our Mission: Working with our community to gather and distribute healthy emergency food to those in need and contribute to public awareness of the conditions that led to food insecurity.”<sup>iii</sup>

The values statement explains what your food bank believes in. This may be as simple as “We believe that each person has the right to fresh, affordable, and accessible food”, or a more extensive statement of your values. You can also adopt a Code of Ethics in place of this statement, such as Food Bank Canada’s Ethical Foodbanking Code.

### **The Ethical Foodbanking Code<sup>iv</sup>**

The Ethical Foodbanking Code has been a guiding part of the Food Banks Canada network since 1989. It offers guidance for food banks and other food programs in a number of areas, including their relationship with those in need of assistance, food safety, cooperation within the network, the need to publicize the existence of hunger, and the need to devote time and effort towards work to reduce poverty, hunger and the need for food banks. It is an essential part of the shared vision, mission and approach of the network.

**Preface:** Food Banks Canada, its Members (provincial associations), Affiliate Member food banks, and associated agencies believe that everyone in Canada has the right to physical and economic access, at

all times, to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences.

### **The Code:**

Food Banks Canada, its Members (provincial associations), Affiliate Member food banks, and associated agencies will:

1. Provide food and other assistance to those needing help regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, income source, age, or mental or physical ability.
2. Treat all those who access services with the utmost dignity and respect.
3. Implement best practices in the proper and safe storage and handling of food.
4. Respect the privacy of those served, and will maintain the confidentiality of personal information.
5. Not require payment of any kind for donated food or consumer products, at any time, from those assisted by their respective programs.
6. Acquire and share food in a spirit of cooperation with other food banks and food programs.
7. Strive to make the public aware of the existence of hunger, and of the factors that contribute to it.
8. Recognize that food banks are not a viable long-term response to hunger, and devote part of their activities to reducing the need for food assistance.
9. Represent accurately, honestly, and completely their respective mission and activities to the larger community.

## **Physical Space**

### **How to acquire an office and distribution location**

A Food Bank will need a space or a facility. Ideally, it would be large enough to store dry food, have a cool place for storing perishables such as fruit and vegetables, space for refrigerators and freezers and hot running water. There should be space for repackaging from bulk buys and adequate space for distribution. A donated facility will reduce operating costs for the Food Bank. Heat, lights, telephone, insurance, garbage, and water service will have to be arranged. Whenever possible, ask that these services be donated. Many businesses are much more willing to donate in kind gifts, rather than in cash, particularly if they believe that it is good publicity for their company.

Other important considerations relative to the building site include: parking, availability to bus routes or transit, accessible for people and truck deliveries, location in an area accessible to the majority of potential volunteers and recipients.<sup>v</sup> If you have already partnered with another organization that has space available for the food bank, ensure that they meet the local and provincial guidelines for food storage. A great first point of contact would be your local public health unit. If you are in need of a space, consider asking the following places for a space in their facilities:

- Places of Worship
- Community Centres
- City government services
- Schools
- Unemployment centres
- Libraries
- Neighbourhood Associations

### **Beyond The Basics: Developing Community Kitchens, Gardens, and other programs**

Food banks provide a great starting point for other programs, such as community kitchens, community gardens, and educational programs for all ages. If you intend to run such programs as soon as you open your doors you will need to ensure that you have a suitable space to do so. This would be an excellent opportunity to create a smaller working group from your governing board that would be responsible for planning a community kitchen or other program.

The Penticton Salvation Army offers many great program examples that you could incorporate into your food bank:

- Weekly cooking lessons led by volunteer food-wise mentors: participants take home meals, share meals together, and learn new techniques and tips.
- Focus on the basics such as 'how to cook with lentils', 'how to make soup stock' 'how to can', 'how to buy large cuts of meat and use all the parts for many meals', how to make breads, etc.
- 4 times per year Nutrition Education series
- Yearly Budgeting and Planning for Nutrition classes
- Regular Store Tours and Label reading workshops
- Community Kitchen Hosts Multi-cultural Guest Chefs
- Host Dinner Theatres as fundraisers
- Canning, Dehydrating & Freezing lessons
- Twice Yearly Canadian Diabetes Association "Food Skills for Families" 6 week series
- Youth Gleaning and Preserving Program in collaboration with another church
- Food Safe Level 1 classes and Safe Food Handling classes
- Gardening Classes: home/business owners provide space and water, room for 12, led by local gardening experts. All food grown supports the community kitchen cooking classes and food bank. Community Partners support the cost of raised beds, fencing, seed and soil.<sup>vi</sup>

For a guide to starting a community garden: <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules>  
For support in establishing a community kitchen: <http://www.freshchoicekitchens.ca/community-kitchen-resources/starting-a-kitchen>

## Service Plan and Policies

Although the phrase client is used most often your food bank can decide to use other terms to refer to those accessing your services such as community members, visitor, or member.

