



NETWORK
PARTNER
HANDBOOK

**The mission of the Vermont Foodbank
is to gather and share quality food
and nurture partnerships so that no
one in Vermont will go hungry.**



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Welcome Letter from CEO John Sayles

Dear Network Partners,

In 1985, then-Governor of Vermont, Madeline Kunin, appointed a Governor's Task Force on Poverty and Hunger. The next year, the Vermont Foodbank was born in an 1,800 square foot warehouse in Barre, distributing food throughout the state to food shelves, pantries and other community meal sites. It was a program of the Central Vermont Community Action Council, now Capstone Community Action. In 1987 the ribbon was cut on a stand-alone distribution center in Barre. That year, 145,000 pounds of food was distributed to 43 Network Partners, and in 1989 the Foodbank became an independent nonprofit. Over the years, our impact has grown together. In 2022, more than 12 million pounds of food was distributed statewide by the Vermont Foodbank through more than 300 partners. Some of you were already serving your communities in 1985, and many have been established over the years. More still want to engage in this work.

The Vermont Foodbank would not exist without you, and together we impact hundreds of thousands of our neighbors' lives each year. There is the food, yes, yet you provide so much more. We continue to evolve as we see how to better partner with our neighbors in meeting basic needs. As our world and the services we all provide becomes more complex, this handbook is one more effort by the Foodbank to provide value through clarity and service. We hope that you'll continue to let us know where we're doing well, and where we can do better.

As always, the focus remains on our neighbors and our ability to meet the needs of our communities most equitably and effectively. We will not succeed in our shared mission until the root causes of hunger – lack of money, systemic racism, oppression of all kinds, and an economic system that does not work for all of us – is acknowledged and change and healing begins. Thank you for joining the Foodbank on this journey and being a teacher and partner as we work to ensure that no one in Vermont goes hungry.



John Sayles, CEO

Introduction to the Vermont Foodbank

As the largest hunger relief organization and the only foodbank in the state, the mission of the Vermont Foodbank is to gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships so that no one in Vermont will go hungry. Through hundreds of network, program, and community partners throughout the state, the Foodbank distributes food and services that increase food security in Vermont. In addition, the Vermont Foodbank is an affiliate of Feeding America, the largest domestic hunger relief organization in the country. Feeding America has a network of over 200 food banks across the United States.

As a network partner of the Vermont Foodbank, your agency has a critically important role in the state's food access network: providing food and services to individuals and families in need with dignity and respect in a clean, welcoming and safe environment. The Vermont Foodbank greatly values relationships with each unique network partner and recognizes the hard work that you perform in providing services to neighbors.

This handbook is designed to help network partners take full advantage of the services offered by the Foodbank, and to provide guidance on best practices for food shelves/pantries and meal sites. Network partners that distribute food to neighbors to prepare and consume at home or elsewhere are designated as Food Shelf/Pantry partners. Those that prepare and serve meals to the public are designated as Meal Sites. Both methods of providing food to neighbors are integral components of the Vermont Foodbank network and mission.

The Vermont Foodbank is a state-wide organization. To effectively serve the whole state, there are three distribution centers dispersed throughout the state. Based on their geographical location, network partners are assigned to one distribution center through which deliveries and/or pickups are coordinated. The address, office hours, and contact information for each distribution center is as follows:

BARRE

33 Parker Road
Barre, VT 05641

Office Hours

Monday - Friday
8 am - 4 pm

Telephone Numbers

802-476-3341
Toll Free: 800-585-BANK

BRATTLEBORO

22 Browne Court
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Office Hours

Monday - Friday
8 am - 4 pm

Telephone Numbers

802-246-0993

RUTLAND

92 Park Street
Rutland, VT 05701

Office Hours

Monday - Friday
8 am - 4 pm

Telephone Numbers

802-747-7984

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commitment

Since 2018, Vermont Foodbank has been on a journey to become a more inclusive and diverse organization that centers equity in everything we do. Though we've made progress, these efforts are ever-evolving as we build our awareness and competencies around systems of oppression that disproportionately impact people from marginalized groups. We still have a lot of work to do, but here are a few examples of what we've done so far:

- We are building staff skills for inclusive meetings, communication, and collaboration.
- We have prioritized learning opportunities that deepen our understanding of (1) the unearned privileges that disproportionately benefit some groups at the expense of others, and (2) systems of oppression that disproportionately disadvantage people from marginalized groups.
- We expanded our leadership team to include non-executive staff, with the goals of including more diverse viewpoints and establishing participatory decision-making practices.
- We founded a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team to resource our organization for an ever-deepening commitment to equity.
- We restructured some internal functions (HR, IT, and Administration, for example) to better serve equitable outcomes.
- We are learning to attribute our logo, the bird and the corn kernel, to its Indigenous meanings and origins.
- We are learning to apply an equity lens to all aspects of our work including employee compensation, hiring, marketing, program design and service delivery (just to name a few).
- We are creating opportunities to deepen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion knowledge and practices across the Network through the Hunger Action Conference, webinars and cohort models.
- If you'd like to connect with us about our journey, past and future, you can contact us at info@vtfoodbank.org.

Our Commitment to Racial Equity

The Vermont Foodbank understands that systems of racism and oppression are at the root of inequities in health, hunger, and economic opportunity, and disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in this country and in Vermont. To remember the countless victims of hate crimes, police violence and human rights violations, and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and all racial justice movements, we commit to:

- Educate ourselves deeply about anti-racism, especially within the food system.
- Center racial justice in all our work.
- Listen to and amplify voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our

community and nationwide.

- Partner with groups/orgs working on racial justice and serving Black and Brown communities.
- Ensure the safety and comfort of marginalized communities in our distribution models.
- Change our internal systems and structures to dismantle systemic racism.
- Hold space to do this work authentically, and not for public praise.
- Broaden the circle and expand the conversation in Vermont around racism.

Please see the [Vermont Foodbank website](#) for additional resources regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Benefits of Partnership

As a network partner (NP) of the Vermont Foodbank (VF), agencies have access to distinct benefits that allow for improved service provision to the community. Some of these opportunities are afforded by the larger Feeding America network, and some are specific to the Vermont Foodbank's mission and vision.

Access to Donated Food

Network partners of the Vermont Foodbank, may order donated food, as available, at no cost to distribute through pantries, meal sites, shelters, and other sites.

Access to COOP Buying Club Food

In addition to free donated food, the Foodbank provides network partners the opportunity to purchase food from the cooperative buying club that sources items from across the country. The COOP Buying Program is a way for the Foodbank to fill the gap that sometimes exists with donated food by purchasing desirable foods such as peanut butter, tuna, canned fruits, and vegetables at the lowest possible cost. These savings are then available to NPs. The cost of these items will be listed on the shopping list and will vary depending on the item.

Free Produce

The Foodbank is proud to provide free produce, which is available through a nationwide distribution system, to network partners. In addition, the Foodbank purchases a significant amount of local produce through the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters program; this produce is also provided to network partners for free. If your agency would like to receive produce from VF, send an email to the Inventory Control Manager at your regional distribution center asking to be put on the "produce email list". When produce is available for ordering, NPs on the list will receive an email from the Foodbank listing the available types and quantities of produce; respond to this email with the desired produce for your agency and the items will be added onto your next pick up/delivery order. Network partners across the state are also welcome to attend monthly produce drops in their region. To learn more about the produce drop availability in your region, contact the Network Relations team.

Free Delivery

In fiscal year 2024 (October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024), all delivery fees are \$0 for network partners. The Vermont Foodbank reserves the right, at its discretion, to make changes in the fee structure for future fiscal years and will notify participating NPs no less than one month prior to the change.

Fresh Rescue

In an effort to save millions of pounds of food from entering the waste stream, the Vermont Foodbank started its Fresh Rescue Program in 2014, which connects a pre-approved group of food shelves and meal sites to make direct-to-store pick-ups of donated food items from grocery retailers throughout the state. This partnership enables grocery retailers to donate unsaleable, yet usable, products to Vermont Foodbank and participating NPs. Donations consist of perishable and some non-perishable food items and occasionally non-food items.

As a network partner, you may be eligible to participate in the Fresh Rescue Program. To learn if this program might be a good fit for your agency, please contact the Retail Store Program Manager, Josh Ellison at jellison@vtfoodbank.org.

The Network Relations Team

The Network Relations Team is here to support your agency! As thought partners, resources for guidance on best practices, and more, VF is committed to increasing the capacity of its vast and impactful network. Please contact the Network Relations Manager, Caleb Sugarman at csugarman@vtfoodbank.org with questions or feedback about the Foodbank's services.

3SquaresVT Team

3SquaresVT, federally referred to as SNAP, is a program that gives people money to purchase the foods they want, when they want. A dedicated team at the Vermont Foodbank supports people in learning about and applying to 3SquaresVT, as well as connections to other resources like heating assistance, WIC and more. The 3SquaresVT team partners with network partner pantries, food shelves or organizations to help spread awareness about the program, helping to break down stigma and enrolling eligible neighbors. Contact Jamie Lombardo at (802) 224-6211 or jlombardo@vtfoodbank.org to discuss options such as rack cards, referrals, newsletter blurbs, trainings for network partner staff, in-person application assistance and more. Community members can self screen for eligibility using our texting tool VFBSNAP to 85511. The most important thing to remember is that the team is here to support you and your neighbors with any questions related to 3SquaresVT.

VT Fresh Program

VT Fresh expands access, improves availability and increases the utilization and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The program supports network partners to implement strategies for improving the food environment with simple taste tests, displays, promotions and messaging tools that help make it easier for food shelf visitors to choose fruits and vegetables. Whether it be through our grant funding opportunities to help support a particular project or need, or by having Recipe Kits that include all the core ingredients needed to prepare a nourishing

vegetable side dish delivered to your facility each month, the VT Fresh Team is here to support! Since 2014, VT Fresh programming has been implemented at over 100 food shelves and meal sites and is being offered at nearly 20 VeggieVanGo produce events across the state.

Hunger Action Conference

The Vermont Foodbank's annual Hunger Action Conference takes place on the first Friday in May at Killington Grand Resort, and offers a space for learning, connection, and networking between NPs and other food access and state partners.

Collaboration & Shared Spaces

In addition to the Hunger Action Conference, the Foodbank occasionally provides opportunities for network partners to connect and collaborate via new partner orientation, listening sessions and working groups, specific content area webinars and trainings, regional meetings, and other opportunities.

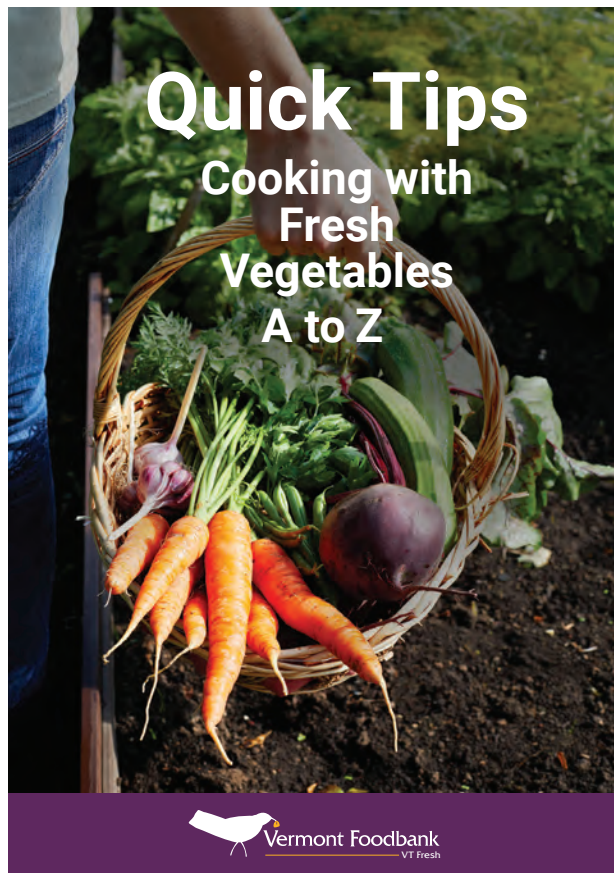
Grant Funding

Several annual funding opportunities are available to network partners through the Vermont Foodbank. Information about these opportunities and application materials can be found on the [Vermont Foodbank website](#). Funding opportunities for fiscal year 2024 are as follows:

Capacity Fund

The Vermont Foodbank's Competitive Capacity Fund is intended to empower VF network and community partners to implement, experience and understand ways to meet persistent and emerging needs. All organizations addressing hunger and root causes of food insecurity throughout Vermont are encouraged to apply. The competitive grant round typically opens in early Summer. With questions, contact the Manager of Community Engagement, Zach Hebert at zherbert@vtfoodbank.org.

If you have a capacity need which falls outside of the scope or timeframe of the competitive round, a smaller grant award may be available for emergent needs. Funds can be awarded to support a broad range of requests up to \$2,500 per year. Applications are by referral and will be reviewed as they are submitted. Applications must be submitted no later than August 31st of the given fiscal year. If you wish to request a referral, contact Amy



The VT Fresh *Quick Tips* book, available to Network Partners to order through our ordering system.

Davidson at adavidson@vtfoodbank.org.

Vermonters Feeding Vermonters

Through Vermonters Feeding Vermonters (VfV) grants, Vermont Foodbank network and community partners are awarded grant funding to purchase fresh Vermont grown produce, meat, dairy and eggs directly from local farmers. VfV leads to improved health for Vermonters facing hunger, security for farmers, a stronger Vermont economy, and a reduced environmental footprint. The VfV Mini Grant cycle occurs once a year, in the early months of the new year. With any questions, please contact the Associate Manager of Community Health Programs, Ruby Bertola, at rbertola@vtfoodbank.org.

VT Fresh

VT Fresh grants aim to increase access to, and the availability and consumption of, fruits and vegetables. These grants accomplish this by transforming food environments and distribution sites in a way that “nudges” visitors to choose produce. Vermont Foodbank network partners and VeggieVanGo sites are awarded funding or in-kind purchases for refrigeration, shelving, displays, cooking class materials, taste test supplies, home delivery support and more! The VT Fresh grant cycle occurs once a year, in the early months of the new year. With any questions, please contact Ruby Bertola at rbertola@vtfoodbank.org.



