BEYOND THE FOOD DRIVE
ENDING HUNGER THROUGH CITIZEN SERVICE

Handbook Generously Supported by:

NEW YORK CITY COALITION AGAINST HUNGER

ConAgra Foods
Food you love
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HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

Whatever your age or income, you can engage in effective voluntary citizen service to fight hunger, ranging from food drives to contacting elected officials about policy changes that will help families in need.

We’ve collected a wealth of information all in one place, and to make it easy to learn how you or your organization can take action, we’ve created individual chapters by opportunity area.

Each chapter includes a description of how you can engage in volunteerism, followed by a checklist and resources for the volunteer and for the nonprofit organization. Once you’ve chosen an activity, you’ll find notes and action steps for each activity to guide you through the process. There is also an appendix, full of facts, additional resources, and more.

Whether you’re looking to organize a team building food drive or utilize your personal skills to help build capacity for hunger organizations or drive policy change, there is a wide range of ways to get involved and have an impact. We encourage you to consider efforts that can create longer term, sustained impacts to reduce hunger. To help the reader identify these opportunities, the New York City Coalition Against Hunger added an impact meter to each chapter.

There is no one way to address the complex issue of hunger in America. It requires collaboration of individuals, nonprofits, policy makers, and companies banding together to find sustainable solutions. Hunger is not an issue that exists “somewhere” in America, but it lives in every county across the United States. Through voluntary citizen service, we can all do our part to help end hunger.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CITIZEN SERVICE CAN END HUNGER IN AMERICA

“Hunger is a national issue that exists in every county across the country. On top of our nearly 20-year commitment to finding solutions to food insecurity, we aspire to build a community of people who are as passionate as we are about ‘doing our part’ to end it.

This is why we teamed up with the New York City Coalition Against Hunger to help launch the ‘Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service’ project. The idea is to spark some new thoughts with people, advocates and volunteers about what can be done to help end hunger, from food drives to skills-based volunteerism, advocacy and more.”

KORI REED, VICE PRESIDENT, CAUSE & FOUNDATION, CONAGRA FOODS

THE ISSUE

In 2011, the latest data available, the USDA reported that more than 50 million Americans—including nearly 17 million children—lived in households that couldn’t afford enough food on a consistent basis throughout the year.

The majority of food insecure or hungry Americans were working parents, children, senior citizens, veterans, and people with disabilities.

The good news is that effective citizen service—combined with improved public policies—can make a big difference. Working together, concerned individuals, civic organizations, youth groups, congregations, businesses, and elected officials can do their part to ensure that all Americans have access to sufficient, nutritious foods to ensure a healthful, active lifestyle.

Millions of Americans already generously give time and money to fight hunger, but they don’t always know the way to make the greatest impact. That is why ConAgra Foods and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCA) are spearheading a new nationwide initiative called “Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service.”

Starting with this handbook, this effort includes concrete tools to help the public engage in volunteerism and for nonprofit groups to effectively harness the energy of such citizen service.
The impact of volunteer activities on reducing hunger in America

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger determined the size of the impact of each activity based on four factors related to each activity: 1) The number of people impacted, 2) The amount of food provided, 3) Whether it provides aid one time, multiple times, or over the long-term, and 4) Whether it gives families the ability to choose healthier foods for themselves.

CONTINUUM KEY

1. Contact Elected Officials
2. Help Connect Eligible Families to SNAP/Food Stamp Benefits
3. Help Increase Participation in School Breakfast Programs
4. Help Increase Participation in Federal Summer Meals Programs
5. Aid Community Gardens, Farmers' Markets, and CSA Programs
6. Raise Awareness
7. Use your Professional Skills to Assist Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens
8. Raise Money
9. Assist a Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry, or Food Bank with Direct Service Tasks
10. Organize a Food Drive

Detailed explanations on following pages.
1 CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS TO ASK THEM TO TAKE SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO REDUCE HUNGER AND THE POVERTY THAT CAUSES IT

Who Can Do It: Young adults, adults, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: Basic familiarity with hunger issues and policy a plus.

