

Tips for Running a Successful Food/Item Drive

Get Organized

Find a partner. Choose a local agency recipient for the food drive. Unless you have predetermined the items you want to collect, work with them to determine what needs you can address with your food/item drive.

Make it easy to give. Provide grocery bags for food donations. Offer the option of giving food, items, cash, or check. Identify drop-off sites. Consider offering more than one site if your company is large or has multiple locations.

Communicate Clearly

Educate everyone about the issue you are addressing, and its impact in the community. If people understand the importance of food drives, they will be more motivated to give. Many pantries receive donations during the holidays, but they also need food at other times of the year, especially in the spring and summer months.

Set a goal. If this is the first food drive you are holding, pick a goal that is challenging, yet achievable. If you have held previous food drives, consider increasing your goal this year. Be sure to post information about the food drive in a prominent location and report daily contributions towards reaching the goal.

Pick a theme or catchy slogan.

Theme examples:

- Baby needs
- Seniors needs
- School supplies
- “Chili Fixin’s Food Drive”
- Chicken soup food drive
- Ethnic food items (Asian, Latino, etc)

Slogan Examples:

- “Pack it In”
- “Clean Up with Hygiene Items!”
- “Book Worms”
- “Squeaky Clean”
- “Baby Basics”
- “Worldwide Fixin’s”

Thank your donors. Communicate final results and express thanks to participants - in employee newsletters, or on your intranet or website.

Provide Incentives

Organize contests: Friendly competitions can be arranged between different departments at your organization. Offer prizes (coupons for free lunches or a vacation day) to the team that brings in the most donations.



Suggested Food Drive Items to Collect

Most Needed Items

Non-perishable food

- Complete meals: whole grain pasta & sauce, boxed meals, hearty soups, stews
- Fruits, vegetables: canned fruits and vegetables, 100 percent fruit juice, instant potatoes, fruit preserves
- Grains: rice, cereal
- Meats, fish, protein: canned tuna, ham or chicken, beef stew, chili peanut butter, canned/dried beans

REMEMBER: Keep it healthy! Try to stick to whole grains, low sodium, and lean meats

Hygiene products - deodorant, soap, toilet paper, tissue, shampoo, feminine hygiene products (tampons & pads), razors, shaving cream, toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, hand/body lotion, ethnic hygiene and hair care products (cocoa butter, shea butter, ethnic shampoos and conditioners).

Baby items - disposable diapers, wipes, formula

Household products dish soap, laundry detergent, cleaning products, paper towels, light bulbs and other commonly used household items

Most food shelves do not take donations of perishable items, home-canned goods or glass containers. Please contact the specific pantry you wish to donate to if you have questions.

Ethnic Food Items

West Michigan hosts a variety of refugee communities who would greatly appreciate the food items most familiar to them. All groups can use staple grains, beans, root vegetables, and rice, and cooking staples such as flour and oil.

Central African (Congolese, Burundian) - corn flour, cassava & sweet potatoes, millet, peanuts, palm oil

East African & Arabic (Somali, Sudanese, Eritrean, Iraqi, Tunisian, Syrian) - rice, flatbread (injera), halal meat (especially chicken & goat), chickpeas

Burmese- rice, frozen shrimp, pork, soy sauce, crushed red pepper, cabbage, cauliflower

Bhutanese - white and red rice, lentils, curry, turmeric, cardamom

Questions? Need connected to a local food pantry?

Email TheVolunteerCenter@hwmuw.org