COVID-19 FOOD PROCUREMENT GUIDE

AUGUST 2020
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WHY DOES THIS GUIDE EXIST?


The virus that shook the world has many names. Not only has it resulted in tragedy for millions, it has also revealed the tangles, gaps and canyons in our global food supply chain to countless others. One survey tells us that since the pandemic started, over 40% of mothers with young children don't have enough food. In the US ALONE. In Spring 2020, some grocery stores were bare, overpriced or simply inaccessible, especially for vulnerable populations.

Enter food rescues, food banks and food pantries. You may have heard of Feeding America, but there are numerous organizations making sure people eat. This guide is to help them (or you) increase donations, funding or volunteers so that they (or you) can continue to do the work you do best!
FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

FARM*

HARVESTING*

STORAGE/PACKING*

PROCESSING

TRANSPORTING*

RETAILER*

CONSUMER

WASTE

*FOOD RECOVERY ACCESS POINT
RELATIONSHIPS

Let's Build!

Surprisingly, this pandemic has brought a lot of us closer. We check in on neighbors, we're spending quality time with our families and even exploring our cities more. Now has become a time to build and strengthen relationships. This can also be used as a strategy to increase your donations.

Reach out to your current food donors. This can be a simple thank you email, text or social media shout out. Something to help show your appreciation for their continued support, if you haven't done so already (if you have you're ahead of the curve). Not only does this make them feel valued, but it also helps to strengthen your partnership. When you're fresh on their mind, they're more likely to contact you when they have surplus. You can also share with them photos or short stories about the impact they're helping you make.

Creating new bonds

There are so many ways to reach out to new organizations, recipients and donors. Sometimes a simple cold email will be enough, other times setting up a meeting is more effective. Support can also come in many different forms. Some can offer funding (see page 12), others can be more helpful with in-kind donations like grant writing assistance or technical services.
Support Local

There can sometimes be a plethora of resources in our own communities, if we know where to look. This can include local restaurants, local bars, food producers and even home gardens. Here are some options you can look to for food donations.

**Food Distributors:** A food service distributor is a company that provides food products to large scale clients like hospitals, restaurants, schools, nursing homes, etc. With many of these facilities closing their doors or at least their food service operations, these distributors have a surplus of food that can be donated.

The [USDA Farm to Family box program](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-assistance-programs/farm-to-family-program) was created under the Family First Coronavirus Response Act as a way to fight food insecurity on a national scale. The USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service solicited contracts from a variety of different food producers including farms, wholesaler and distribution companies to assemble and give out boxes of fruits, veggies, meat, dairy and frozen products to US families. A few of Food Rescue Alliance members have be able to rescue millions of pounds from those contracted who simply have more food than recipients.

For a list those awarded a contract click [here](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-assistance-programs/farm-to-family-program) or [here](https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-assistance-programs/farm-to-family-program).

**Food producers:** In addition to large scale food companies there are also many other local sources of food who often can use additional help or have surplus food. This includes farms, farmers markets, CSA’s and food hubs.

You can find your local farms [here](https://www.farmertodistributor.com).

You can find your local farmers markets [here](https://www.farmertodistributor.com).

You can find your local food hub [here](https://www.farmertodistributor.com).
Local food organizations: In addition to local food sources there are also local food nonprofits who can help you find food that needs to be rescued. This includes Slow Food chapters and your local County Extension office. These wouldn't traditionally been seen as places to find help getting surplus food donations, but many have found success doing so.

County Extension Offices are located in local counties and land grant universities. They are experts in soil, wildlife, crops, and more found in their specific county and provide expert advice to local residents.

You can find your local County Extension office here.

Tips:
- Reaching out to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department or the Master Gardeners program will give you the best resources for finding farmers, school or community gardens who may have surplus or bonus crops to donate.

- Fresh Food Connect (an app that connects home gardeners with surplus to nonprofits in need) is a GREAT place to start! Find them here.

Slow Food is an organization that facilitates engagement, campaigns and gatherings around "good, clean and fair food for all". They host international festivals, local events and build partnerships to create dynamic change in the food system. Each chapter usually has a primary focus so it's best to find your local chapter for help.

You can find your local Slow Food chapter here.

Tips:
- Most don't list direct contact information so you'll have to fill out the contact form on their website or social media. This is an option for those who aren't pressed for time or needing immediate donations.
Communication is Key.