Advantages: Connect directly with your federal, state, and local elected leaders, make a long-term impact in hunger policy, actively participate in the movement to end hunger.

Challenges: Many Americans falsely believe that elected officials will ignore them, even though the truth is that most elected officials react directly when constituents contact them.

Why? With tens of billions of dollars in anti-hunger funding at stake, government actions can dramatically increase or reduce hunger and poverty. Public policy advocacy is often the single most effective step anyone can take to fight hunger.

2 HELP ELIGIBLE FAMILIES OBTAIN SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—SNAP (FORMERLY CALLED THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM)—BENEFITS

Who Can Do It: Adults, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: Short-term: No special skills are required to distribute flyers and information. Brief, same-day training required for phone outreach. Long-term: pre-screening or mediation for applicants requires 1-2 days training and a possible background check.

Advantages: Meet other volunteers who care about hunger, build skills for your resumé, connect directly with people being served by your work, and improve nonprofits’ program capacity.

Challenges: Short-term outreach often requires volunteers to visit low-income communities, which may require travel across town or to another part of your county. Pre-screening or application assistance requires linking with a nonprofit partner to provide equipment and software, and 1-2 day training.

Why? Although the average SNAP benefit dwarfs the amount of food families receive from charities, millions of eligible families fail to receive benefits that dramatically reduce short- and long-term hunger. Escalating demand for food from kitchens and pantries means that many are forced to turn people away, reduce portion size, or close entirely. SNAP benefits help reduce dependence on these struggling agencies.
3 HELP INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

Who Can Do It: Kids, adults, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: Volunteers should be comfortable talking to people from diverse backgrounds. Connection to PTA groups and/or relationship building skills a plus, but not required.

Advantages: The activity allows you to meet and connect with other parents, school administrators, and teachers, and also helps to improve overall school performance.

Challenges: Outreach generally cannot be conducted in the summer.

Why? Two-thirds of kids who receive subsidized school lunches fail to receive school breakfasts; simple outreach activities can quickly and efficiently increase participation and reduce child hunger. Participation in school breakfast dramatically reduces tardiness among students and improves test scores.

4 HELP INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL SUMMER MEALS PROGRAMS

Who Can Do It: Kids, adults, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: Most outreach activities require no special skills. Brief training required to help organizations develop and submit applications to host new Summer Meals sites.

Advantages: Connect with other parents and teachers. Learn new skills and build relationships with community organizations, experience the direct impact of starting a new Summer Meals Program.

Challenges: Outreach generally conducted only in the late spring and summer.

Why? Only one in seven students who receive subsidized meals during the school year also receives them in summer. Outreach activities ensure that kids receive free, healthy meals in the summer, which is often their only meal of the day. With a simple training, you can directly help programs apply and start new Summer Meals sites that will provide meals to hundreds of local kids.

5 AID COMMUNITY GARDENS, FARMERS’ MARKETS, AND COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) PROGRAMS

Who Can Do It: Children (supervised by adults), adults, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: Most gardening and CSA (Community Supported Agriculture programs) activities do not require special skills. Some training may be required to provide cooking demonstrations as a “CSA Chef” or “Community Chef.” Must have training as a nutritionist to provide some types of nutrition education services.

Advantages: Meet people of diverse ages and backgrounds who enjoy gardening, or cooking and sharing recipes.

Challenges: Often labor intensive, sometimes requires up-front monetary payments, and provides food only during the growing season (16-26 weeks per year). Some CSA Chef and Community Chef trainings have a cost.

Why? Participate in a growing Community Food Security movement that helps you, and other residents, access fresh fruits and vegetables, directly from farmers. Help families with few healthy food options obtain and learn how to cook fresh vegetables.
**6. RAISE AWARENESS: COORDINATE A GROUP TO WATCH A HUNGER DOCUMENTARY, SPONSOR A “HUNGER BANQUET,” CONDUCT A HUNGER SIMULATION, TAKE THE SNAP/FOOD STAMPS CHALLENGE, AND/OR HOLD A HUNGER TEACH-IN**

*Who Can Do It:* Children, adults, groups, and businesses  
*Special Skills Needed:* Interest and willingness to talk to others about hunger. Ability to gather friends, family, and colleagues a plus.  
*Advantages:* Helps friends and family better understand hunger issues and build awareness in your community.  
*Challenges:* Awareness must be coupled with direct action to reduce hunger.  
*Why?* These activities can educate people about the hunger problem and solutions to it, as well as provide significant motivation to take on other anti-hunger projects together.