Agency Guidelines & Expectations of Partnership

The Foodbank is proud to provide many benefits of partnership for its network, and is committed to providing the highest level of service to NPs. Network partners are held to a high standard, and must adhere to the following guidelines to ensure that people accessing food may do so in the most clean, safe, and welcoming environments:

- Donated products will not be transferred in exchange for money, property or services.
- Donated products will not be transferred to other agencies or programs unless approved by VF and record keeping is in place to track transfers.
- Donated product is to be used in Vermont only.
- Donated products will be used only in a manner related to the exempt purposes of the organization which makes it tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.
- Donated product may never be used in connection with fundraisers or fundraising events.
- NPs are encouraged to fundraise; however, they may not require donations in exchange for meals, product, or the delivery of food. If the NP accepts voluntary contributions, it must be assured that the contributions are truly voluntary and anonymous. Customers must be able to make their donations in an inconspicuous and anonymous manner. NPs can neither keep records of which customers contribute, nor prohibit or discourage participation based on a customer's nonpayment. NPs that distribute TEFAP (USDA Foods) are prohibited from soliciting any voluntary contributions.
- NPs are required to participate in hunger surveys/research studies conducted by Feeding America and/or VF.
- NPs are required to handle donated goods safely, conforming to all local, state and federal regulations.
- NPs are required to maintain food in a safe and sanitary manner. Any violations that create imminent health hazards may result in the NP being placed on "hold" status, during which it shall be ineligible to receive product until it ensures correction of the deficiency and conditions that led to such. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that the site is free from rodents or insect infestations.

Dignity and respect are at the center of the Foodbank's mission. Ensuring that neighbors feel safe and autonomous while receiving food from network partners is crucial to increasing food security in Vermont. Keeping dignity and respect in mind, the following is expected from network partners:

- Network partners of the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. must not engage in discrimination, in the provision of service, against any person on the basis of race, color, citizenship, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disabilities, sexual orientation including gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran.
- Religious proselytizing, if any, is to be limited to a few words or prayer before a meal



or food distribution. Proselytizing cannot be discriminatory or onerous to the client. Disseminating religious material or requiring people to attend a religious service in order to participate in a meal or food distribution is prohibited.

- In programs where VF food is served, all participants will be treated with dignity and respect.
- NPs may not use subjective opinions or judgments of an individual's lifestyle or perceived economic status to determine worthiness of a customer's access to Vermont Foodbank products.
- These are the minimum expectations to create a safe and welcoming environment to neighbors. Learn how to build on this foundation of dignity and respect even further in the 'Best Practices' section of this handbook.

Throughout the fiscal year, network partners have responsibilities that are required in order to retain active network partnership status. The table below provides an overview of these requirements. For more detail, see the information below the table.

Network Partner Responsibilities

Requirement	Description	Frequency	NPs Contacted	In person/ remote	Information used for:
New Partner Orientation	All new NPs are required to attend a virtual orientation provided by VF.	One Time (for each key staff and volunteer, for new staff)	Email	Remote	NPs to familiarize themselves with VF policies, procedures, programs, and to learn how to use the online ordering system
Site Visits	VF staff visits NPs to check in, provide customer service, and offer general support to NPs, evaluate compliance with food safety practices and other requirements of VF partnership.	Biannually (Non-TEFAP) Annually (TEFAP)	Email	In person, at Network Partner site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Safety compliance • Support for NPs • Feeding America Requirement
Quarterly Reporting	NPs share the number of individuals and households served per month each quarter.	Quarterly 1/10, 4/10, 7/10, 10/10	Email	Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informs state/county level funding allocation for federal food assistance programs • Showcases trends and changes in need
Network Partnership Renewals	NPs update information and re-sign VF basic agreement.	Annually, July	Email	Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates to VF contact and billing database • Confirmation of eligibility for NP status • Renewing annual agreement
Annual Fees	For FY23, the fee structure is a \$75 flat rate for each network partner. Annual Fees are due each fiscal year.	Annually, beginning of Fiscal Year	Email	Remote	Maintaining network partnership status

Requirement	Description	Frequency	NPs Contacted	In person/ remote	Information used for:
Contact Updates	NPs must update VF on any contact information that changes in a timely manner.	Whenever changes occur to contact, billing, shopper, shipping information	NPs must contact VF via phone call, email, or letter.	Remote	Communications
Food Safety Training	All NPs must have the appropriate staff/volunteers trained through ServSafe or an equivalent Food Safety Training Service.	Pantries/Shelves: Food Handler for Food Banking (every 5 years) Meal Sites: Food Handler (every 3 years)	NPs are responsible for recertifying. Will be checked at site visits.	Remote (Online training)	Food Safety compliance

New Partner Orientations

All new network partners of the Vermont Foodbank, as well as new employees and volunteers of existing network partners, are expected to attend a virtual Orientation held by the Foodbank. A network partner's current highest authority, main contact, and primary shopper must attend. New Partner Orientation covers programs, benefits of partnership, requirements and expectations, an ordering/Agency Express tutorial, and more. Be sure to arrive with questions! To sign up for a New Partner Orientation, contact the Network Relations Manager.

Site Visits

Following an initial onsite visit of new network partners, each partner is visited at least biannually, with the exception of USDA approved partners, which will be visited annually. Agency site visits not only allow VF staff to ensure that proper food safety and storage practices are followed, but also serve as an opportunity for network partners to ask questions, request information and support. Network partners are **required** to participate in site visits, and are encouraged to use this opportunity to connect with VF staff and resources. The Vermont Foodbank, at its discretion, reserves the right to monitor any network partner agency more frequently and without prior notification. After a site visit is completed, a copy of the visit report will be emailed to the network partner. Any recommendations, requirements, or requests for information will be followed up on by Foodbank staff.

Quarterly Reporting

Quarterly Service Reports are required from every network partner and detail the number of unique individuals and households served by an agency per quarter. These reports are a primary reason that tracking the number of people served by your agency is required. The data gleaned from quarterly reports inform state and county level funding allocation for federal food assistance programs and, as a food security status indicator, helps the Foodbank and network partners understand changes in need. Quarterly reports are submitted via Survey Monkey each January 10, April 10, July 10, and October 10.

Network Partnership Renewals

Partnership with the Vermont Foodbank must be renewed annually. At the end of the fiscal year, all network partners will receive an email from the Network Relations Manager detailing the renewal process. Using an online form collector, each partner is required to sign the partnership agreement as well as to provide updated operations and contact information, and days/hours of operation.

Annual Fees

There is an annual fee of **\$75.00** for all network partners for FY2024. Invoices for your new annual fee are mailed to partners during or directly following the first quarter of the fiscal year. Invoices shall be paid within 30 days of receipt. NP accounts may be made inactive due to nonpayment. The Vermont Foodbank reserves the right, at its discretion, to make changes in the fee structure and will notify participating NPs no less than one month prior to the change. If you have any questions about your annual fee payment or invoices, please call (802) 477-4123.

Contact Updates

In order to develop and maintain a supportive relationship between the Vermont Foodbank and network partners, contact information must remain accurate. The Foodbank commits to updating network partners with any changes to Network Relations staff or contact information, and to share information such as food recalls, policy changes, and other shifts to operations. Network partners must inform the Foodbank of any changes to main contact names, email addresses, phone numbers, agency hours, or locations. This ensures that a line of communication to NPs is always available. Send updates to the Network Relations Manager at csugarman@vtfoodbank.org.

Food Safety

To operate a successful food shelf/pantry or meal site, food safety must be a top priority. Network partners are required to take food safety training courses tailored to the type of programs and services offered. Pantry staff and/or volunteers must be up to date on their training; VF staff will request current training status at agency site visits. The required online, self-led training programs are described in further detail in the 'Food Safety' section of this handbook. [Visit our website](#) for more details and to register.

Federal Food Programs: TEFAP & CSFP

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

To support American farmers and processors, the USDA purchases food with federal dollars that is distributed to populations in need through school nutrition programs, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and TEFAP. The Foodbank distributes TEFAP/USDA Foods to eligible food shelves and meal sites in Vermont.

Enrollment for Network Partners

NPs are encouraged to distribute or utilize USDA Foods, but must first contact the Network Relations Team to discuss eligibility. It is recommended that the person responsible for the USDA paperwork contact the Network Relations Manager at the Foodbank for an orientation or for help understanding the required paperwork and processes. Please keep this in mind when there are changes in your staff. NPs that distribute TEFAP/USDA Foods are **prohibited** from soliciting any voluntary contributions, and must follow additional record keeping and food safety requirements.

TEFAP Partner Requirements

All required forms for reporting can be found on the [Vermont Foodbank website](#).

- USDA monthly reports are to be filled out each month and kept on file at your site. If you did not distribute USDA during a particular month please indicate this on your report. **Keep a copy of all USDA records and reports for the three previous years plus the current year.**
- Please be sure to report the number of households that received USDA Foods and the amount of product distributed on your monthly report.
- USDA Foods Eligibility Forms are to be signed by recipients affirming that they meet the income guidelines for their household the first time that they receive USDA Foods from TEFAP during the period of eligibility. The period of eligibility runs July 1-June 30. These forms are to be kept on file at the agency for three years plus the current year. All files must be shredded after four years. No proof of need or income is required. Agencies are prohibited from asking applicants to undergo any means testing.
- Failure to maintain monthly USDA reports or maintain current signed eligibility forms may disqualify an agency from participating in the USDA program.
- All network partners who wish to distribute TEFAP must undergo annual civil rights training for all staff and volunteers.
- The [USDA Non-discrimination Statement](#) must be included in all public communications about TEFAP. Partners looking to participate in this program must also consider how to assist clients with limited English proficiency, and clients with disabilities.

Enrollment for Neighbors

Recipients of USDA Foods are required to self-declare their residency in Vermont, and their income as at or below 300% of the federal poverty level, although this income guideline is subject to change. **No proof of eligibility is required.** A signature on the eligibility form asserting self-declaration of eligibility is all that is needed. This form must be completed each year, and is updated annually by July 1st.

Recipients of USDA Foods from **meal site partners** are not required to sign the eligibility form to receive prepared TEFAP foods as part of their meal.

Feedback and complaints regarding USDA Food products may be voiced via email (USDAFoodsComplaints@usda.gov) or phone (1-800-446-6991) Monday through Friday from 6:00AM-5:00PM. Complaints or feedback should always include:

- Description of the problem
- Photo of the problem
- Any reported illness or injury
- Brand/Manufacturer name
- Numbers, codes, dates from packaging
- When the order was received

Food Storage and Labeling

In addition to following all requirements in the 'Food Safety' section of this handbook, NPs distributing USDA Food through TEFAP **must** store this food separately from the rest of inventory and clearly label it as USDA Food. This is required from both pantry and meal site partners. USDA Foods **may not be used as USDA Food past expiration dates**, but can be rotated into regular inventory (following TEFAP record keeping requirements and Vermont Foodbank food safety guidelines) once the expiration date has passed. Network partners distributing TEFAP must also keep regular temperature logs of refrigerator and freezer temperatures.

Site Visits for TEFAP Agencies

Agencies that receive and distribute TEFAP will be visited annually, as opposed to biannual site visits for partners that do not distribute TEFAP. At site visits, Vermont Foodbank staff will ask to see your agency's record keeping for the current year plus three years previous, separate storage and labeling of USDA food, and up to date regular temperature logs for fridges and freezers. Please note that a representative from the State of Vermont attends 10% of TEFAP partner site visits each year.



Please Note:

- As with any product from the Vermont Foodbank, food cannot be sold, exchanged for property or services, offered as barter, or used for fundraising. In addition, food cannot be taken by agency personnel or volunteers for personal or congregational use.
- Please only order the amount of USDA Food that your agency can reasonably distribute. Agencies are welcome to request more USDA foods or less USDA foods by contacting the Inventory Control Manager for an agency's regional distribution center.
- Stockpiling of foods is strictly prohibited.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program distributes monthly boxes of canned vegetables, fruits, proteins, shelf stable milk items, cereal, juice, and pasta or rice to Vermonters 60 years of age or older who meet income guidelines. Network partners may request to become a pick up site by contacting the Foodbank. Agencies that wish to operate as CSFP pick up sites must commit to obtaining signatures from clients and providing the required paperwork back to the Foodbank each month. Interested agencies should contact CSFP Coordinator, Patrick Gilbert at pgilbert@vtfoodbank.org for more information.

Food Safety

To operate a successful food shelf/pantry or meal site, food safety must be a top priority. Network partners are required to take food safety training courses tailored to the type of programs and services offered. Pantry staff and/or volunteers **must** be up to date on their training; VF staff will request current training status at agency site visits. The required online, self-led training programs are described below. Please [visit our website](#) for more details and to register.

For Pantry Partners: At least one representative from each network partner agency must complete the *ServSafe Food Handler Guide for Food Banking* training or equivalent and pass the exam associated with the program. The Foodbank recommends that the staff member or volunteer that holds the primary responsibility of managing the pantry receives the training, but it is best practice for all staff and volunteers who handle food to be trained. The Food Handler for Food Banking certificate is valid for 5 years. When trained representatives turn over/leave the organization, new staff or volunteers are onboarded, or the license expires, food safety training must be completed as soon as possible.

For Meal Site Partners: Any network partner that distributes or serves prepared meals is required to complete the *Servsafe Food Handler* training or equivalent and receive a certificate. The Food Handler certificate is valid for 3 years. Additionally, if your program utilizes food provided by the Vermont Foodbank to make meals that are served to the public or in residential programs, then all food service program staff are required to meet local commercial food safety standards as well as hold this ServSafe training. When trained representatives turn over/leave the organization, new staff or volunteers are onboarded, or the license expires, food safety training must be completed as soon as possible.

Food safety standards must be followed at every stage of food handling from pick up/delivery to storage and distribution. The following are food storage **requirements** for network partners:

- For pest control purposes, food must be removed from banana boxes and stored at least 6 inches off the floor and 4 inches from walls. Do not allow products to lean against walls. Distribution centers will gladly accept banana boxes back from network partners at their next pick up or delivery.
- Store laundry, cleaning supplies, personal care products or any other chemicals away from food items.
- Maintain adequate and consistent pest control.
- Check food items regularly and carefully to determine freshness. Please see the 'VF Fresh Rescue Donation Guidelines', "Prepared Meal Donation Decision Tree" and "Visual Donation Guidelines" in the Additional Resources section for further guidance.
- Distribute food as soon as possible after receiving. To help assure quality and freshness of food, the "First In–First Out" (FIFO) method should be used. Food should be stored and

distributed so that cases/products with the oldest received dates are used first.

- All storage areas including refrigerators and freezers **must** have calibrated thermometers and/or thermostats to ensure that food is being held at the proper temperatures.** Please check them regularly.
 - Refrigerator safety range: 32 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Freezer safety range: -10 to 0 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Ideal range for nonperishable storage area: 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit

**Partners that distribute TEFAP/USDA Foods must keep temperature logs as well. See the 'Federal Programs' section for more information. **

In addition to these storage requirements, NPs should adhere to the following food safety guidelines:

- Sanitize areas where food is stored and handled as well as the equipment that comes into contact with food. For example, all tables and surfaces in contact with food should be cleaned and sanitized before and after distribution.
- Incorporate information on food safety into volunteer orientations and trainings as relevant to the different volunteer positions at your site.
- Always wash hands for 20 seconds before, during and after handling food, after touching your face or cell phone, or any time you switch tasks. When hand washing is not possible, apply hand sanitizer.
- Sick staff and/or volunteers should stay home until they feel better.