## Eligibility Guidelines for Clients

Who will you allow to access your services? It is good practice for food banks to clearly communicate to potential clients, the community, and to donors who is eligible for the food bank services.

Often the service guidelines will include:

- Geographical limits: restrict your service to people within your town, neighbourhood, or postal code
- Proof of income and expenses: to establish need (many food banks choose not to collect this)
- Proof of dependants, such as health cards or immigration papers: to establish if there are children or other adults who rely on the client so you can account for their needs
- Other eligibility criteria may be related to the organization that your food bank is being operated under, such as shelters that offer support only to their current or former residents or school-based sites that restrict service to current students and/or staff.

Tips:

- Have on hand the contact information for neighbouring food banks that you can refer anyone ineligible for your services to.
- Keep an up-to-date list of other sources of support in the community that the client may be able to access, such as subsidized transit and recreation programs.
- You may choose to require an identification card and proof of address to establish where someone lives. Be mindful that requiring a photo ID, a utility bill, or proof of citizenship may mean that some of the people with the highest need will not qualify for your services. Consider how you will respond to someone without a permanent fixed address, who cannot afford an ID and has no bills in their name, or who may be an undocumented immigrant.

## Frequency of Service

When and how often can your clients come to the food bank?

Establish consistent hours of operation and advertise them alongside all of your communications.

Try to offer services at times that are convenient to those you serve. For instance, providing services on weekends and staying open late on weekdays may allow people who work or go to school during typical business hours to come access your services. If your location is served by public transit make sure you account for any gaps in their schedule, such as if the route only runs during the rush hour period.

Communicate to your clients what the service limit is for accessing the food bank. This limit may change depending on how much food you are able to gather and the number of clients you serve, as well as how often you are able to access your physical space if it is shared with another organization or service. Depending on your service limits and volunteer resources, you may operate every day or only one day a month. Many food banks impose limits on number of visits and/or amount of items received per month.

## Client Intake and Records

Asking for help is hard, especially when it is for something as basic and personal as feeding one's family and self. When they get to you, your clients will almost certainly be frightened, frustrated, and humiliated. The last thing you want to do is make them feel even worse. Establish a list of steps on how to welcome a client to your food bank so volunteers know how to approach the many situations they may encounter. If you share the steps publically you can offer some reassurance to client on what to expect when they come looking for your help. Here is a suggestion for a basic procedure:

1. Welcome each client individually. Introduce yourself and any other volunteers in the room, and ask for the client's name.
2. Offer a place to sit if you cannot register them right away. Provide distractions for children, such as toys and books.
3. Ask the client to join you in a more private area of the room or in a separate room to gather information and determine their eligibility for your services.
  - a. If you go to a private room, you should try to sit the client closest to the exit to allow a greater sense of safety. It is good practice to ask if the client would like the door to be opened or closed, and respect their wishes.
  - b. Give the client the nicer and more comfortable looking chair, and try not to sit directly opposite to them.
4. Collect any necessary information, and explain where it will be stored, who will have access to it, and why it is being collected.
5. Explain all relevant policies and procedures, including hours of operation and limits to services. Ask the client to sign an agreement to services. This can be as simple as signing the intake sheet saying, "I agree to respect the services of the food bank and other clients." You can see an example of Client Rights & Responsibilities in Appendix E.
6. Offer referrals to other community organizations when appropriate, and then thank the client for their time and guide them to the next stage where they will pick up their food.

## Record Keeping Procedures

You will need some basic information about anyone requesting food so that you can give them adequate assistance. For your own use, you will want records of those you have helped, their particular needs and your success in helping them. Remember that you must keep all information provided by your clients completely confidential and locked up with access limited to only a few key people. This will help you comply with provincial and federal privacy protection laws.