**7. USE YOUR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TO HELP FOOD PANTRIES & SOUP KITCHENS IMPROVE THEIR PROGRAMS**

*Who Can Do It:* Adults and businesses  
*Special Skills Needed:* Professional skills including: accounting, budgeting, graphic and/or website design, marketing, communications, and strategic planning.  
*Advantages:* Enables you to have a strong direct impact on programs and services. Builds leadership skills, adds to your résumé or portfolio.  
*Challenges:* Many people prefer not to perform the same tasks they do for work as a volunteer—however, applying your professional expertise to a project has a far greater longer-term impact than food service.  
*Why?* NYCCAH can link you to specific projects—one-time, short-term or long-term—enabling you to use your expertise to help soup kitchens and food pantries expand or improve their programs for low-income families. Visit [nyccah.org](http://nyccah.org) for details.

**8. RAISE MONEY FOR ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS**

*Who Can Do It:* Adults, kids, groups, and businesses  
*Special Skills Needed:* Organizational skills, attention to detail.  
*Advantages:* Enables you to have a strong direct impact on programs and services. Builds leadership skills, adds to your résumé or portfolio.  
*Challenges:* May require advance planning (for events).  
*Why?* Fundraising is a great way to make a strong impact, and bring people together. Volunteers can build new skills sets, while organizations attract new people to their mission.
ASSIST A SOUP KITCHEN, FOOD PANTRY, OR FOOD BANK WITH DIRECT SERVICE TASKS

Who Can Do It: Adults, kids over 14, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: Willingness and ability to do manual tasks, including preparing and serving food and clean-up.

Advantages: By helping feeding agencies in the actual food distribution and for-consumption preparation, you are literally feeding individuals and families who rely on the services provided by you and the agency you are serving. Since the majority of feeding agencies are staffed solely by volunteers, your time fulfills a critical need, especially when you serve the agency on a regular, recurring basis.

Challenges: This activity can be physically taxing. Also, many agencies run programs during business hours, making it difficult for volunteers who work. Group sizes are limited by each agency.

Why? Most agencies are run entirely by volunteers, and are in need of help on a regular basis. Consider giving your time on a consistent regular basis, not just on holidays.

ORGANIZE A FOOD DRIVE

Who Can Do It: Adults, kids, groups, and businesses

Special Skills Needed: None, although basic organization and logistical planning may be more suited to adults, or with adult supervision.

Advantages: Aiding in food drives for local anti-hunger organizations can be a good first start in fighting hunger, and can be an easy way to engage all community members. Food drives can also be used as a tool to educate the community about the local and national hunger problem and broader solutions to solve it.

Challenges: This activity can create more work for volunteers, who must sort through cans and boxes, and in some cases, must actually throw away food that is expired or damaged.

Why? This is a powerful way to engage young and inexperienced volunteers, however, it is important to follow the guidelines of the participating food program.
**Introductory Letter**

**Americans are incredibly generous, both with their time and money.** Millions of Americans—including those with meager resources themselves—donate food to local feeding programs and money to local and national anti-hunger nonprofit organizations.

Anti-hunger organizations are always supremely grateful for this vital support.

When volunteers and donors know all of the facts, they are often eager to make a meaningful, long-term impact. Thus, this handbook is intended to educate people, organizations, and businesses on how to best fight hunger using both their hearts and their heads.

For instance, while countless Americans aid food drives, most professional anti-hunger groups—who buy in bulk and/or obtain large-scale donations—are able to feed far more people with monetary donations than they are with food drive donations. Moreover, when anti-hunger organizations are given money to purchase food, they are not only able to buy more nutritious foods, but they are also able to buy food that they know low-income families most want and need.