Vehicle Food Safety

Food Safety is essential during the transportation of food. To eliminate contamination risks, vehicles transporting food must be clean and free from dirt, trash, and debris. Drivers must store food away from any personal items (such as drinks, medication, their own groceries or food, etc.). Chemicals including auto care products and household cleaning products (glass cleaner, upholstery cleaner, disinfecting wipes) must not be stored near food items. Pets are not allowed in the vehicle while transporting food. If your agency receives refrigerated or frozen product, cooling blankets, coolers, or other methods of keeping product within the required temperature ranges are recommended during transport. VF may be able to facilitate NP procurement of these temperature controlling resources. With inquiries, please contact Joshua Ellison at jellison@vtfoodbank.org.

Recalls

The Vermont Foodbank will notify network partners by email if there are any food recalls; always check your inventory and dispose of all recalled items. To maintain the safety of your agency and neighbors served, it is critical to update the Foodbank with any changes to main contact information, including email address and phone number.

Best Practices

Communications with the Foodbank

In order for the Foodbank to adequately support the network, staff must be able to contact network partners. Having correct and updated contact information for all NPs is essential to the Foodbank carrying out its mission. It is best practice to notify the Network Relations Team via email, phone call, and/or letter of any changes to your agency's main contact information *as soon as they happen*. With accurate information, the Foodbank can contact all network partners efficiently regarding recalls, orders, and urgent matters, as well as funding opportunities and other supportive programming.

Client Intake & Information Collection

How do network partners determine a potential client's eligibility to receive services? The Vermont Foodbank **highly encourages** NPs to remove burdensome client intake processes and instead allow clients to self-declare their need for food assistance. By operating under this best practice, **clients are not required to provide proof of need or income to receive food**.

While in some cases, such as federal nutrition assistance programs, identification and personal information are required for enrollment, individual network partners that are able to design low-barrier programs are encouraged to do so. Low barrier programs do not ask for identification, proof of income, current address, immigration status, or other personal information. Less personal information such as household size or county/town of residence may be useful and non-intrusive to collect, and often helps ensure that a client's needs are covered.

Food shelves/pantries, mealsites, and shelters often rely on outside funding to maintain operations. Often, this means that specific data reporting is required in exchange for funding. Programs that must collect private information due to funding or reporting requirements should do so in a private, separate area of their site and collect as minimal information as possible. In these instances, it is imperative to inform clients if and when their information may be shared, and with whom.

If your agency is unsure whether you are able to follow these recommendations, please connect with the Network Relations Team for a conversation about making your space more accessible, dignified, and welcoming. We are here to support you!

Home Delivery

When enrolling neighbors in a home delivery program, be sure to obtain consent to gather contact/delivery information, food preferences, allergies, or dietary restrictions, and helpful

notes for those delivering. Routes should be planned and grouped based on proximity of recipients and deliveries that can be filled by a single vehicle. Routes should be easily shared with all delivery drivers and home delivery personnel. Setting a consistent delivery window (i.e. Wednesdays between 12 and 2PM) will ensure that clients are available to receive food from your delivery program.

It is essential to maintain food safety standards while delivering. In addition to vehicle sanitation requirements, such as daily inspection records, there must be accurate documentation to show who had control of the product from the time it left the agency until the client received it. For food safety purposes, it is best practice to deliver shelf-stable items that do not require temperature control devices to neighbors.

Succession Planning

Succession Planning refers to the process of identifying potential future leaders at your agency and training them to fill key positions. This process ensures that NPs can continue serving the community even if a key leader(s) is absent. Succession planning benefits an agency by ensuring long term survival, improving commitment to mission and activities, and increasing current leaders' support system. NPs that do not have a succession plan run the risk of uncertainty and low morale for staff/volunteers, unprepared or unqualified leaders, and inability to serve community members in need. To start on your succession planning journey, see the Succession Planning Toolkit in the Additional Resources section of this handbook.

Wrap-Around Services

Wrap-around services refer to community resources that address needs that often come in tandem with emergency food, including (but not limited to) health; legal and financial guidance; housing, utility and furniture assistance; clothing and personal care; employment and education; immigration and language resources; and more. Pantries and mealsites can promote the use of wrap-around services using several strategies. Co-locating services, organizing visits from service providers, offering person-to-person assistance, and simply making information available are just a few strategies. Learn more in the 'Wrap-Around Services' section of the Manual of Best Practices for Food Pantries linked in the Additional Resources section of this handbook.

Welcoming, Dignified Spaces

Food shelves/pantries and meal sites are incredible community resources; creating a welcoming, dignified space in your agency is the first essential step in successfully serving the community. See the 'Dignified and Welcoming Environment' report in the Additional Resources section of this handbook for more information and recommendations for staff, volunteers, wait times, physical environment, experience, and food offerings to feel more

dignified and welcoming.

Client Choice

The client choice pantry model is promoted and prioritized by the Vermont Foodbank, and important to our mission to gather, nurture, and share food throughout the state in a dignified way. 'Client choice' refers to clients' ability to select their own food items when visiting a pantry/food shelf. This practice promotes dignity and respect within the food pantry environment by allowing and encouraging clients to access items that they want, need, and prefer, instead of receiving pre-packed, standard bags of groceries. Client choice models can vary in structure and level of choice, ranging from "None" to "Full". Refer to [The Choice Visual Library](#) to learn more about how these options may be possible for you and your pantry! When prompted, the password for access is "Choice".



Ordering & Receiving

Produce Ordering

NPs may order free produce from the Foodbank. If your agency would like to receive produce, send an email to Zach Miller, Inventory Control Manager, at zmiller@vtfoodbank.org asking to be put on the “produce email list” for Barre and Rutland distribution centers. Partners that receive food from the Brattleboro regional distribution center should contact the Production Coordinator, Blaze Trayhan at btrayhan@vtfoodbank.org. When produce is available for ordering, NPs on the list will receive an email listing the available types and quantities of produce; respond to this email with the desired produce for your agency and the items will be added onto your next pick up/delivery order.

Agency Express

Network partners place orders from the Foodbank using an online inventory/ordering system called Agency Express. All new network partners will see an ordering walkthrough at their New Partner Orientation. You must be registered with the Foodbank as a shopper to log into Agency Express. NPs may have multiple shoppers; if a partner agency wishes to add a new shopper at any time, contact the Network Relations Manager, Caleb Sugarman.

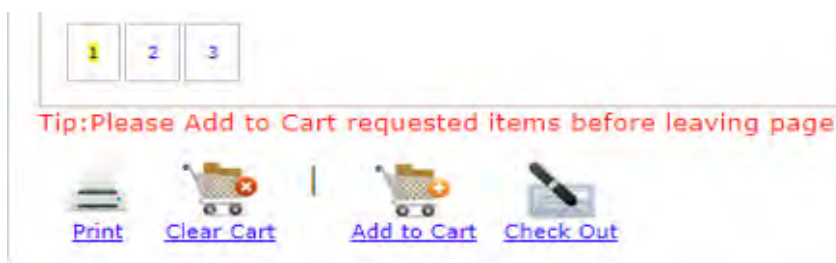
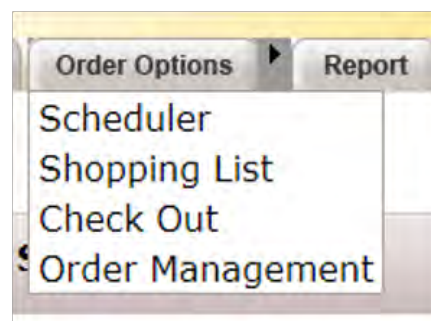
To access Agency Express, go to www.vtfoodbank.org and choose the ‘Network Partner Resources’ tab in the upper right corner of the screen. Choose ‘Order’ from the drop down menu, then ‘Order Now’ on the following screen. You will then be prompted to log in to Agency Express.



To log into Agency Express, a shopper must have their username, password, and agency number. Usernames are a shopper’s first and last name with a space in between. For example, shopper John Smith’s username will be “John Smith.” All passwords are automatically set as “change12”, but may be changed by the shopper after their first login. All agency numbers start with 0189pp, and finish with the five-digit agency numbers assigned to each network partner by the Foodbank.

NPs that **pick up** their orders at the Foodbank should begin by:

1. Click on the 'Order Options' tab and choose 'Scheduler'.
2. Select 'Pickup'. You will be prompted to select your day by clicking on the calendar, and the time you would like to pick up by clicking on the clock icon. After choosing your pick up date and time, click on 'Reserve'.
3. Go back to the top of the page, click on 'Order Options' and select 'Shopping List.'
4. Choose desired items and remember to **click on 'Add to Cart' before going to the next page of the shopping list** or your items will not be saved. Shoppers should be sure to note whether there is a fee associated with the product(s) being ordered at this time.



5. When you are all done shopping, click 'Check Out.' You are now at the Check Out Screen.

NPs that have their orders **delivered** to them should begin by:

1. Follow the 'Order Options' tab and select 'Shopping List.'
2. Choose items and remember to **click 'Add to Cart' before going to the next page of the shopping list** or your items will not be saved. Orders must be a minimum of 150 pounds for delivery.
3. When finished shopping, click 'Check Out'. You are now at the Check Out screen.

At the Check Out Screen

Under 'My Appointment':

Pickup agencies – select pickup, then the date and time you previously reserved

Delivery agencies – select delivery, then the date and time that is already reserved for you.

If you finished adding to your order, click '**Submit Cart**'. A message will say,

 A screenshot of the 'My Appointment' form. The form has a title 'My Appointment' in bold. Below the title, it shows 'Reference Number: PO4681041' in green. Then, it asks for 'Pickup/Delivery Date:' and 'Time:'. The 'Pickup/Delivery Date:' has a dropdown menu set to 'Pickup' and a date input field. The 'Time:' has a time input field with a clock icon. Below these is a 'Comment' section with a text area and a note: '(Please limit comment to 150 characters, no special characters (&, <, >, ", '). Anything over 150 characters will be cut off when PO is updated or submitted.)'.

“Do you want to Submit Your Order?” Click ‘OK’. A message will then inform you that your order was submitted successfully. Click ‘OK’ again. You will then be brought to the Order Management screen.

Please Note: Network partners that **pick up** their orders are responsible for bringing a vehicle that can hold their pickup products safely. NPs are advised to consider the capacity of the vehicle to be used to transport the items when placing orders for pickup. NPs should limit the order/pickup to the size and pound capability of the vehicle per the vehicle manual. The VF will not be responsible for damage to vehicles used by the NP to pickup and transport orders. Food safety must be considered when transporting product after pick up. All NPs that pick up at a VF facility or drop must comply with food safety rules while transporting the food and ensure the vehicle is clean and free of dangerous chemicals, pets and dirt. Orders must be verified with the VF driver and the NP at time of pick up. Any shortages or incorrect items received must be reported to the VF on the day of pickup. For food safety reasons, refrigerated or frozen items may only be returned at the time of pick up. Orders must be placed online at least 3 and a half business days, but no more than 15 calendar days, in advance of when you want to pick up your food. You must submit your order by 12:00 noon three and a half business days prior to your pick-up. Food will be accepted “as is” and stored properly. If the NP should receive spoiled product, it must be reported to VF within 24 hours in order for a credit to be issued

Please Note: NPs that order for **delivery** can place their order up to 15 calendar days before the delivery date, but no later than 3 and a half business days before the delivery date.

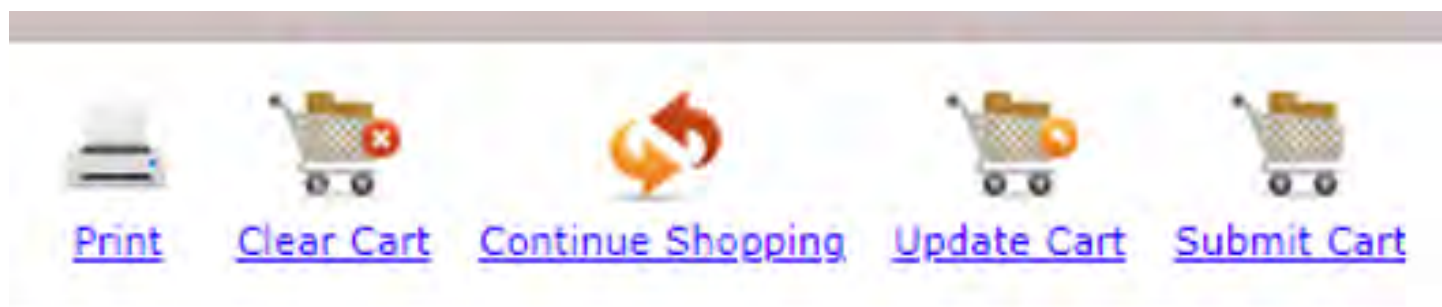
NPs who are eligible to have product delivered can expect to have deliveries made to the agency door. The delivery area must be safe, accessible and clear of debris, including snow. It is the responsibility of the NP to ensure that VF product is routed from the drop off point to the appropriate storage area in the agency. VF staff are not permitted to take product up or down the stairs. Orders must be verified with the VF driver and the NP at time of delivery. Any shortages or incorrect items received must be reported to the VF on the day of delivery. For food safety reasons, refrigerated or frozen items may only be returned at the time of delivery. Food will be accepted “as is” and stored properly. If the NP should receive spoiled product, it must be reported to VF within 24 hours in order for a credit to be issued.

Errors

If you receive a message on your screen saying that there is an error in your order, it may be because you did not reserve your date and time, or the quantities you have selected are no longer available. If this happens, you will get the following error message:

“Error Unable to add (item#). Available Quantity exceeded.”

Correct the quantity to match available quantity or delete highlighted lines. Then re-submit your purchase order. At this time, click OK, then review your order and adjust the quantities for items highlighted in yellow that have exceeded the available quantity. Either reduce the amount of the specific item, or delete the item by clicking the red 'X'. Be sure to update your cart, then click 'Submit Cart'.



If there are no errors in your order, a confirmation email will be sent to the email address of the username who placed the order. It is best practice to print your order from 'Order Management' after you have received the confirmation email.

Editing an Order



If you want to edit (change, add or subtract) an order you have until 12 noon, three and a half business days before your delivery or pick-up date. Please follow these steps:

1. Go to 'Order Management'.
2. Click on the pencil icon for the order that you have placed.
3. Click OK on the "You are editing a submitted order". All changes are subject to Foodbank approval. Please remember to submit the order once changes have been made."
4. Make any necessary changes to items. Be sure to click "Update Cart."
5. If you want to add items to your order, click the 'Continue Shopping' Icon on the right side of the page. This brings you to the shopping list. Add items to the cart as you normally would. When finished editing, proceed to check out.
6. Review your cart, then **submit**. There is no need to set an appointment while editing, you have already done so when first placing the order.