We've heard it time and time again, but it's true. As a food rescue, one of the most important things you can do is to learn how to communicate your message, do it well and do it often. Not only does this help you express your need and purpose to donors, but also to the general public and recipients.

Start simple: If you're a new nonprofit, start with the 5 W's (who, what, when, where, why). Who are you, what you do, why are you needed and where you do the work. You can also start with your mission statement.

One size does not fit all. Reaching out to donors can look different depending on their priorities and values. You'll want to have a semi personalized request pitch based on your audience. We'll get into that below.

Curious about additional arguments to make to food donors? Check out the Package Deal (also great if you're new to Food Rescue).

Farmers: One of the most well known food producers in the world, farmers, are an irreplaceable piece in our food system. The impact of Covid has caused financial loss across nearly all aspects of the agricultural sector.
Tips when approaching a farmer for food donations:

- Know what kind of support/donations you're looking for
  - Do you want to glean (pick what's left) from the fields after the initial harvest?
  - Do you want to purchase food that's unmarketable (include blemishes but still edible)?
  - Do you want surplus from a grocery store drop off?
- Recognize that farmers are people too!
  - Have a conversation with them about what your organization does and the impact their food could have.
  - If you have the money to purchase their food, have a budget ready of how much you can afford.
  - When working with a limited budget, try to negotiate but DON'T HAGGLE. Ask what amount is worth it to them, while making it known what your budget it. Be as realistic as possible, they also have families, bills and businesses to run. You may not be able to purchase hundreds of pounds or multiple crops.
- Get Factual
  - The amount of families who don't have food has doubled since the beginning of the year, more that 54 million.
  - There are many benefits to donating food. On the next page you'll find a fact sheet on what those are.
- Meet people where they are
  - Many farmers would love to make an impact but are unsure how.
  - Depending on the ask you can offer to coordinate pick-ups/drops offs, help box/package produce or meet them at the farmers market.
  - If you're a 501c3, offer a donation receipt, so they can get tax credits.
Food Donation Benefits

1. **Protected by Law**
   The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act of 1996 protects food donors from liability when donating to a 501©3 non-profit organization in good faith.

2. **Tax Benefits**
   Donations to 501c3 organizations can receive up to 50% of the USDA market value for conventional produce donations and 75% of the market value for organic produce donation in some states.

3. **Direct Support**
   Donations go DIRECTLY to people in your communities that are facing hunger.

4. **Cost Reduction**
   By donating surplus or unmarketable food, you reduce storage and transportation costs.

5. **Fight Food Waste**
   Donated food reduces the amount of food in landfills and reduces dumping costs.
Food Distributors: Wholesale food distributors can sometimes be harder to connect with. They usually have a large staff which can make contacting them difficult.

- Find whose local
  - If you're looking for your local food wholesaler click here
  - A simple google search can help you find the local office plus a number or email

- Reach out
  - Working with a large distributor may be a little different than working with a farmer.
  - You can send out a cold email, asking if there is the possibility to rescue their surplus food.
  - Another option is to talk with your local food bank who may already have a connection with these companies. This can be tricky if you don't have a prior relationship with the local food bank/pantry or they aren't open to collaboration but it's worth a try.

The next page offers a graphic that can help you talk about partnering with them.

- Important things to mention are where donations would be going, if and how you can coordinate pick up/drop off and if you're able to supply them with a donation receipt.

Restaurants: This was a hot spot for food donations at the beginning of the year when many food spots closed down. Some donations have tapered down since many restaurants have reopened but incorporating food donations is still a valid option for them. Benefits include:

- Reduction on food waste costs
- Donations offer DIRECT support to families in need
- Good press/marketing opportunity
- Food donations are TAX DEDUCTIBLE

ReFED has this awesome guide specifically for restaurants who wish to donate. Check it out here.
FOOD SAFETY

Working with Restaurants

One thing to consider when getting prepared food is there are usually more safety requirements. For example, stricter food safety guidelines, higher quality control demands, and shorter time windows from pick up to distribution.

Here's a tip from Boulder Food Rescue:

- Ask restaurants to freeze food, then pick up and transport it frozen. This will eliminate the chance that food will reach unsafe temperatures during transport.

Another thing to consider is the fact that not all recipient sites have freezer or refrigerator space for prepared food, so it can take extra time to call ahead and check. If you have the resources, you can also set up a drop freezer at select locations, for easy drop off and pick up.