I often make this analogy: if you knew that there were many seniors citizens in your neighborhood who couldn't afford prescription drugs, you probably wouldn't hold a prescription drug drive, asking your neighbors to go into their medicine cabinets to donate medicine or go to a pharmacy to buy new medicines that they think their neighbors might need. You'd be more likely to donate money to a well-run nonprofit group that provides health care to senior citizens and/or ask your elected officials to do more to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors.

Food drives are a positive step for people who want to find an easy way to help (and anti-hunger groups certainly need and appreciate all the help they can get). Yet to truly end this problem, we need to move beyond the food drive.

In 2011, the New York City Coalition Against Hunger surveyed hundreds of food pantries and soup kitchens across New York City to determine their volunteer needs. Only 12 percent of feeding agencies reported that they needed unskilled volunteers for serving, packing, and distributing food. By comparison, 47 percent of kitchens and pantries reported needing long-term, skilled volunteers to assist with projects such as website development, grant-writing, and more.

Given that food pantries, soup kitchens, and food banks cannot possibly play the lead role in ending the massive hunger problem in America, one of the most effective ways to tackle the issue of hunger is to utilize volunteers to increase participation in federal nutrition assistance programs. For instance, even though Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP (formerly called the Food Stamp Program)—is the nation’s single most efficient and cost-effective tool in reducing hunger, up to one third of all the eligible families in America don't receive it; in part because the application process is incredibly onerous and time-consuming. Volunteering to enable families to overcome participation hurdles, so that they can access these benefits, can make a concrete, long-term difference in reducing hunger.

To raise awareness of U.S. hunger, individuals, libraries, or organizations can coordinate groups to watch a hunger documentary, read a hunger book, sponsor a “hunger banquet,” conduct a hunger simulation, take the SNAP/Food Stamps Challenge, and/or hold a hunger teach-in. You can also contact your elected officials to request that they take specific steps to reduce hunger and food insecurity.

There is so much we can do to help our fellow 50 million Americans, including children, not worry about food today or in the future. Use this guide to learn how.

Together we can end hunger in America.

Sincerely,

Joel Berg, Executive Director
The New York City Coalition Against Hunger
Collecting, sorting, and distributing food are components of an effective food drive. For many people who learn about the hunger issue, the natural inclination is to donate food through a food drive or other activity. This is a powerful way to engage the young and inexperienced volunteer to take action, and one that has immediate and direct impact.

While this handbook is titled “Beyond the Food Drive,” due to the effectiveness and longer impact of the other methods, we are starting where most people get involved.

In this chapter, you will find specific information to ensure that your food drive or direct help meet the food needs of the program you plan to support.
With a little planning, food drives can be a fun and easy way to support your local food bank or food-rescue organization. The forms and tools included here may also be used by food providers to organize a food drive.

Although it might seem like a daunting task, it’s actually pretty easy to host a food drive, and we can help make it even easier. We’ll give you everything you need—from basic instructions to posters you can use to publicize your food drive.

Our suggestions are general guidelines—you should contact your local food bank (feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx) to see which items your local food bank needs most.

FOOD DRIVES

If you would like to organize or aid a food drive, it is best to work with an existing soup kitchen, food pantry or food bank, and carefully follow their guidelines so you can effectively collect the foods they need most.

Both volunteers and anti-hunger organizations can use the following steps on how to organize a food drive.

Volunteers sort canned food items for St. John’s Bread & Life’s food pantry in Brooklyn, NY.
COLLECT FOOD FOR LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES, SOUP KITCHENS, AND FOOD BANKS

IMPACT-O-METER
HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, KIDS, GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED
➤ Almost anyone can participate in the collection of food, but basic organization and logistical planning might be better for adults or minors with adult supervision.

ADVANTAGES
➤ Aiding in food drives for local anti-hunger organizations can be a good first start in fighting hunger, and can be an easy way to engage all community members.
➤ Food drives can also be used as a tool to educate the community about the local and national hunger problem and broader solutions to solve it.

CHALLENGES
➤ Food drives often create extra work for other volunteers who must sort through cans and boxes and, in some cases, must actually throw out some of the food, which may have either been expired or damaged beyond use in the sorting process.