Agencies that receive TEFAP (USDA Foods)

To accept a TEFAP allocated order:

- Look for your Allocated order (AO) in Order Management. Status will say "Allocated".
- Click on the pencil.
- Click OK to accept "editing a submitted order".

	<u>Reference Number</u>	<u>Created By</u>	<u>Status</u>
 	AO165492		Allocated

Under My Appointment:

TEFAP Delivery Agencies:

- Select 'Delivery' (if you are a delivery agency).
- Date and time must be reconfirmed before submitting your allocated order. Click on the calendar and select the green date, then click on the clock and select the time.
- If you want all the items allocated to you at the listed quantities, then click Submit Cart. If not, see below.

TEFAP Pick Up Agencies:

- If you are a pickup, go back up to Order Options and select Schedule.
- Once you are in Scheduler, select your pickup date and time. Once reserved, click on Order Options and go back to check out.
- In Check Out, go to My Appointment, Select Pickup, click on calendar and pick the date highlighted, then click on clock and select time.
- If you want all the items allocated to you at the listed quantities, then click Submit Cart. If not, see the next section.
- Click OK to submit this Order. Once your order has been submitted, you will end up on the Order Management Screen.

To Change Quantities in an Allocated TEFAP Order:

- If you want to make changes to quantities allocated to you, you can reduce the quantity but cannot increase the quantity while ordering. Please note that after submitting an allocated order, you can call 802-477-4112 to request increases to your allocated quantity.
- Once you have made changes, click on Update Cart **before** Submitting Cart.
- You are only able to edit/change this type of order **one time** so please be sure before submitting.
- Click OK to submit this Order.

All orders should be checked by the recipient at delivery/pick up and any discrepancies must be noted by the driver on the Foodbank copy of the invoice. Questions on orders, invoices, delivery, and pick-ups should be directed to the regional distribution center of each agency. NPs that receive food from Barre or Rutland distribution centers should call (802) 477-4112; NPs that receive food from the Brattleboro distribution center should call (802) 246-0993. If we cannot answer your questions, we will forward you to the proper department.

Agency Draft Orders

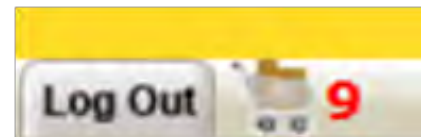
Draft orders can be seen on Order Management under the 'Status' column. If the draft order is not on the first page, look on the last page.

A draft order exists when the shopper tries to either log out or close their browser from any Agency Express screen without submitting their order (this also includes editing) they will receive this warning:

"You are leaving Agency Express and have not submitted your cart. The items will not be reserved unless the cart is submitted. Click OK if you still want to leave."

The shopper can click OK to continue logging out, or Cancel to stay on the screen.

When logging into Agency Express, a shopper may see a Cart Icon with a red number; this indicates a draft order. In most cases, the order is in 'Drafts' because there were insufficient quantities of a product in inventory. Shoppers can click on the Cart Icon and it will take the shopper directly to Check Out.



Items must be deleted to submit your order. This is done by clicking on the red X in the box that shows available quantity as "0" and updating the cart. Once complete, the shopper should enter the delivery or pick up date and time and submit the cart. If the calendar dates are no longer available for their delivery or pickup dates then the order must be canceled.

Payment

Network partners may choose to pay by agency check during pick-up, by individual invoice, or by monthly statement. Invoice payment is to be made in full within thirty days of the date of purchase or statement balance is to be paid in full by the 10th of the following month. **The Foodbank cannot accept personal checks or personal credit cards.**

Non-compliance with Basic Agreement

The Vermont Foodbank works with agencies in partnership with unity of purpose to gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships so that no one in Vermont will go hungry. While NPs do maintain autonomy in their work, requirements of partnership are outlined in the Basic Agreement and network partners are expected to comply in all areas. Whenever possible, VF will work with partners to assist them in coming into compliance without an interruption in service to them and, by extension, to their communities. However, there are times when a partner agency's account may be placed on hold or suspended.

Violations may include but are not limited to:

- Exchanging donated food or other products for money, property, or services.
- Any posting of signage that infers a “suggested donation” as part of food or meal distribution is strictly prohibited. Suggested donations for senior meals must be handled away from food distribution and kept anonymous. For further clarification, contact the Network Relations Department.
- Removal of donated food or other product from an agency for private use by agency's employees and/or volunteers.
- Using donated food or other products in a manner that is not related to the expressed purposes of the Vermont Foodbank, or that violates the VF food safety policies and procedures.
- Delinquency of payments. The Vermont Foodbank reserves the right to establish a cash on delivery (COD) policy for a network partner. This will be done in consultation with the network partner and the Foodbank will make the final determination.
- Donated food or other products that are improperly stored, refrigerated, transported or stockpiled.
- Inaccurate record keeping.
- Network partners violating any applicable state or local statute, ordinance, code, or regulation.
- Refusal by a network partner to allow a Foodbank representative to complete a monitoring visit, including an inability for Vermont Foodbank staff to contact a network partner to schedule a monitoring visit.

Probations

The purpose of the probationary period is to place an agency on notice that they must bring their program into compliance with Vermont Foodbank policies or face suspension. An agency may be placed on probation for a period not to exceed three months. Notification from the Vermont Foodbank of an agency's probationary status shall be in writing. An agency placed on probation will retain rights and privileges including shopping privileges of a network partner with a few minor exceptions:

- If probation is due to delinquency in payment the outstanding unpaid balance must be paid before an agency can receive food.
- Any violations that create imminent health hazards will result in the NP being placed on “**hold**” status, during which it shall be ineligible to receive product until it ensures correction of the deficiency and conditions that led to such. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that the site is free from rodents or insect infestations.
- Failure to maintain food safety training for key staff and/or volunteers. This will be done in consultation with the network partner and the Foodbank will make the final determination.
- Failure to respond to VF requests for a site visit. This will be done in consultation with the network partner and the Foodbank will make the final determination.

A participating network partner’s probationary status changes when one of the following occurs:

1. The Vermont Foodbank makes a written determination that the violation has been rectified.
2. The network partner does not rectify the violation and is suspended by the Vermont Foodbank. A probationary period may be extended at the discretion of the Vermont Foodbank.

Suspensions

Participating network partners may be suspended without first being placed on probation if found in serious violation and, after written notification, does not immediately rectify the violation. A serious violation is one that would result in an immediate threat to the health and safety of persons or property, or is a violation of state or federal health and safety laws or regulations. A suspended agency will receive written notification of the violations leading to the suspension, which shall not exceed six months. Conditions of suspension are as follows:

- Network partners will lose shopping privileges and all other rights and privileges of a Network partner agency.
- At the end of the suspension period, an agency may re-apply to become a network partner of the Foodbank.

Appeals

Network partners that wish to submit an appeal to the Vermont Foodbank regarding the terms of probation or suspension must do so via letter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Vermont Foodbank, ideally sent on official letterhead by the agency’s Director or Board Chairperson. Appeals will be reviewed internally. A response will be sent after a review period of no longer than 60 days.

Additional Programs

In addition to the collection and distribution of food and household items to NPs, the Vermont Foodbank offers many other programs designated to assist communities in providing nourishing food and serving targeted populations. By collaborating with communities, the Vermont Foodbank strives to improve food access and wellbeing. The programs highlighted below exemplify some of the ways we aim to achieve this goal. To learn more about these programs, visit our website at www.vtfoodbank.org and navigate to the 'What We Do' tabs.

VeggieVanGo (VVG)

VeggieVanGo, a Vermont Foodbank program, provides fresh produce to anyone looking to stretch their food budget. Every month VF trucks travel around Vermont delivering food to a variety of scheduled locations, the majority of which are hospitals or schools. Our truck arrives with large bins of thousands of pounds of fresh food to distribute with the help of our amazing volunteers. VVG is free, open to all individuals, and requires no registration or proof of identification.

VeggieVanGo+ (VVG+) is a school food pantry program that has been running since 2019. Inspired by the success of the VVG program, the concept of VVG+ is to create more permanent, dignified food access points within Vermont school partners. Fully stocked food pantries in schools allow teachers and school staff to send home snacks and meals with students with inconsistent access to food. The program builds on the success of VVG, and uses a program model designed to be flexible to meet the unique needs of each school community. To learn more about VVG and VVG+ visit our [VeggieVanGo webpage](#).



BackPack Program

Many children who receive meals through the National School Lunch Program are left without adequate nourishing food to eat on the weekends. The BackPack Program is a weekend feeding program of the Vermont Foodbank which attempts to fill this gap and reduce child

hunger. The program provides children who are at risk of hunger with a bag of kid-friendly, easy-to-prepare, and nutritious food every Friday throughout the school year. Guidance counselors, school nurses and other staff identify students in need and send permission slips home to their parents explaining the program. Approximately 1,350 youth receive backpacks each week through the Backpack program. To learn more about this program visit [our Backpack program webpage](#).

Community Kitchen Academy (CKA)

Community Kitchen Academy is a culinary job training program operated in partnership between the Vermont Foodbank, Capstone Community Action and Feeding Chittenden. Students develop the professional and interpersonal skills they need to find and retain employment in the hospitality industry. Meals prepared in the program are used to fight hunger in the community. A professional chef instructor teaches unemployed and underemployed individuals marketable skills that prepare them for sustainable careers in the food service industry, helping to break the cycle of poverty and hunger. Since 2009, more than 271 students have graduated from CKA, having produced and distributed more than 500,000 meal servings. Ninety-one percent of graduates have been successful in finding employment in the culinary industry. To learn more about the CKA job training program, please visit [our Community Kitchen Academy webpage](#).



Additional Resources

- Basic Member Agreement
- Food Rescue Donation Guidelines
- Fresh Rescue Donation Guidelines Appendix
- Prepared Meal Donations Information Sheet
- Client Choice Guide - Agency Version
- Succession Planning - Agency Version
- Creating a Dignified & Welcoming Environment in Food Pantries Information Sheet
- Wraparound Services Information Sheet



VERMONT FOODBANK, INC.

Basic Agreement 7/1/23- 6/30/24

In partnering with the Vermont Foodbank Inc. (VF), approved Network Partners (NP) then become part of a statewide affiliation with Vermont's only food bank as well as becoming a part of Feeding America. In signing this basic agreement, the Vermont Foodbank and its Network Partners agree to work toward and maintain a positive partnership with the vision of a Vermont where everyone has access to enough nourishing food every day, everyone takes action to eliminate hunger and poverty, and everyone has what they need to thrive

The Vermont Foodbank, Inc. and the approved nonprofit Network Partner:

[**Network Partner name** which is on the 501 (c)(3)] _____

Foodbank Network Partner Number # _____ agree to the following terms and conditions by which the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. will provide donated food, inspected under strict guidelines, to the above-noted network partner which, in turn, will use these foods in programs serving children, elderly, ill, homeless, or other community members in need.

NETWORK PARTNER (NP) TERMS OF AGREEMENT

1. Donated products will not be transferred in exchange for money, property or services.
2. Donated products will not be transferred to other agencies or programs unless approved by VF and record keeping is in place to track transfers. Donated product is to be used in Vermont only.
3. Donated products will be used only in a manner related to the exempt purposes of the organization which makes it tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.
4. Donated product may never be used in connection with fundraisers or fundraising events.
5. NPs are encouraged to fundraise; however, they may not *require* donations in exchange for meals, product, or the delivery of food. If the NP accepts voluntary contributions, it must be assured that the contributions are truly voluntary and anonymous. Customers must be able to make their donations in an inconspicuous and anonymous manner. NPs can neither keep records of which customers contribute, nor prohibit or discourage participation based on a customer's nonpayment. **NPs that distribute TEFAP (USDA Foods) are prohibited from soliciting any voluntary contributions.**
6. NPs who are eligible to have product delivered, can expect to have deliveries made to the agency door. The delivery area must be safe, accessible and clear of debris (including snow). It is the responsibility of the NP to ensure that VF product is routed from the drop-off point to the appropriate storage area in the agency. VF staff are not able to take product up or down the stairs.
7. Orders must be verified with the VF driver and the NP at time of delivery and/or pick-up. Any shortages or incorrect items received must be reported to the VF on the day of delivery and/or pick-up. For food safety reasons, **refrigerated or frozen items may only be returned at the time of delivery.**
8. Food will be accepted "as is" and stored properly. If the NP should receive spoiled product, it must be reported to VF within 24 hours in order for a credit to be issued.
9. Quarterly Service Reports will be completed by food shelves, emergency meal sites and shelters and submitted to VF each January 10, April 10, July 10, and October 10.
10. NPs are required to participate in hunger surveys/research studies conducted by Feeding America and/or VF.
11. NPs are required to handle donated goods safely, conforming to all local, state and federal regulations.
12. NPs are required to maintain food in a safe and sanitary manner. Any violations that create imminent health hazards will result in the NP being placed on "hold" (or "partial hold", as appropriate) status, during which it shall be ineligible to receive product until it ensures correction

of the deficiency and conditions that led to such. This includes, *but is not limited to*, ensuring that the site is free from rodents or insect infestations.

13. NPs that are picking up at a VF facility or drop must comply with food safety rules while transporting the food and ensure the vehicle is clean and free of dangerous chemicals, pets and dirt.
14. NPs are responsible for bringing a vehicle that can hold their pick-up products safely. NPs are advised to consider the capacity of the vehicle to be used to transport the items when placing orders for pick-up. NPs should limit the order/pick-up to the size and pound capability of the vehicle per the vehicle manual. The VF will not be responsible for damage to vehicles used by the NP to pick-up and transport orders. Food safety must be considered when transporting product after pick-up.
15. At least one representative from each NP agency of the VF must receive some form of food safety training. If the NP utilizes food provided by VF to make meals (on-site programs), their key food service program staff are required to meet local commercial food safety standards and be ServSafe Food Handler certified.
16. Religious proselytizing, if any, is to be limited to a few words or prayer before a meal or food distribution. Proselytizing cannot be discriminatory or onerous to the client. Disseminating religious material or requiring people to attend a religious service in order to participate in a meal or food distribution is prohibited.
17. In programs where VF food is served, all participants will be treated with dignity and respect.