You will want to keep an inventory of the amount and types of food you have taken in and distributed. Besides demonstrating how much work you have done, this will contribute to the smooth functioning of the food bank as you will know what you have and what you need to get.

Food Banks Canada collects information from food banks in order to form the annual HungerCount; a comprehensive report on hunger and food bank usage in Canada and recommendations for change.

You can also benefit from collecting statistics in order to report to donors and as an advocacy tool when lobbying for increased government support from your elected representatives.

If you have the funds available, you may choose to purchase software to manage your food bank programs and clients. Here are two companies that offer this:

[www.link2feed.ca](http://www.link2feed.ca)

<http://www.nucleuslabs.com/?page=15>

## Service Models

### Self-select versus Hamper model

The way in which you distribute the food will impact the amount of space required for operations. Consider which model works best for the population you are serving and the space available for the food bank to use.

Self-select model: Much like a small grocery store, this model allows clients to enter the food bank and choose which food products they take within their defined limit. There are numerous methods that can be used to do this.

*Advantage:* Client-choice empowers clients to make their own decisions, and can reduce the amount of food wasted, as they will only take items they know how to use and will eat.

*Disadvantage:* This model may require more space for food storage, as not only volunteers but also clients will access it as well.

Hamper model: Clients are given a basket or bag of food products that were gathered before their arrival to the food bank that day. Most contain a variety of food groups and cover a couple days worth of food.

*Advantage:* Much easier to prepare hampers in advance and quickly distribute them to clients.

*Disadvantage:* Clients may not use food they are given, which leads to more food wasted.

Hybrid self-select and hamper: Clients choose from a list of available items, and are also given other items that are available. This model allows food banks to ensure a certain amount of nutritional product is being given out while also giving clients the power to choose what other items they would like to use.

### Tips for Designing the Ideal Nutritious Food Hamper<sup>vii</sup>

#### Do's:

#### 1. Choose Foods High in Vitamins, Minerals, Fiber

- Whole wheat/whole grain breads over white bread
- Fruit juices instead of sodas or tea
- Fresh and frozen produce v. canned
- Low sodium canned v. regular canned

#### 2. Choose Foods/Snacks Lower in Fat

- Better snack choices include graham crackers, pretzels, rice cakes, dried fruits, nuts, and plain popcorn
- Beans are a good source of protein; they're even better when combined with rice
- Tuna and sardines are low in fat, high in protein, B vitamins, iron; sardines are also high in calcium
- Learn to understand food labels; you can help to then choose food products that can better meet the needs of clients (e.g. low sugar, low sodium, low fat etc.)

#### 3. Follow Canada's Food Guide recommended servings.

Be sure your clients receive a variety of foods from these groups.

#### 4. Include at Least One of the Following in Each Hamper:

(Use this guideline for a family of four for three days)

- a. Protein: Beef, poultry, seafood, beans and rice, nuts, peanut butter

- b. Calcium and Vitamin D: Nonfat dry milk, milk and yogurt (if available), soy products such as tofu, green leafy vegetables
- c. Vegetables/Produce: Spinach, carrots, peas, zucchini, squash, mixed greens, broccoli
- e. Fruit: Any fresh, canned, frozen or dried fruits, especially citrus fruits (vitamins C)
  - Choose fresh and dried fruits for higher nutrient content
  - Choose unsweetened canned fruits and juices in light syrup v. heavy syrup
- f. Whole grains: breads, bagels, muffins, hot/cold cereals, pita bread, tortillas, saltines, rice, and pasta

A suggested hamper

- h. One 1-lb. or one 14 oz. box of rice
- i. 2 cans of beans or 1lb. bag of dry beans
- j. 2 cans of tuna or 1 can salmon (or use other meat alternative; peanut butter, beans)
- k. 2-3 cans of fruit or 8 pieces of fruit
- l. 3 cans or 2-3 10oz./1lb. packages of frozen vegetables
- m. 2 quarts of milk (1 gallon with children/adolescents) or equivalent amount of dry milk

- Determine if clients have cooking facilities, refrigerators, and storage space.
- Find out what foods clients like or want to eat - if they won't eat it, don't give it to them.
- Include home and personal products if you can get them.