DOWNLOADS
➤ Download ConAgra Foods Foundation’s list of suggested donations for food drives: conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Suggested-Donations.pdf
CHAPTER 1: COLLECTING FOOD

ACTION STEPS FOR ORGANIZING A FOOD DRIVE

A little planning can go a long way to ensure your food drive is a success.

☑️ **Contact Your Local Food Bank**
Inform them of your plans to hold a food drive and ask if they have any tips or pointers. Find out the best way/time to drop off the food you collect.

☑️ **Build a Team**
The White House’s volunteer initiative, [www.Serve.gov](http://www.Serve.gov) has great tips for starting your own food drive. One suggestion is to plan a food drive with your family, friends, colleagues, or faith group members. Working in teams can help share the work, motivate members, and make your food drive even more successful.

☑️ **Set a Date**
Pick a date or dates for your food drive. Single-day events can be very successful; if the food drive goes on for too long, people could lose interest. Also, make sure the date you pick gives you plenty of time to prepare for your food drive.

☑️ **Pick a Location**
Decide where you want to hold your food drive. Make sure there is plenty of space for food and collection bins.

☑️ **Publicize Your Event**
A key to success will be making sure lots of people know about your food drive so they can donate. Use our Customizable Event Poster ([www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Drive-Poster.pdf](http://www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Drive-Poster.pdf)) to help spread the word. Simply fill in the appropriate details, print, and hang around town. You’ll have people lining up to donate.

☑️ **Download a List of Suggested Donations**

☑️ **Create a Collection Barrel Sign**
Confusion can set in on your big day if people don’t know where to drop off their food. Print out our Collection Barrel Signs ([www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Barrel-Poster.pdf](http://www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Barrel-Poster.pdf)) and affix them to places where people can put their donated items. You can put them on boxes, bins, and bags — actual barrels are not necessary.

☑️ **Set Goals and Parameters**
Figure out how much food you would like to collect. Decide whether or not you will accept just food, just cash, or both. You should consider taking money donations — just $1 can be transformed to 20 pounds of food and grocery products for hungry children.

☑️ **Develop a Collection System**
Figure out how you want to collect the food. Consider how you will transport the food once the food drive is over. It will be easiest to lift small- to medium-sized boxes.

☑️ **Drop Off Collected Food**
Once your food drive ends, it’s time to drop off your food to the people in need. If you haven’t already, contact your local food bank ([feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx](http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx)) to find out when and how they like to receive donations.
**SOLICIT FOOD DONATIONS THROUGH FOOD DRIVES TO SUPPORT YOUR PROGRAM**

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<th>IMPACT-O-METER</th>
<th>WHO CAN DO IT</th>
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<td>HELPFUL</td>
<td>ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS</td>
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**NOTE SPACE**

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**SKILLS NEEDED**

- Almost anyone can participate in the collection of food, but basic organization and logistical planning might be better for adults or minors with adult supervision.

**ADVANTAGES**

- For new emergency food programs, food drives may be your primary source of food for your program, until you have been in operation long enough to qualify for food from traditional sources, like food banks.
- Food drives can help build community awareness about your program.

**CHALLENGES**

- You will need either staff or community volunteers to help you organize the food drive, advertise it, and collect donated food.
- Food drives connected to farmers’ markets or local farms can only serve your program during the growing season (16-24 weeks, depending on your geographic location).
The United States already has tens of thousands of existing food pantries and soup kitchens—most of which lack sufficient food or money—so before you start your own feeding program, we strongly suggest that you research whether it makes more sense to aid existing ones in your area. If you do seek to start a new program in an under-served area, you should be aware that new soup kitchens and food pantries are often unable to obtain food from government programs and traditional food banks until they have been in operation for significant periods of time, sometimes up to two to three years. If you are a new soup kitchen or food pantry, food drives will most likely be your primary resource until you have been in operation for long enough to qualify to purchase food from your local food bank. Many of the tools and resources included below can be used for hunger organizations as well as for volunteers.