PARTNERSHIP CONDITIONS

1. The original donor of donated products, the Vermont Foodbank Inc. and Feeding America are released by the Network Partner from any liabilities resulting from the donated goods.
2. The original donor of donated products, the Vermont Foodbank Inc. and Feeding America offer no express warranties in relation to the gift of goods and are held harmless from any claims or obligations in regard to the NP or the donated food.
3. By signing this agreement, the Network Partner hereby agrees to release the Vermont Foodbank Inc. from any liability resulting from the damage or injury to Network Partner property, employees or volunteers while on the premises of the Vermont Foodbank, Inc.
4. Network Partners of the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. must not engage in discrimination, in the provision of service, against any person on the basis of race, color, citizenship, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disabilities, sexual orientation including gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran.
5. NPs may not use subjective opinions or judgments of an individual's lifestyle or perceived economic status to determine worthiness of a customer's access to Vermont Foodbank, Inc. products.
6. Either party may terminate this agreement by notification in writing, no less than one month in advance.
7. The Vermont Foodbank, Inc. reserves the right to limit the amount and type of product available to any NPs.
8. NPs are willing to adhere to additional donor stipulations, as needed.
9. NPs will not violate any applicable state, local or federal statute, ordinance, code or regulation.
10. The parties hereby acknowledge that each is freely and voluntarily entering into this agreement.

MEMBERSHIP FEES and INVOICING: Each NP account is subject to a \$75 annual membership fee. This fee shall be paid within 30 days of receiving an invoice. All invoices shall be paid within 30 days from the date of invoice unless other arrangements are made with the VF. NP accounts may be made inactive due to non-payment. The Vermont Foodbank, Inc. reserves the right, at its discretion, to make changes in the fee structure and will notify participating NPs no less than one-month prior to the change.

MONITORING: The VF must conduct an on-site visit of each new NP, including multi-site programs, prior to approval. Once approved, each NP agency may be visited on or after its six-month anniversary.



Following the initial on-site visit(s), each NP will be visited at least bi-annually, with the exception of USDA approved NPs, which will be visited annually. A copy of the visit report will be emailed or mailed to the NP after the visit. From time to time, the VF may visit any NP more frequently and without prior notice.

VERMONT FOODBANK'S COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY

The Vermont Foodbank understands that systems of racism and oppression are at the root of inequities in health, hunger, and economic opportunity, and disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in this country and in Vermont. To remember the countless victims of hate crime, police violence and human rights violations, and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and all racial justice movements, we commit to:

- Educate ourselves deeply about anti-racism, especially within the food system.
- Center racial justice in all our work.
- Listen to and amplify voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our community and nationwide.
- Partner with groups/organizations working on racial justice and serving Black and Brown communities.
- Ensure the safety and comfort of marginalized communities in our distribution models.
- Change our internal systems and structures to dismantle systemic racism.
- Hold space to do this work authentically, and not for public praise.
- Broaden the circle and expand the conversation in Vermont around racism.

We ask that our Network Partners join us in this commitment.

NETWORK PARTNER COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

1. Create or participate in local Hunger Action Month activities as they are available.
2. Participate in regional meetings and conferences organized by the Vermont Foodbank.
3. Maintain email & internet capabilities for optimum communication and service.
4. Become involved in local community meetings around the issue of hunger.
5. Actively seek out local grant and other funding sources.
6. Display Vermont Foodbank logo in appropriate place, if possible.
7. Survey customers for service satisfaction and product needs.
8. Participate in Vermont Foodbank data collection and research around the issue of hunger in Vermont through research studies like the Hunger Study
9. Food shelves are expected to implement a customer choice method of distribution unless there are safety concerns such as during a pandemic.

VERMONT FOODBANK COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

1. Create and participate in Hunger Action Month activities.
2. Organize and participate in regional and statewide meetings and conferences.
3. Pursue and utilize optimum avenues of communication.
4. Assist Network Partners with capacity building.
5. Continue to visit and communicate with Network Partners to better understand their specific client needs.
6. Assist Network Partner food shelves in implementing and utilizing a customer choice method of food distribution.
7. Assist with fund and food raising projects as feasible and appropriate.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP

The benefits of Foodbank partnership to your donors, consumers, and communities are far more than just receiving food, they also include:



- Opportunity for grant funding for equipment (computers, refrigerators, freezers, pallet jacks, etc.);
- Training and technical assistance;
- Assistance with infrastructure, operational assistance;
- Other grant opportunities (i.e. pass through grants for food, Capacity Fund, VFV Mini Grant, VT Fresh Mini Grant);
- Participation in nationally recognized programs;
- Educational opportunities like the annual Hunger Conference.
- Participation in the low-cost Cooperative Buying Program;
- Networking with other anti-hunger organizations;
- Publicity and media support (PR through the Foodbank on radio, website, etc.).

PROBATION AND/OR SUSPENSION POLICY FOR NETWORK PARTNERS:

Probation

A participating Network Partner may be placed on probation for a period not to exceed three months if found to be in violation of terms and conditions in this agreement. Notification of any alleged violation must be in writing from the Vermont Foodbank to the Network Partner. The Chief Executive Officer of the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. has authority to place Network Partners on probation. The Network Partner may appeal its probationary status to the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. by delivering such appeal, in writing, to the Chief Executive Officer. The purpose of the probationary period is to place a Network Partner on notice that it must bring its program into compliance or it will be suspended. During the probationary period, the Network Partner retains all rights and privileges. If the violation is not rectified by the end of the probationary period, the Network Partner may be suspended. The Network Partner may appeal this decision as previously outlined. A participating Network Partner's probationary status terminates when one of the following occurs:

1. The Vermont Foodbank, Inc. makes a written determination that the violation has been rectified.
2. The Network Partner does not rectify the violation and is suspended by the Vermont Foodbank.

A probationary period may be extended at the discretion of the Vermont Foodbank, Inc.

Suspension

A participating Network Partner may be suspended without first being placed on probation if found in serious violation and, after written notification, does not immediately rectify the violation. A serious violation is one that would result in an immediate threat to the health and safety of persons or property, or is a violation of state or federal health and safety laws or regulations. All other violations must be preceded by a probationary period before suspension. Only the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. Chief Executive Officer has the authority to suspend Network Partners. A suspension shall be in writing and shall not exceed six months. Upon suspension, a network partner loses all rights and privileges to obtain product from the Vermont Foodbank. At the end of the suspension period a Network Partner may reapply to become a participating Network Partner of the Vermont Foodbank, Inc. and must certify to the Foodbank that the problem leading to suspension will not recur.

I have read, understand and agree to the terms outlined in this agreement.

Executive or Program Director's signature Date

Christine K. Meehan, Chief Community Impact Officer,
Vermont Foodbank, Inc.

Executive or Program Director's name (please print)



FRESH RESCUE

DONATION GUIDELINES

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

While individual donors ultimately decide what is eligible to be donated from their brand, this document is intended to be used as a visual guide when preparing donation to ensure that all food is donated with dignity and is safe to consume. Discarding food that does not meet the following criteria is not a waste; you are protecting people.

All donated food must:

1) Be in its original packaging, with no loss of sanitary barrier and must be packed in clean banana boxes, i.e no clear or black trash bags, boxes used to store chemical, or boxes that were used to store raw meat.

ACCEPTABLE



UNACCEPTABLE



2) Contain a label with the product's name, full list of ingredients, code date (expiration, use-by, sell-by etc.)

ACCEPTABLE



UNACCEPTABLE



Some food items may be donated past the code date. Please see the attached document for further guidance on what items the Vermont Foodbank can distribute past the code date.

CANNED GOODS

ACCEPTABLE

- Minor dents
- All items must have their full ingredient label
- Safety seal must be intact
- Dented beverage cans



UNACCEPTABLE

- Dents on seal
- Metal touching metal/ crimped over
- Puffy, bulging
- Rust
- Missing label
- Leaking
- Severely dented



DRY GROCERY

ACCEPTABLE

- Outer packaging damaged with inner seal intact
- Crushed top of plastic jugs (seal must be intact)
- Cosmetic Damage
- Individual units taped back to original packaging, containing label



UNACCEPTABLE

- Open or ripped bag that has been taped
- Open box with no inner seal (ie pasta)
- Missing/no ingredient label
- Jars missing inner seal



BREAD, BAKERY & PASTRIES

ACCEPTABLE

- Cosmetic damage
- Items approaching or just past best-by date
- Bread, pastries and other items with full packaging, label and no mold



UNACCEPTABLE

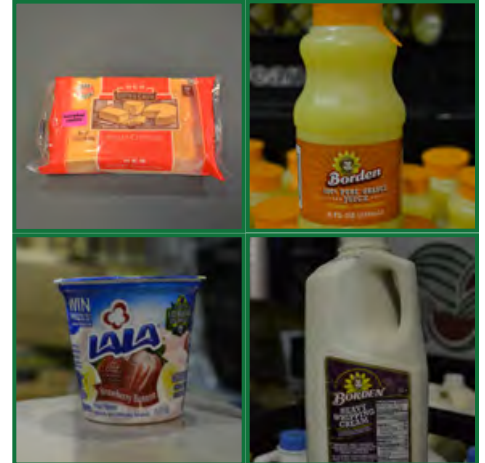
- No packaging/ open packaging (open-ended baguettes, self-serve bulk rolls, etc.)
- Open or torn packaging
- Mold, decay or crushed
- Missing/no ingredient label
- Items left outside for pick-up



DAIRY

ACCEPTABLE

- Discard broken eggs and donate any unbroken eggs
- Refrigerated juices, dips, sauces, etc
- Milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, etc
- Cosmetic damage



UNACCEPTABLE

- Open, leaking
- Broken seal
- Puffy, bulging
- Missing/no ingredient label
- Items left out of temperature



PRODUCE

ACCEPTABLE

- Minor bruises
- Superficial spots
- Slightly green oranges
- Small sprouts

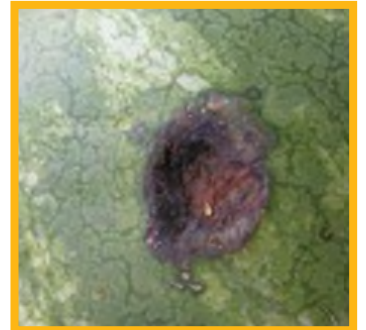


- Slight speckling
- Odd shapes
- Minor spots on surface
- Some brown at base



UNACCEPTABLE

- Overripe
- Rot
- Green potatoes (solanine)
- Decay



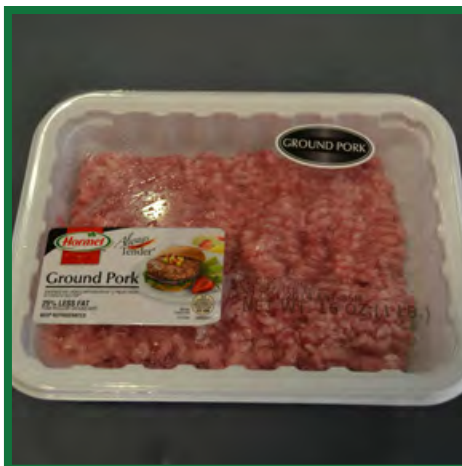
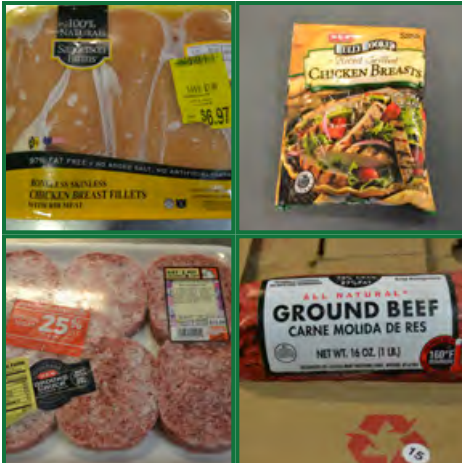
- Wilted leaves
- Mold
- Chill damage
- Puffy/bulging packages



FROZEN MEAT & SEAFOOD

ACCEPTABLE

- Frozen fish or seafood
- Outer packaging damaged with inner seal intact
- Lunch meat, hot dogs, other deli items
- All beef, chicken, pork and turkey products
- All items from frozen department (pizzas, frozen vegetables, etc.)



1 ALL PROTEIN MUST BE FROZEN ON OR BEFORE THE USE-BY DATE 1

UNACCEPTABLE

- Marrow bones, suet



- Open or exposed



- Leaking



- Discolored



- Discolored



- Discolored



- Missing/no ingredient label



- Items not frozen



- Freezer burn



- Loosened vacuum seal



- Puffy/bulging



- Uncooked fish or seafood



UNACCEPTED ITEMS

The Vermont Foodbank does not accept the following items:

- Explosives
- Lighters
- Charcoal
- Matches
- Lighter fuel
- Charcoal lighter
- Alcohol
- CBD products
- Kombucha
- Home-canned/pickled products
- Cough medicines/medicines containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine
- Products containing Olestra
- Wild Game

SHELF LIFE GUIDELINES

While inspecting donations for quality assurance, it is important to check the dates or codes on the packaging. These dates are commonly misunderstood as “expiration dates,” a date that signifies the item is no longer safe to eat. This is in fact not true for most items. Many non-perishable items are safe to eat long after the date on their packaging, and the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods can be extended if they are handled properly. Baby food and formula and over-the-counter medications are the only items that are required by federal law to have an actual expiration date.

Here are explanations of different code dating you may see on food packages:

Expiration Date- (“Expires 1/1/11”, “Do not use after 1/1/11”)

- Look for it on: Baby food and formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, baking powder.
- What it means: Do not distribute or consume infant formula, baby food, vitamins or medicines after the expiration date! Yeast and baking powder work less effectively after expiration, but are still safe to eat.

Sell By Date – (“Sell by 1/1/11”, also called “Pull Date”)

- Look for it on: Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes.
- What it means: This tells the store how long to display the product for sale. If the food has been handled properly, it may still be safe to eat past this date.

Use By or Quality Date – (“Best if used by 1/1/11” or “Use before 1/1/11”)

- Look for it on: Crackers, cookies, cereals, canned goods, and other dry, shelf stable foods.
- What it means: This date is the manufacturer’s recommendation for how long the food will be at peak quality. After the quality date, the food is still safe to eat but slowly begins to lose nutrients and the quality begins to lessen.

Pack Date or Coded Date – (“Packed on 1/1/11”, “A70319R 23:16”)

- Look for it on: Canned food, crackers, cookies, spices, and other dry shelf-stable foods.
- What it means: These dates represent the date on which the food was packaged or processed for sale. They are not intended for consumers but rather are used by manufacturers and retailers to track inventory, rotate food on shelves, and locate items in case of a recall. Since dates are printed at the manufacturer’s discretion, their meanings may be different for each product line, and therefore be difficult to decipher. Usually this food is safe to eat for a long time past the date, as long as the packaging is not damaged.

The suggested shelf life (how long an item is considered “good” past the code date) varies drastically from product to product, even between similar types of items. For example, some shelf-stable items can be kept for 3-5 years past the date, while others might only be good for 1 month after the date. Below is a condensed list of the most commonly donated products with guidelines about shelf

life after the code date. It is important to remember that these guidelines are in fact just that – guidelines! They are primarily intended to ensure quality, not safety. The product should be safe as long as the product has been properly handled and stored, and does not have significant damage. The timeframes listed are for product that has been properly handled, stored, and remains un-opened. The following should be used for training staff and volunteers who will be inspecting donations. Please refer to [The Food Keeper](#) brochure, website, or app available for more specific items' recommended shelf lives.