**Further Recommendations**

1. Try to keep to a minimum high sugar and high fat foods
2. Don't forget to include foods from all food groups
3. Don't neglect client preferences, cultural preferences, or dietetic needs

**Recommended Number of Food Guide Servings per Day**

	Children			Teens		Adults			
	2-3	4-8	9-13	14-18 Years		19-50 Years		51+ Years	
	Female and Male			Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>	4	5	6	7	8	7-8	8-10	7	7
<b>Grain Products</b>	3	4	6	6	7	6-7	8	6	7
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	2	2	3-4	3-4	3-4	2	2	3	3
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	1	1	1-2	2	3	2	3	2	3

For example:

If you are a 35 year old woman you should aim to have:

- 7-8 vegetables and fruit
- 6-7 grain products
- 2 milk and alternatives
- 2 meat and alternatives
- 30-45 mL (2-3 Tbsp) of unsaturated oils and fats

This "How Much Food You Need Every Day" table can be found through Health Canada at:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/basics-base/quantit-eng.php>

## Operations

### Best Practices for Developing a Volunteer Program

Volunteers are motivated by a belief in a meaningful cause and a desire to help. These volunteers will come to your food bank to lend a hand, and it is important that you have the tools to properly lay out a work plan for them and manage them. Creating a volunteer program can prove to be challenging, but if the appropriate steps are taken, you can be guaranteed the program will be a success. To successfully implement a volunteer program, you'll need to start with a good plan, develop policies and procedures, effectively recruit individuals, properly supervise these individuals and finally keep these individuals motivated and feeling appreciated so they come back time after time.

1. **Planning.** A thorough planning process should be the first step to developing your volunteer program, and should answer the following questions: What needs will the program address? What will be the impact of the program? Is there a budget? How will you prepare to work with the volunteers? What will the volunteers do? Once these questions have been answered, you can properly recruit individuals to your volunteer program.
2. **Policies & Procedures.** It is extremely important to outline policies and procedures for all volunteers. First and foremost, policies and procedures connect the volunteer program to the larger organization and its mission. But policies and procedures also provide structure and ensure continuity over time. Policies that should be developed are: mechanisms for managing risk (e.g., insurance coverage, background checks), rules and expectations, regulations and guides to action (e.g., confidentiality, time and training commitments) and additional materials to ensure that volunteers' rights and responsibilities are clearly outlined and shared.
3. **Recruitment.** The process of recruitment means enrolling an individual to become involved with your food bank. Depending what type of individual you are seeking you may have multiple recruitment "messages" – but all messages should include the following: the specific need of the clients and the food bank, how the volunteer can alleviate the need, and the benefits to the volunteer. Next, once individuals have been recruited, a brief screening and interview should be conducted to determine a proper match between the individual and the food bank. Screening processes may be different depending what type of position you are recruiting for. Last, be sure to provide orientation and training to all volunteers, enabling them to perform the assigned tasks both efficiently and effectively. Volunteers who understand what is expected from them do a better job and feel satisfied by serving your organization.
4. **Supervision.** The supervisor's role is to ensure the volunteer's success in the work they perform for the organization. Volunteers should always have a supervisor available to answer questions, lend guidance and provide support and feedback. The supervisor is responsible for providing materials, training, and direction to enable the volunteer to perform assigned tasks to the best of their ability. Supervisors will evaluate the effectiveness of the volunteers and their role in meeting the objectives of the volunteer program and the organization as a whole.
5. **Retention.** Understanding volunteers' motivations and remaining sensitive to their needs are essential to retaining volunteers. Always be consistent and sincere in your expectations. Remember to address a volunteer by their first name. Be receptive to new ideas and ways of doing things. Take every opportunity to applaud competence, punctuality and all the other things you value. Be sure and

say “thank you” or “good job” – it costs nothing but goes a long way. At least once a year, go out of your way to recognize volunteers by holding some type of luncheon or appreciation event. As much as possible, make things fun! Turn on some background music; let volunteers work together, serve refreshments. Remember that volunteers are helping out your food bank on their own time and deserves as much courtesy and consideration as a paid employee.

If you are unable to follow all of the aforementioned steps, at the very least always remember to show appreciation. A warm smile and a “thank you” can mean a lot.<sup>viii</sup>

For help with volunteer management, contact your local Volunteer Centre:

<http://volunteer.ca/content/find-volunteer-centre>

## **Operational Roles and Responsibilities**

These roles may be taken by paid or unpaid staff, and may differ depending on your mode of service.