Benefits of rescuing prepared food include eliminating food waste that sometimes isn't considered and you're serving certain populations like seniors or the home insecure that don't have access to a kitchen or are unable to cook for themselves.

Additional Food Safety Resources:

USDA has a wonderful easy to follow page on Food Safety Basics. you can find that here.

BFR has a step by step guide on prepared food protocol. Find it here.

Community Food Rescue, based in Maryland, has a few hour long webinars on the subject. You can find that here.
## SMALL, DECENTRALIZED MODEL ORGANIZATIONS

**VERSUS**

## LARGE SCALE CENTRALIZED MODELS

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<th>Deliver directly to people</th>
<th>Larger and longer term food storage capabilities</th>
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<td>Well equipped to distribute fresh perishables quickly</td>
<td>Better equipped at distributing large quantities of nonperishable food</td>
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<td>Usually include ways for those who receive food to participate in creating collective change</td>
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A helping hand

As a nonprofit, you know that volunteers are a major component of day to day operations. Some organizations have had an increase in their volunteer base and some have experienced the opposite. Either way, its important to make it clear that those who want to help will be kept safe and that proper precautions are made to do so.

Tips on volunteer management during COVID-19:

- **Plan.** Are you able to offer at least 6 ft of space between volunteers during shifts? If not, is there an overflow procedure? If you’re delivering to senior or high risk populations, are you able to make shifts brief and no/low contact? What is your procedure for possible exposure? Are masks required? Is a volunteer liability waiver an option for you?

- **Recruit.** There are a variety of places to look for volunteers. This includes VolunteerMatch, local clubs/membership organizations, schools and universities, even social media.

- **Inform.** Do you have the proper signage stating risks and ways to stay safe? Are you able to provide gloves, masks and/or hand sanitizer?

- **Manage.** Check-in stations, email/text notifications, disinfecting high traffic areas and maintaining social distancing when possible are all ways you can help keep yourself and others safe.
FUNDING

Money Helps Too

If you’re fortunate enough to have funding during the pandemic and can purchase food, you’re ahead of the curve! If you’re curious about ways to support your work through grants you can find some below. Some deadlines have passed, but are wonderful options to have on your calendar.

Open Opportunities:

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Pioneering Ideas Brief Proposals: (Rolling)
  
  - https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/funding/832

Large Grant Opportunity Lists:

http://www.safsfsf.org/resources/covid19-funds/

https://www.cofchrist.org/grants-hunger-and-nutrition

Closed or Future Grant Opportunities:

- CalRecycle Organics Grant:
  
  https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/climate/grantsloans/organics

- CalRecycle Food Waste Prevention and Rescue Grant
  
  https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/climate/grantsloans/FoodWaste/
• **Alpha Gamma Delta Fighting Hunger Grant:**
  [https://alphagammadeltafoundation.org/fighting-hunger-grants/](https://alphagammadeltafoundation.org/fighting-hunger-grants/)

• **Use Reuseables Waste Prevention Equipment Grants**
  [http://usereusables.org/grants](http://usereusables.org/grants)

• **Stop Waste Food Waste Reduction Grant:**

• **USDA Emergency Food Assistance Program:**

• **Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition Rooting in Evidence Grant:**
  [https://www.centerfornutrition.org/rootedinevidence](https://www.centerfornutrition.org/rootedinevidence)

**In-kind Opportunities:** (Can be used as matching funds for some grants)

• **Healthy Food Financing Initiative Technical Assistance:**
  [https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/funding/4547](https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/funding/4547)

**Large Grant Opportunity Lists:**


[https://www.cofchrist.org/grants-hunger-and-nutrition](https://www.cofchrist.org/grants-hunger-and-nutrition)

**Other Resources:**

• [https://geopub.epa.gov/ExcessFoodMap/](https://geopub.epa.gov/ExcessFoodMap/)
REFERENCES + RESOURCES

Food Donations:

Farm to Food Bank:
Food Donation Benefits:
- ReFED. (2020, August). INCORPORATING FOOD WASTE REDUCTION INTO YOUR COVID-19 OPERATING PLANS. https://d1qmdf3vop2i07.cloudfront.net/vital-water.cloudvent.net/hash-store/e7c51ded9bcf07bacdc9d2e676d11800.pdf

Food Waste and Hunger:

Volunteer Resources:

Communication:
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This page is to thank and express gratitude for all the organizations that made this guide possible. We had an incredible group who shared resources, stories and feedback on how to help get food back into the hands of those who need it most.

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