	Food Item	Shelf Life After Code Date
	SHELF STABLE	
	canned goods (low acidity)*	3 years
	canned goods (high acidity)**	18 months
	dry beans, rice, pasta, ramen	2 years
	boxed/bagged goods - cereal, crackers, mixes, etc.	1 year
	saucers, condiments, dressings	1 year
	beverages	1 year
	chips	2 months
	mayonnaise/cream based items	3 months
	baby food/adult formula	discard after date
	FROZEN	
	all assorted meats/poultry	2 months
	fruit, vegetables	6 months
	ice cream	2 months
	DAIRY/COOLER	
	juice	3 weeks
	milk	1 week
	cheese	1 week (soft) 1 month (hard)
	eggs	3 weeks
	yogurt, sour cream, dips	2 weeks
	salsa, pesto	discard after date
	hummus	1 week
	prepared dishes or meals	3 days
	salads	3 days
	PRODUCE	
	packaged produce (bagged lettuce, etc.)	Discard if moldy, has a slimy look/feel, or is overly soft or discolored
	cut produce	Discard if moldy, has a slimy look/feel, or is overly soft or discolored
	BREAD/PASTRY	
	fresh	4 days
	frozen	1 month
	containing cream	throw away if not kept refrigerated/frozen

Appendix 2

Vermont Foodbank – Fresh Rescue Donation Guidelines

We want your excess or unmarketable food, **NOT your waste.**

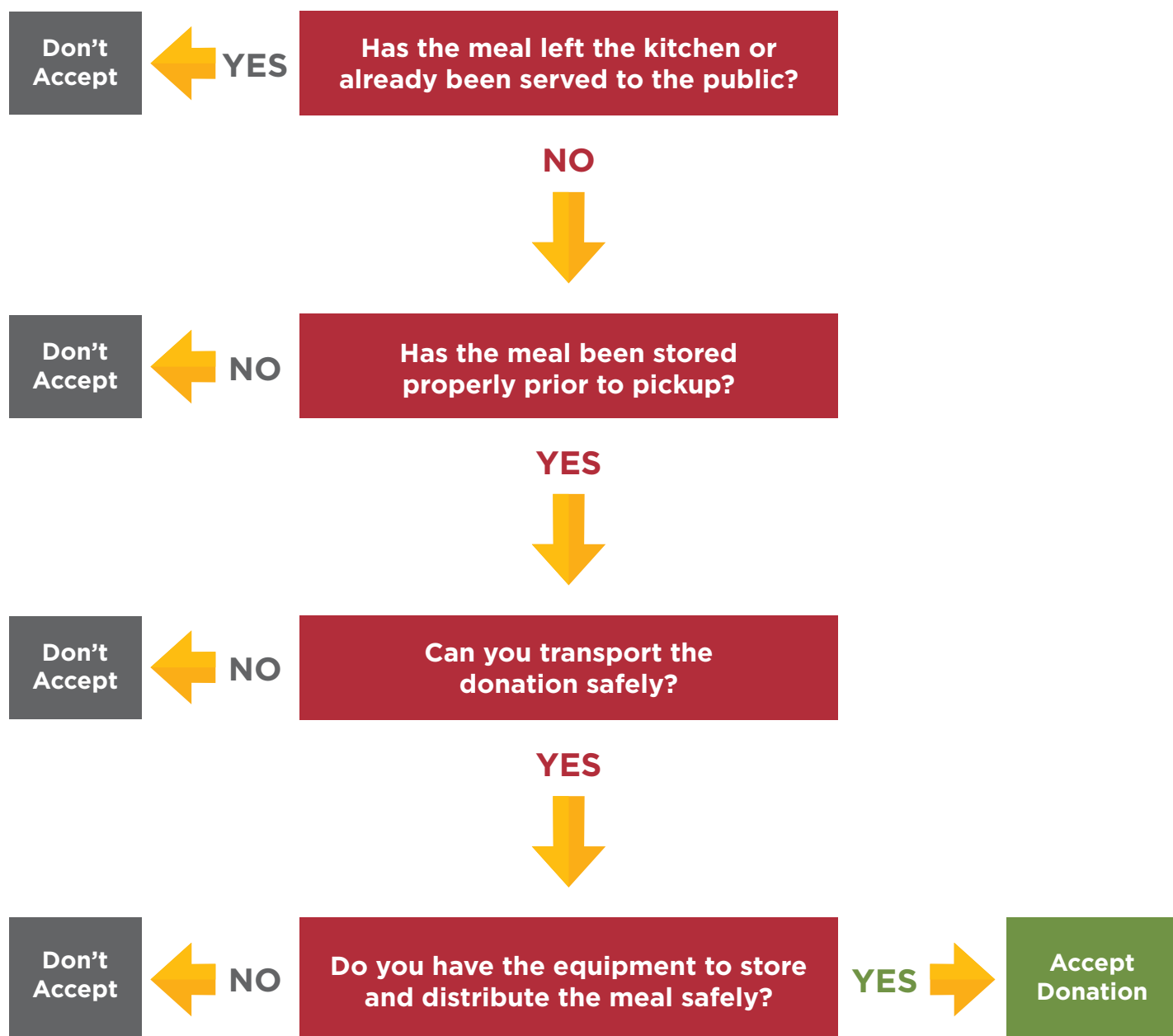
PRODUCT	PACKAGING	STORAGE	UNNACCEPTABLE
Deli Prepared Salads	Separated by Product, securely closed to avoid spillage, Marked with Product Ingredients	Chilled to 40°F or less. DO NOT Freeze.	Mixed Product in the Same Container, Temperature Abused, Spoiled DO NOT Freeze.
Deli Sandwiches, pickles	Clear Plastic Containers, Securely Closed, Marked with Product Ingredients	Chilled to 40°F or less DO NOT Freeze	Stale, hard, soggy bread. DO NOT Freeze.
Bread	Packaged gently in clear plastic bags	Cool, dry area	Stale, hard, moldy, or crushed
Pastries	Packed in clear plastic bags, avoid crumbling	Cool, dry area	Stale, hard, moldy, or crushed
Prepackaged Foods	Manufacturers Original Packaging	Chilled to 40°F or less	Opened, punctured, or damaged packaging
Frozen Foods	Manufacturers Original Packaging	Frozen to 0°F or less	Defrosted, freezer burned, or punctured packaging
Fluid Dairy Products	Manufacturers Original Packaging	Refrigerated at ALL times to 40°F or less	Cannot accept past code. Damaged packaging or temperature abused
Soft dairy (Yogurt, cream cheese etc.)	Manufactures Original Packaging	Refrigerated at ALL times to 40°F or less	Damaged packaging or temperature abused
Hard Cheese	Manufactures Original Packaging	Refrigerated at ALL times to 40°F or less	Mold, damaged packaging or temperature abused
Meat, Poultry MUST BE FROZEN	Manufactures Original Packaging, Separated into Different Boxes by Species	Frozen On or Before Code Date & Stored to 0°F or less at ALL times	Defrosted, freezer burned, punctured container, temperature abused or not frozen on code date
Fresh Produce (whole)	Packaged Separately From Other Foods, Bulk Items in Clear Plastic Bags	Cool dry area	Significant decay including: mold, rotting, over ripe, squishy
Fresh Produce (chopped)	Separated by Product, securely closed to avoid spillage, Marked with Product Ingredients	Chilled to 40°F or less	Discoloration or significant decay, Combined with other Product
Fish/Seafood	Manufacturers Original Packaging	Frozen to 0°F or less	We cannot accept fresh fish, seafood or sushi

The Vermont Foodbank Reserves the Right to Refuse Any Product Where Food Safety is in Question.



PREPARED MEAL DONATIONS

I WANT TO TAKE A PREPARED MEAL DONATION





PREPARED MEAL DONATIONS

PREPARED MEAL DONATIONS INCLUDE

- Large pan of a meal
- Individual portions of a meal
- Bag of soup

STORAGE AND SAFETY PRIOR TO PICKUP

- Food can never leave the kitchen
- Food can never have been served to the public
- Food must be completely wrapped
- List of ingredients must be included
- Must have donation date on the packaging
- Must have name of donor on the packaging
- Meal is cooled quickly if previously held hot
- Thawed meals must be kept in a refrigerator at 41°F or below
- Frozen meals must be kept in a freezer at 0°F or below
- Meals must be kept off the floor

CODE DATE REQUIREMENTS

IF MEAL IS GIVEN FROZEN, KEEP IT FROZEN	IF THE MEAL IS GIVEN THAWED, KEEP IT THAWED	BAKED GOODS
Can last up to 3 months	Can last up to 3 days	3-5 days (if not moldy)

TRANSPORTATION OF DONATION

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- Truck with a refrigerator unit capable of keeping product at or below 41°F at all times
- Truck with a freezer capable of keeping product at or below 0°F at all times
- Cooler filled with ice at all times
- Commercial-grade insulated blanket that covers entire product

STORAGE AND REDISTRIBUTION OF MEALS

- Thawed meals must be kept in a refrigerator at 41°F or below
- Frozen meals must be kept in a freezer at 0°F or below
- If meal is donated thawed but will not be used within 3 days, the meal must be put in a freezer
- Meals must be kept off the floor
- If product is donated in large quantities and you have access to a soup kitchen, serve that meal immediately; soup kitchen will need a stove or microwave to reheat
- If meal is donated in large quantities, it can be re-portioned and repackaged, then distributed to families to eat off-site
- Need repackaging equipment if repackaging meal
- Need a safe and clean space to repack

Questions? Contact your local Feeding America food bank.



MealConnect™ **FEEDING AMERICA**

Client Choice

Agency Version

CLIENT CHOICE TOOLKIT

DEVELOPED BY



PURPOSE

Client choice programs incorporate the ability for neighbors to choose their food. From offering a select number of options to a full-scale grocery store experience, there is a way for partners of any size to utilize a choice model.

This brief guide shares learnings from food banks to assist partner agencies in implementing client choice programs.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Elements of a successful program
- Benefits of offering choice
- Client choice tips
- Client choice practices
- Relaunching choice models

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM?

A successful program is one in which clients have some level of choice in their food selection and have a welcoming, judgement-free experience during their visit.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF OFFERING CHOICE?

- **Serve with dignity:** Offering choice is a core component of serving with dignity, which is a primary goal of the Feeding America network and agency partners who receive product from food banks.
- **Less food waste:** When clients are able to choose what they need, want, and have the appropriate tools to prepare, less food may be wasted or unused by those who receive it.
- **Better accommodate special diets:** Clients who have health conditions - diabetes, chronic kidney/heart disease, or celiac disease, for example - are required to follow specific diets to manage their conditions. A choice model may allow those clients to more closely align with any dietary restrictions and their personal health requirements.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF OFFERING CHOICE? - *continued*

- **Offer culturally appropriate foods:** Many religions incorporate dietary tenets - e.g., avoiding pork, restricting dairy, coffee, or tea, or following a vegetarian diet - that are important to large populations of neighbors. Specific cultural practices may also mean that some foods will have more utility than others that may not be traditionally incorporated into diets.
- **Volunteer hours can be spent interacting with clients:** Packing fewer boxes in advance just requires a shift in volunteer work, not necessarily more volunteers. Volunteers can stock shelves and assist clients with their selections, enhancing the neighbor experience.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“People only take what they need. There’s a misconception that people take more, but they want there to be food for the next person. You will distribute less food, because people take what they want. We never had any agency go back. Once they change, we hear that they wish they had started earlier. Everyone feels good about people making their own choices. Everyone appreciates being able to offer that.”



- Sue Estee, Second Harvest North Central Food Bank, Grand Rapids, MN


WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS? WHERE DO WE START?

- Some level of choice can be offered in all settings: mobile pantries, set-up/tear down shelves, drive-through distribution, home delivery, even with largely pre-packed models.
- Although one end of the continuum is a grocery store model, in which clients shop with a cart and select options similar to the local market, all programs start somewhere. If beginning, consider adding one or two choices to regular distribution. Fresh items may be a good place to start, if available.
- Many partners who have limited space begin with a choice table, or “swap table”, where clients may select between items, or exchange an item they received for something that better suits their needs.

“Agencies don’t have to have a full set up. You can do choice in a closet. Consider setting up your shelving differently, guiding the flow of traffic, a checklist for the drive-through, even just one choice of meat with a packed bag.”

- Emily Alt & Kate Long, Maryland Food Bank, Baltimore

TIP



Some of the most effective partners have eliminated their check-out practices. If you still need to have a check-out process to track poundage, for example, don't use it to cross-check or restrict quantities, as that may have the effect of clients feeling like they are being monitored while making their selections.

CLIENT CHOICE PRACTICES

- ➔ A **simple list** can be an extremely effective tool for beginning or intermediary choice models. When clients enter the drive-through line, or participate in the intake process, they are given a list with their choices for that visit to complete and hand back to the staff member/volunteer. Remember to allow for multiple families in the same vehicle/visit.
- ➔ **Limits:** If hesitant about offering unlimited choice, many agencies still guide clients to select quantities according to household size. Provide a handout and post guidelines on tables/shelves.
- ➔ **Share flexible recipes:** Recipes that can be modified to accommodate different types of grains or vegetables will be most useful to clients who may choose whole-grain pasta over brown rice, for example. Recipes are also helpful when encouraging selection of a new or healthier item, or an item you have in abundance.
- ➔ **Collect feedback:** Give clients the option to share feedback you can use in evaluating how effective new programs are. You can use a post-visit survey if you have contact information, QR code on a handout, or a listening session with a select group. Make sure the feedback method is easy and that comments or scores can be tied to the specific services you would like to measure.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We do a choice model with our drive-through. They get a list when they get in the queue, and we have a shopper who puts it together and takes it out to their car. We asked our clients, and they like ability to choose with car pick up. They’re a little more anonymous in the car. More privacy.”



- Brandy Love, Food Bank of Northern Indiana, South Bend, IN

CLIENT CHOICE—*continued*

CLIENT CHOICE PRACTICES - continued

- Those who already offer choice and want to grow may find a pantry logistics consultation with their agency relations partner helpful. The food bank staff may be able to offer suggestions on shelving, flow, and other storage solutions.
- If you are excited about offering choice, or expanding your existing program, contact your food bank for assistance. They can provide guidance and support.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We give people a shopping cart and a suggested list; they can get the amount they want. We opened access to the amount of visits and no longer check out people. We noticed at first, families did stock up a bit, but now they understand that they can come back whenever they want and get what they need.”