Here are some suggested roles:

### **Financial Coordinator**

- Collect and pay bills
- Manage donations and grants
- Create and track budgets
- Sends out thank you notes and tax receipts

### **Food Handling Helpers**

- Order food
- Receive deliveries and make pick-ups
- Unload, date cases, and stock food
- Coordinate food drives
- Sort and inspect incoming food
- Ensure first in, first out system

### **Intake Worker**

- Welcome clients and handle intake
- Guide clients as they choose foods; Hand out recipes
- Carry out food for senior and disabled clients

### **Outreach Coordinator/Fund Raising and Events**

- Give public presentations to groups
- Invite community services to the pantry for educational activities
- Solicit donations
- Organizes events to raise funds and awareness

### **Volunteer Manager**

- Recruit new volunteers
- Schedule and train volunteers
- Create volunteer manual

### **Statistical Coordinator**

- Write grants
- Complete Food Bank paperwork such as annual renewals and monthly statistics

### **Pantry Maintenance Helpers**

- Vacuum and sweep floors
- Keep work surfaces clean and sanitized
- Remove snow and ice from parking lots
- Record refrigerator and freezer temperatures

## Social Media Coordinator

- Updates Website
- Maintains active online presence through Facebook, Twitter, etc...

## Raising Food

Where are you going to get an adequate and varied supply of food? Many food banks rely on a variety of donation sources to keep their shelves stocked, including food products and funds.

## Running Food Drives

Food drives are a good way to secure a variety of items for your food bank while simultaneously cultivating community awareness. Food drives give everyone in the community an opportunity to learn about your organization and feel good about helping to feed the hungry. It is also an opportunity for you to request certain difficult-to-acquire items such as protein-rich foods and personal hygiene products.

In order for your food drive to be successful, people need to know about it. The easiest way for a small food bank to spread the word about an upcoming food drive is to distribute flyers. Your flyer should request specific items and include information so that people know where and when to donate. Distribution ideas or food drive flyers include:

- Schools: Many schools are more than willing to participate in service projects such as food drives. Sending flyers or calling a school to provide them information on your food bank and current drive is an easy way of getting publicity and attention.
- Religious institutions (e.g. churches, synagogues, and mosques): Many are willing to support food drives. Contact these organizations with your flyers, or ask to speak to the congregation about the food bank and the need in the community.
- Use as tray liners in cafeterias and fast food restaurants.
- Hand out in shopping malls and street corners.
- Use as inserts in local publications or church bulletins.
- Post in the local library and have them place a box for donations.
- Supermarkets: Ask the store manager if you can place a box for donations near the front of the store. Make sure to post a bright-colored flyer on the box to attract attention!

Other creative food drive ideas:

- Choose an honorary chairperson/spokesperson for your food drive. Approach a local celebrity/political figure and have him/her publicly support your efforts by mentioning your food bank at special events.
- Develop and adopt-a-month program where civic organizations can select a month where it is their responsibility to provide food to the food bank.
- Get theaters and sports teams involved. Ask local movie/performance theaters and sports venues to charge a certain amount of canned goods as admission for one night.
- Create a name for your annual food drive. Names like “caring hands,” “fishes and loaves,” etc. increase community awareness of hunger issues and boost food donations.
- Publicize and educate. Create t-shirts, buttons, or decorate paper lunch bags and consider offering them in exchange for a food or monetary donation.<sup>ix</sup>

Check out the Food Drive Toolkit from the Alberta Food Bank Network Association:

<http://afbna.ca/media/uploads/resources/FoodDriveToolkit.pdf>

## Connecting to Businesses

In addition to donations from the general community, you may also want to pursue donated products from businesses. You may also be able to arrange discounts on large purchases of items that are generally difficult to come by, such as diapers or protein. In particular, ask for both food and personal hygiene donations from:

- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants
- Bakeries
- Convenience Stores

Meet with storeowners and managers to let them know who you are, and ask for their assistance. Come prepared with information on the clients you serve, what products you are most in need of, and with ideas on how the business can promote their relationship with your food bank to the community.<sup>x</sup>

Donations from farmers are an excellent way to procure fresh food for distribution. Tax credit opportunities may exist in your province that would act as an incentive for farmers to donate product to the food bank. One popular way to partner with a farmer is to ask permission for food bank volunteers to glean their fields. Gleaning refers to the age-old practice of collecting crops that, while still in good condition, remain in the field following a farmer's commercial harvest. This can include fruits, vegetable, grains, or any crop.