- Jennifer Belisle, Channel One Regional Food Bank, Rochester, MN

RELAUNCHING CHOICE MODELS

Many food banks and partner agencies scaled back or temporarily halted their choice models as a result of safety precautions implemented during the pandemic. Choice can still be accommodated in any model, even amidst these challenges, and returning to full-scale client choice is important when safe to do so.

Hybrid Distribution Models where an agency deploys both client choice and curbside, delivery and/or drive thru options offers flexibility for meeting your neighbor and community needs.

Succession Planning

Agency Version

AGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING TOOLKIT

DEVELOPED BY



PURPOSE

Succession planning can be challenging for volunteer-run partner agencies, but it is a critical practice to ensure that there are no gaps or delays in distribution of food to neighbors.

This brief guide shares learnings from food banks to assist partner agencies in implementing succession planning best practices.

This resource is for partner agencies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- What is succession planning?
- Why is succession planning important?
- Initial checklist
- Succession planning practices
- Continuity and evaluation
- Emergency measures

WHAT IS SUCCESSION PLANNING?

Succession planning is a process to prepare your agency for a smooth transition in planned or unplanned/emergency leadership changes, whether long-term or temporary.

WHY IS SUCCESSION PLANNING IMPORTANT?

- **Best serve clients:** If only one person is equipped to run your agency - with the knowledge or physical components (i.e., keys) to do the job - clients will be negatively impacted if/when that person is unavailable for any reason and food cannot be distributed.
- **Communication with the food bank:** The food bank may need to communicate time-sensitive messages to you, for example if a truck is delayed or delivery items have changed. This chain of communication is more effective when multiple people have a relationship and modes of contact with food bank staff.
- **Long-term viability:** Bringing more people into your agency and its processes only serves to grow capacity and create natural leaders to sustain the agency's mission into the future. A shared allocation of tasks can also ease the administrative burden that is often carried by one person.
- **Sound nonprofit business practice:** When readiness is a core organizational system, rather than an ad hoc process, the agency is better prepared to meet the legal requirements of its nonprofit charter/articles of incorporation.

SUCCESSION PLANNING PRACTICES

- ➔ **Create a list of key operational processes:**
Draft a simple list of operational practices that are important to the mission and how often they are completed. Don't forget to include tasks that occur less frequently, such as tax filings or quarterly reports to the food bank. List the level of coverage (lead and back-up) for each key area, and then prioritize the practices by those that are critical to access to food; the ability to order food and open the pantry or kitchen are two examples. This will help identify any holes, or areas of limited coverage, to begin to address.
- ➔ **Document systems:** Once a list is made and prioritized, you can begin to note important processes in a central location so that others have a reference to consult when needed. This can be a daunting task, but don't feel pressured to do everything at once; steady progress is good progress.
- ➔ **Encourage others to be involved:** Although consolidating tasks may be easier, it is healthier for the agency to have multiple people with institutional knowledge to carry out the mission. Bring a core group into the fold on prioritized list items to share work, become familiar with processes, and further the legacy of founding members.
- ➔ **Clarify roles:** There may be cases in which a secondary contact is identified and asked to serve strictly in emergencies. There may be others in which the "back up" can take more of a lead role as preparations for long-term transition are made. Be certain these roles are clear when asking people to serve in these functions to avoid confusion later.


INITIAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Identify at least one back up**
Neighbors rely on your agency for food, so there should be at least one additional person who can ensure that your agency is still able to operate if the lead volunteer/staff person is indisposed. For many agencies, it is helpful to default to the board chair or chair-elect to serve in that role; for others it may be a co-founder or other long-term volunteer. The benefit to having a board member in this role is that as positions rotate each term, more than one director will become familiar with operating procedures, which both ensures sustainability and that the board is aware of the current succession plan.
- ☐ **Confirm accessibility in case of emergency**
No one can be totally prepared for an accident or a natural disaster. In an emergency, though, more than one person should have the tools they need to access the agency, including keys to the building and any other locked function (i.e., mail), as well as codes or passwords to necessary protected accounts. The agency should also have more than one trusted person who can access organizational banking systems (multiple approvals may be appropriate for withdrawal).
- ☐ **Communicate with your food bank partner**
The agency relations professional at the food bank can support succession planning efforts by including the secondary contact(s) in trainings or meetings and on key emails.

CONTINUITY AND EVALUATION

- **Evaluate and confirm annually:** Consult the list of priority operational tasks, secondary contacts, and progress toward documenting systems on an annual basis. Make sure all information is still accurate and current and identify any succession planning goals for the coming year. This may be helpful to do in conjunction with the beginning of the calendar year or fiscal year.
- **Cross-check for atypical change:** The agency may have added or decreased services in the prior year, or additional compliance measures and processes may have been implemented. Double check that new functions have the same level of coverage as long-standing tasks.
- **Communicate any updates:** Share any changes with your board and food bank partner, especially if a change impacts information included in agency contracts.

TIP



It may be helpful to attempt to answer a few questions as a temperature check each time you evaluate your current succession plan:

- What would happen if I/the person in our lead role was absent for three months? How would that impact our ability to distribute food?
- Who else could serve in the lead role if necessary? If only one person or none can be called upon, more work must be done to increase coverage.

EMERGENCY MEASURES

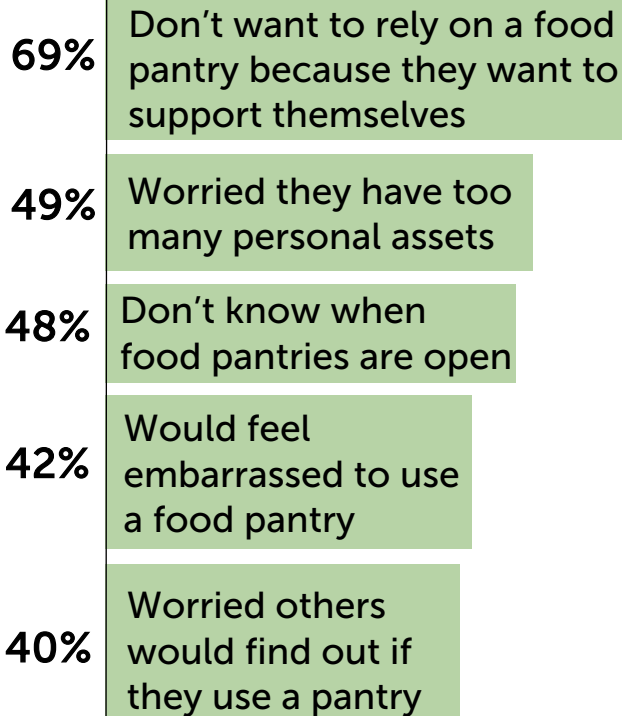
While the focus of this resource is on taking proactive steps to set succession plans in motion, it isn't always the case that these plans are fully developed when an urgent need for them arises. In this situation, there are a few emergency measures to take:

- Notify other lead volunteers, board, and your food bank partner to activate an “all hands-on deck” approach to coverage. Or simply coordinate with one other person to share with these entities. You may have a phone tree or email listserv already in place for communicating across these groups.
- Arrange pick up of any necessary keys, and share important codes, passwords, or contact information.
- Focus on short-term priorities first: ensuring food is available and opening the pantry for the next client distribution.

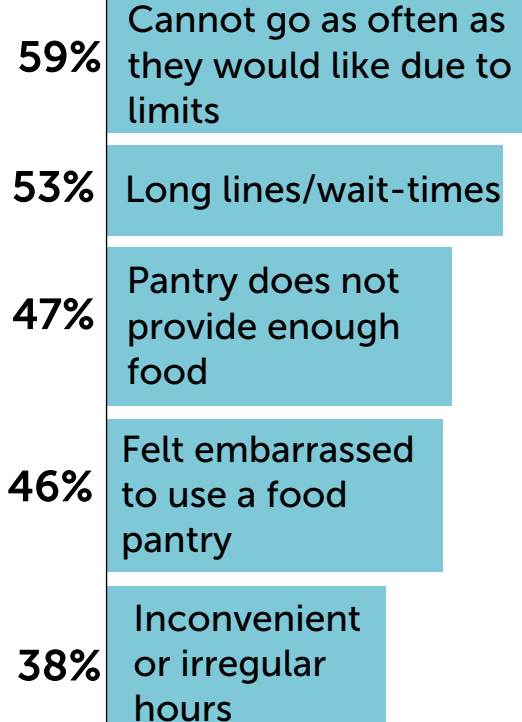
Creating a Dignified & Welcoming Environment in Food Pantries

We surveyed over 1,000 Connecticut residents to ask about their challenges with getting enough food one year after the COVID-19 pandemic began. While people appreciate receiving charitable food, we found that our neighbors have many concerns about using food pantries and face barriers to receiving food from pantries.

Concerns about Using Pantries



Experiences while Using Pantries



93% of pantry users would recommend food pantries to others in need of help getting food, and 83% say the pantry made them feel welcome.

Who is more likely to worry others would find out if they used a food pantry?



Higher Income

Households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more are **almost 2x more likely**.



Higher Education

People who attended some college or more are **almost 2x more likely**.



Younger

People 34 or younger are **about 1.5x more likely**.



Anxious or Depressed

People who scored higher on an anxiety and depression scale are **over 1.5x more likely**.



Recommendations

- To reduce the stigma of using food pantries, it's important to use empowering and person-centered language. Instead of "client," we suggest "customer," "guest," or "neighbor." Instead of "feeding the hungry," we suggest "providing food for people who need it."
- Promote your program on social media and through community news outlets and let people know that all are welcome.
- To prevent embarrassment, avoid having guests wait in line. Consider appointment times or using a lottery system.

Who is more likely to worry about the paperwork required to enroll in pantries?



Anxious or Depressed

People who scored higher on an anxiety and depression scale are **3x more likely**.



Hispanic

Hispanic people are **over 2x more likely** than white respondents.



Younger

People 34 or younger are **over 1.5x more likely**.



Recommendations

- Minimize paperwork to avoid discouraging people from visiting.
- If you receive food from government sources, consult with your food bank to learn about the most up-to-date guidance on what information guests are required to provide.
- When asking guests to fill out paperwork, be sure to clarify the required fields and communicate how the information will be used.

Who is more likely to say they'd be embarrassed to use a food pantry?



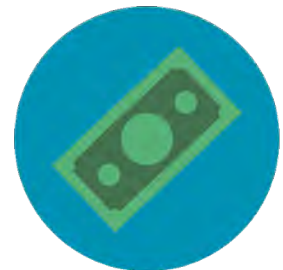
Higher Education

People who attended some college or more are **over 1.5x more likely**.



Anxious or Depressed

People who scored higher on an anxiety and depression scale are **1.5x more likely**.



Higher Income

Households making over \$75,000 are **almost 1.75x more likely**.

How do people of color experience food pantries differently?



One in three people of color (33%) report experiencing discrimination when visiting a food pantry.

- Hispanics are the racial and ethnic group most likely to express concerns that they would experience discrimination if they visited a food pantry, and Black respondents were the racial and ethnic group least likely to report this concern.
- 44% of Hispanic pantry-goers report experiencing discrimination while at the food pantry, compared to 6% of white respondents.

Pantry staff doesn't speak their language

Almost a quarter of people of color (24%), including almost 1/3 of Hispanic respondents (32%), report that pantry staff doesn't speak their language, compared to 4% of white respondents.



Given food they don't know how to prepare

People of color are **over 4x more likely** than white respondents to say the pantry gives them food they don't know how to prepare, with 41% of respondents of color reporting this.



Recommendations

- Engage with your guests to create a culture where all voices are heard and respected, and use guest input to inform program changes.
- Commit to prioritizing guest experience over volunteer tradition or convenience.
- Set up a committee of diverse staff, volunteers, and guests to create equity, diversity, and inclusion policies for your program.
- Engage with local experts in diversity, equity, and inclusion to facilitate conversations about structural racism with staff and volunteers and emphasize the connection between racism, trauma, and poverty.



Recommendations

Volunteers and Staff



- Emphasize the importance of customer service.
- Assign a volunteer to welcome and greet guests.
- Develop a group of volunteers and staff that culturally reflect your community.
- Promote trauma-informed care and an organizational culture of trust and transparency.

Wait Times



- To avoid lines, provide guests with appointment times and comfortable places to wait for their turn to shop.
- Display pantry procedures to inform new guests and communicate any changes clearly.
- Expand days and hours of operation to allow more time to shop.

Physical Environment



- Pick out bright colors as well as artwork and wall décor that is culturally representative of your community.
- Hang signage with pictures and in multiple languages.
- Create a bulletin board of additional resources, inspirational quotes, and client success stories.

Shopping Experience



- Use tables, shelving, and glass-front refrigerators to organize your pantry like a grocery store.
- Allow guests to select their own food.
- Encourage volunteers to build personal connections with guests while helping them shop and navigate the pantry.

Food Offerings



- Consult with guests to learn which foods they prefer.
- When ordering from your food bank, consider what items would be most culturally relevant to your patrons based on their feedback.
- Provide recipe cards or preparation instructions for foods that may be unfamiliar to guests.

Appendix

About the Survey

In April and May 2021, the Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions at Connecticut Foodshare surveyed over 1,000 people from all eight Connecticut counties with the goal of understanding changing food access during the COVID-19 crisis. We asked questions about food insecurity, food program use, and the food pantry experience. This study was conducted in collaboration with the National Food Access and COVID Research Team, a group of researchers around the country dedicated to better understanding food systems during this pandemic. You can read more from our series of reports at foodshare.org/institute or learn more about the project at nfactresearch.org.

Study Notes & Definitions

- The survey targeted low-income households and people of color in order to reach the people most at risk for experiencing food insecurity. Statistical methods were then used to adjust the data to be representative of Connecticut's population.
- **People of color:** Any respondent who identified as Asian, Black, Native American, or Hispanic.
- **Anxious or depressed:** Respondents who answered positively to screening questions for generalized anxiety disorder or major depressive disorder.

To learn more about creating a welcoming environment, promoting dignity, and reducing barriers to food access in your food pantry or program, visit foodshare.org/institute or email Brittney Cavaliere, Program Manager, at bcavaliere@ctfoodshare.org.

In partnership with:



With generous funding from:



WRAPAROUND SERVICES

PANTRIES CAN GO BEYOND FOOD

Wraparound services are the community resources and social services available to address needs beyond emergency food. By connecting clients to these resources, pantries can address the multi-faceted needs of their clients more effectively. Since food insecurity is a symptom of poverty or crisis rather than an isolated need, almost all pantry clients have needs beyond their immediate food needs.

There are many government programs and nonprofit organizations designed to address the needs of families in poverty or crisis, but people need exposure and education in order to utilize those services. If there are so many existing services, why do needs go unmet? The primary reasons are:

- People don't know these services exist.
- People assume they wouldn't qualify for the services.
- People have barriers to applying or learning more.

Food pantries have a unique opportunity to connect with diverse groups of people in need of assistance. Using this opportunity to promote other resources can help clients gain stability in their lives and even address the root causes of their food insecurity. The following includes strategies for promoting wraparound services in the pantry, as well as a list of resources that might be of use to your clients. Implementing these strategies can have a huge return on investment. If your pantry is not ready to promote wraparound services, consider at least referring

clients to 211. As a 24/7, free, confidential referral service, 211 can connect your clients to the services they need.

INDIANA 2-1-1

GET CONNECTED. GET ANSWERS.



PHONE
2-1-1



ONLINE
IN211.ORG



TWITTER
@IN211INFO



TEXT
YOUR ZIPCODE
TO 898-211



INSTAGRAM
@IN211INFO



FACEBOOK
@IN211

PROMOTING WRAPAROUND SERVICES

There are a few ways for pantries to promote wraparound services. Consider implementing one or more of these strategies:

1. **Co-locate services** so that another social service is always available in the same location as the food pantry. For example, the Gleaners Community Cupboard has a St. Vincent health clinic, the St. Vincent de Paul Client Choice Pantry has a legal services area, and the Noblesville Community Cupboard shares a building with the Goodwill Excel Center, which offers HSE classes.
2. **Organize visits from service providers** to offer services or information during pantry times. Services could include blood pressure screenings, mobile dental clinics, free tax preparations, or SNAP enrollment. Organizations could also provide brochures about off-site services.

PROVIDING NON-FOOD ITEMS

The concept of wraparound services is centered on the idea that pantry clients often need help with more than food, and helping clients find the support they need will help stabilize clients and ideally, help them move toward self-



Hunger Inc. Food Pantry offers diapers and toilet paper to clients.

sufficiency. One easy way pantries can help meet other needs in clients' lives is by providing non-food items in the pantry. SNAP doesn't cover toilet paper, dish soap, or other necessary non-food items. Some pantries offer hygiene items, clothing, furniture, and pet food. It could benefit your clients to provide a list of some of the pantries that provide these items, if you don't stock them onsite.



The Community Cupboard of Lawrence offers personal hygiene and household cleaning products.

3. **Offer person-to-person assistance** to connect clients with relevant services. Some pantries have volunteers, staff members, or social workers who are trained to talk about available resources.
4. **Make printed information available** for clients about a variety of different local resources. These resources could be on a table, brochure rack, bulletin board, or digital display.



Vineyard Care Center posts information on community events, resources, and jobs in their waiting room.

HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT SERVICES

The following are good sources of information on available wraparound services:

- [Community Compass](#)
- [Indiana 211](#)
- [CHIP Handbook of Help](#)
- [Vineyard Care Center Google drive](#)
- Community meetings

WHERE TO START

Deciding Which Services to Promote

The next few pages outline commonly needed resources. A list like this can be overwhelming, but remember that it's not necessary to connect your clients to every resource listed. Instead, find ways to promote the resources that are most relevant to your clients and that your pantry is capable of promoting. Here are some questions to consider:

- Have you surveyed your clients to learn

which services they're interested in?

- What connections do you have within your congregation or neighborhood?

COMMONLY NEEDED RESOURCES

Food

- **Community Compass.** Community Compass connects people to food resources using a mobile app, chatbot, texting, and Facebook Messenger. This resource also screens people for SNAP and WIC eligibility and refers them to the closest place to apply. For more information and marketing materials, see [IHN's Community Compass webpage](#).
- **Free cooking and nutrition classes.** [Cooking Matters](#) is a cooking and nutrition education program offered by Indy Hunger Network through Share Our Strength that equips people who have limited budgets with the skills to shop for and cook healthy meals. For information about classes, contact msonger@indyhunger.org.
- **Referrals to other food pantries.** Many clients would benefit from knowing about pantries that are more conveniently located for them, or additional pantries they can visit to increase their food supply. Generally, clients will need the location, hours, required documents, eligibility requirements, and a phone number for the pantry. Information about pantries can be found through Community Compass, 211, or IHN's Food Pantry Network meetings.
- **Information and enrollment assistance for federal nutrition programs.** Helping an eligible client enroll in SNAP or WIC is one of the fastest and most effective ways to address ongoing food needs. Clients would benefit from receiving information on what

these programs are, who is eligible, and how to apply. See [the FSSA website](#) for more information on SNAP, and your clients can learn more about WIC through [Marion County WIC's informational brochure](#). Screening clients for SNAP and WIC eligibility can be done using Community



Community Compass is available through the App Store and Google Play. You can also talk to the chatbot by texting "hi" to 317-434-3758.

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Compass. Because the application forms for SNAP are complicated and some clients have language or comprehension barriers, it can be a huge help to assist clients in filling out these applications. Volunteers can be trained and given permission to do this. See Hunger Free America's [SNAP Outreach Toolkit](#) for information on recruiting and training volunteers for SNAP outreach. You can also invite a representative from the SNAP Outreach Program at Gleaners to your pantry by emailing rigordon@gleaners.org or visiting Gleaners Food Bank's [SNAP Outreach webpage](#).

- **Information on free summer meals.** Summer Servings provides free meals and snacks during the summer to anyone under 18 at nearly 100 sites across Indianapolis. For information, see the Department of Education's [Summer Food Service Program webpage](#).
- **Referrals to hot meal sites.** There are many organizations that offer free meals to the public. Clients could benefit from information about the sites nearest your pantry. If you don't know where the nearest sites are, use 211 or Community Compass.
- **Information on nutrition incentive programs.** Many farmers markets offer matching programs for SNAP and WIC as well as Senior Shopping Days. Visit the [Fresh Bucks website](#) to learn about local incentive programs and [CICOA's Farmers Market Vouchers](#) webpage for information on senior markets.

Health

- **Insurance information and enrollment assistance** with government health insurance options, including Medicaid, Hoosier Healthwise, the Healthy Indiana Plan. For more information, see the [overview of medical options for the uninsured](#) compiled by Indiana Legal Services.
- **Information on sliding scale or low-cost clinics.** Find information on specific centers using this [list of Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) in Indianapolis.
- **Mental health and addiction resources**, including treatment programs, support groups, and naloxone training. Specific sites and resources can be found using the CHIP Handbook of Help or 211.
- **Health screenings onsite**, for example, blood pressure checks and pre-diabetes screenings.
- **Information on free STI and HIV testing.**
- **Community health fairs.** Specific events can be found using 211 or in community meetings.

Legal & Financial Guidance

- **Indiana Legal Services** offers free civil legal assistance to low-income people in Indiana. ILS helps clients who have legal problems that decrease their ability to meet basic needs; ILS does not handle any criminal cases. Your clients might be particularly interested in the SNAP appeals program. For information on this program, see [ILS's brochure on appeals](#). For general information on ILS, see [the ILS website](#).
- **Indianapolis Legal Aid Society** offers free legal assistance to low-income people in Indiana. Legal issues are frequently related to housing, guardianship, adoption, and family law. For information, contact Legal Aid at 317-635-9538 or visit [Legal Aid's website](#).
- **Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic** offers criminal record expungement, license reinstatement, and immigration law assistance. For information, see the [Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic's website](#).
- **The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA)** offers free income tax preparation to qualified individuals. For information, see the information compiled by the IRS on [free tax preparation](#).
- **Budgeting and personal finance classes** organized by the pantry or other community organizations. Local community centers (e.g. the John H. Boner Community Center) frequently offer financial classes or programs.

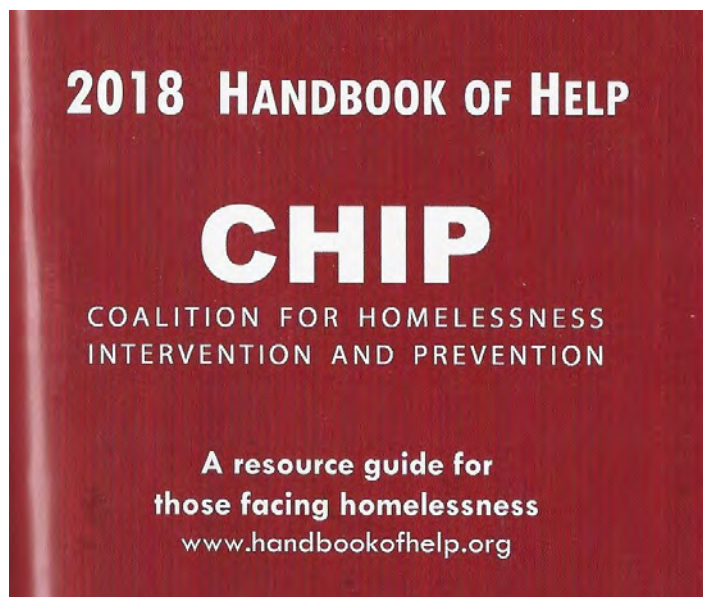
TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

Township trustees can distribute aid and connect residents to resources. To learn about the requirements for receiving assistance, contact your local trustee.

- Center - 863 Massachusetts Ave. | 317-633-3610
- Decatur - 5410 S. High School Rd. | 317-856-6600
- Franklin - 6231 S. Arlington Ave. | 317-780-1700
- Lawrence - 4455 McCoy St. | 317-890-0011
- Perry - 4925 Shelby St. | 317-788-4815
- Pike - 5665 Lafayette Rd. | 317-291-5801
- Washington - 5302 Keystone Ave. | 317-327-8800
- Warren - 501 N. Post Rd. | 317-327- 8947
- Wayne - 5401 W. Washington St. | 317-241-4191

Housing, Utility, & Furniture Assistance

- **Subsidized housing programs.** For an overview of these resources, see ILS's [brochure on subsidized housing](#).
- **List of nearby pantries with household items.** Pantries can be found through 211 and IHN's pantry meetings.
- **Information on applying for household items** through St. Vincent de Paul. Clients can use SVdP's [online form](#) to apply.
- **Information on the Energy Assistance Plan**, which can help low-income residents keep their utilities on and paid for during the winter.
- **Free smoke detectors** through the Indianapolis Fire Department. Clients can use the [online Smoke Alarm Request Form](#) to apply.
- **For clients experiencing homelessness**, offer CHIP's Handbook of Help and information on local homeless shelters. Connect homeless veterans to HVAF of Indiana.
- **List of organizations offering rent and financial assistance**, including referrals to the Township Trustee office.



The Handbook of Help has information on services for people facing homelessness, but many of the resources are helpful for any low-income people. Order booklets by contacting info@chipindy.org, or view the digital handbook at <http://www.handbookofhelp.org>.

Resources for Seniors

- **CICOA** is the Area Agency on Aging for Central Indiana, and as such, is the go-to resource for services available to seniors. Among other programs,

CICOA offers delivered and congregate meals. Learn more on [CICOA's website](#).

- **Meals on Wheels**, a program of Partners in Nutrition, offers delivered meals and a pantry to seniors. Learn more on the [Meals on Wheels website](#).
- **Senior shopping days** are pantry hours specifically for seniors. Several pantries offer these opportunities. Use Community Compass or 211 for more information.
- **The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** is a free program that connects clients to resources that can help them pay for Medicare costs. For information, visit the [SHIP website](#).
- **Informational brochures** on topics relevant to seniors, including healthcare options and housing, are available on the [Senior Informational Brochures page](#) of the ILS website.

Clothing & Personal Care

- **List of pantries with clothing and hygiene items.** Nearby pantries can be found through 211 and IHN's pantry meetings.
- **Changing Footprints** supplies free shoes to food pantries. For information, see the [Changing Footprints website](#).

Seasonal Assistance

- **Holiday programs**, including hot meals, meal ingredient boxes, and gift programs are provided by many organizations. If your pantry does not offer these programs, connect clients to organizations that do. Find details through 211.
- **Back-to-school assistance.** Indianapolis hosts several back-to-school events to equip students with school supplies. Some food pantries and community centers also offer additional assistance during this time. Use 211 for event information.

Domestic Violence

- **24/7 helpline** available at 317-920-9320.
- **Emergency shelters**, such as [the Julian Center](#) are available for victims of domestic violence.
- **Residential and support programs.** [The Julian Center](#) offers multiple resources.
- **Information on federal assistance** for domestic violence victims who need financial help is available on ILS's [brochure about TANF and Domestic Violence](#).

Employment & Educational Resources

- **Second Helpings** has a culinary job training program. For information, visit the [Second Helpings website](#).
- **HSE/GED classes.** Call 211 or connect with local community centers to locate nearby classes.
- **Job training programs.** For information, see the [Department of Workforce Development website](#).
- **Wage claim information.** For information, see ILS's [brochure on wage claims](#).

Resources for Veterans

- **HVAF of Indiana** houses, supports, and advocates for veterans and their families. For information, visit the [HVAF website](#).
- **The Military Assistance Project (MAP)** assists low-income military members, veterans, and family members with legal cases. For information, see ILS's [MAP webpage](#).

Immigration & Language Resources

- **Exodus Refugee Immigration** provides education, employment training, health services, and more to newcomers from 90 days up to 5 years after arrival in the U.S. For information, see [Exodus Refugee's website](#).
- **La Plaza** offers educational programs, workforce development support, and access to healthcare and human services for Spanish-speaking families. For information, see [La Plaza's website](#).
- **Immigrant Welcome Center** organizes multiple programs for immigrants, including legal services and citizenship workshops. For information, see the [Immigrant Welcome center's website](#).

Children & Parents

- **Car seats** are available for free from the Indianapolis Fire Department. To apply, use IFD's [online application form](#).
- **Diapers, formula, and baby food** can be made available in the pantry. Make sure no baby items are expired! If your pantry does not stock these items,

provide information on nearby pantries that do. [Maternity Outreach Ministry \(M.O.M.\) House](#) is one example.

- **Information on low-cost daycare** and Head Start programs. See information on childcare at [Childcare Answers](#) and information on Head Start from [Family Development Services](#).
- **WIC and Summer Servings** (see Food, above)
- **The Villages** offers community services to families, such as casework, counseling, and parent education. For information, see [the Villages website](#).
- **The Children's Bureau** empowers families with support and resources to prevent issues that lead to entry into the child welfare system and works with families to be able to keep their children who are in the system. For information, visit [the Children's Bureau website](#).

Pets

- **List of pet food pantries.** Use 211 to find nearby locations.
- **Information on free or low-cost vet services.** For a list of options, see the [Indy Pit Crew website](#).

EXPANDING WRAPAROUND SERVICES

The above list does not include all available resources but provides an idea of the types of services and information pantries could offer. If you're looking for a place to start, try focusing on federal nutrition programs and other food resources. Once your pantry is comfortable with those categories, you can expand your promotion of wraparound services in a few ways:

- Ask your clients what resources they need access to or information about.
- Offer resources in which your clients have already expressed interest.
- Offer resources based on the season (e.g. tax help in the winter).