## Tips for Fundraising Success<sup>xi</sup>

1. Believe in what you are doing and have passion
2. Know what you are talking about
3. Listen to community members ...they are potential donors
4. Follow up any leads – if you say you will contact don't forget
5. Build relationships and trust
6. Public awareness; build it and maintain it through social media, newspaper editorials, etc...
7. Know how to ask for money – don't be afraid to ask
8. Get involved in local events to garner donations and raise awareness
9. Accept "no" for an answer gracefully, follow up at a later date
10. Make sure you say thank you – verbal and written – you can never say thank you enough
11. Create a calendar at the beginning of the year and review upcoming community events for possible partnerships
12. Contact service groups, Rotary, Churches, local businesses

## Outreach to Clients

- Add yourself to the local Community Resource databases
- Post information on community bulletin boards and in local newspapers
- Build a website
- Create and use a twitter and Facebook account
- Build relationships with other social service organizations in the area

## Safe Food Handling

The Safe Food Handling Program through Food Banks Canada helps to ensure that employees and volunteers at food banks across the country are taking appropriate steps to safely handle the food provided through their programs. Developed with input from the food banking sector, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and the agri-food industry, the program provides education and resources to food banks across the country.

As part of the program, we have created a comprehensive set of materials, available at no cost through our website. These resources assist with needs assessment and personnel training, and include:

- set of safe food handling standards, with detailed instructions on best practices in receiving, handling, and storing food, including cleanliness and pest control, equipment, and environmental controls and training
- series of facility posters providing clear, graphic instructions for food bank personnel, a series of stick on decals that can be affixed to walls, doors and areas where quick reference to safe food handling fact is necessary
- set of fact sheets on food safety issues
- self-assessment questionnaire to help identify gaps and areas for improvement
- intake form for receiving donations

**How to participate:** Contact Food Banks Canada at [info@foodbankscanada.ca](mailto:info@foodbankscanada.ca) to request access to the materials.

## Additional Resources

[Food Banks Canada Resources Link](#)

[Office in a Box: Documents to Help You Organize Your Food Bank](#)

Fighting Hunger 101: North Texas Food Bank

How to Start A Food Pantry: Montana Association of Food Banks

Neighbours Helping Neighbours: Alberta Food Bank Network Association manual

Organizing & Operating an Efficient Emergency Food Pantry: Capital Area Food Bank of Texas

Organizing and Operating a Food Pantry: Regional Food Bank of NENY and the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley

## About Food Banks Canada

Food Banks Canada supports a unique network of over 3,000 food-related organizations in every province and territory that assists close to 900,000 Canadians each month. Together, the network shares over 200 million pounds of essential safe quality food annually, provides social programs that help to foster self-sufficiency, and advocates for policy change that will help create a Canada where no one goes hungry.

For more information on Food Banks Canada and its many programs, please visit [www.foodbankscanada.ca](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca)

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from “Fighting Hunger 101”, by the North Texas Food Bank

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/pplyng/rgstrtn/rght-eng.html>

<sup>iii</sup> The Calgary Food Bank Mission Statement <http://www.calgaryfoodbank.com/vision-mission-and-values-statement>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/About-Us/Organization/Food-Banking-Code-of-Ethics.aspx>

<sup>v</sup> Neighbours Helping Neighbours, page 9

<sup>vi</sup> Membership Webinar: Food Bank Community Programs, section by Barb Stewart from The Salvation Army Penticton Community Food Bank

<sup>vii</sup> Adapted from “Organizing & Operating an Efficient Emergency Food Pantry”, authored by Capital Area Food Bank of Texas

<sup>viii</sup> Adapted from “Organizing & Operating an Efficient Emergency Food Pantry”, authored by Capital Area Food Bank of Texas

<sup>ix</sup> Adapted from “Organizing and Operating a Food Pantry”, A Resource Provided by the Regional Food Bank of NENY and the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley

<sup>x</sup> Adapted from “Organizing and Operating a Food Pantry”, A Resource Provided by the Regional Food Bank of NENY and the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley

<sup>xi</sup> Adapted from Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society, presentation at Membership Conference 2013

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