- **Make a list** of the food items that you need most.
- **Contact your local farmers’ markets** to see if they can donate excess produce to your organization. This is also a good time to ask if you can post flyers or set up a table to collect donated items (and monetary donations) on market days. (See: localharvest.org/farmers-markets). Because farmers’ markets tend to run on regular days during the growing season, this could be a significant source of food for your program.
- **Contact your local farmers**, especially those involved in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. (See: nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml). Because farmers who supply CSAs already drop off shares of produce for CSA members, you may be able to secure donations of unclaimed farm shares. This can provide significant volume of fresh fruits and vegetables for your program, but may also be inconsistent since you rely on unclaimed shares. CSA drop off sites may also be a great option for a food drive location.
- **Contact your local churches and schools** to inform them of your food needs as well as the need for your program. Ask if you could partner with them to hold a food drive. If they agree, be sure to ask how the food will be transported to your program—will they drop it off, or will you need to pick it up?
- **Contact your local grocery store managers** to see if they will donate unsold items to your program. Grocery stores cannot keep items past their posted shelf life, you may be able to pick up produce or canned items that can no longer be shelved. However, be advised that such items must be prepared or cooked almost immediately. You will need to be sure that none of the items have spoiled before you serve them to your patrons.
Decide on the duration and frequency of your food drive. If it goes too long, food donors may lose interest. However, you have a food program to run so you will need some regularity. Food drives can be used to supplement recurring donations from farmers and food suppliers.

Set your dates. Make sure your date(s) leave you enough time to organize the food drive.

Set your goals. Decide how much food you need per week or per month to operate your program.

Pick a location for food donations. Be sure the location has enough room to hold food donations from the community. You may consider multiple locations at the same time.

Publicize your event. A key to success will be making sure lots of people know about your food drive so they can donate. You can use ConAgra Foods Foundation’s Customizable Event Poster (www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Drive-Poster.pdf) to help spread the word. Simply fill in the appropriate details, print, and hang it around town. You’ll have people lining up to donate.

Create a collection barrel sign. Confusion can set in on your big day if people don’t know where to drop off their food. Print out our Collection Barrel Signs (www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Barrel-Poster.pdf) and affix them to places where people can put their donated items. You can put them on boxes, bins, and bags—actual barrels are not necessary.

Download your list of suggested donations and highlight the items you need the most so that people are aware of them: www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Suggested-Donations.pdf

Decide whether or not you will accept just food, just cash, or both. You should consider taking money donations, but will need to have a secure collection box for donations.

Pick up any donated food that is not brought to your program location.

Thank your food donors! This is extremely important. Let donors know how much food you collected, and how many people you were able to serve because of their contribution. Thanking donors helps you to build important relationships with people who can help you going forward. Please see Chapter 2 on monetary donations.
RESOURCES

To locate your nearest emergency food provider, call the Hunger Hotline toll free at:
1-866-3-HUNGER or 1-877-3-HAMBRE

ConAgra Foods Foundation Food Drive Toolkit:
☞ www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/help-conagra-foods-foundation/organize-food-drive.jsp

Customizable poster to promote your food drive:
☞ www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Drive-Poster.pdf

Customizable list of suggested food donations:

Ample Harvest, internet-based campaign enabling Americans who grow food to easily share excess harvest with local food pantries:
☞ www.ampleharvest.org

Feeding America, directory of food banks and affiliate organizations in your area:
☞ feedingamerica.org

Local Harvest Directory of Farmers’ Markets:
☞ www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, national directory of farmers’ markets:
☞ www.ams.usda.gov/AMSw10/FARMERSMARKETS
Then click on “Find or Add a Farmers’ Market Near Me”

USDA National Agricultural Library - Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, directory of CSA farms:
Then click on “Find a CSA Farm”
WHY DONATING MONEY IS IMPORTANT

Another way to make a difference is to raise money for anti-hunger nonprofit organizations. While food drives are a great way to engage volunteers, many professional anti-hunger organizations can more effectively leverage cash donations to buy products, increase capacity to serve more people or invest in innovative ideas. These groups buy in bulk and/or obtain large-scale donations to feed far more people. When professional anti-hunger organizations purchase food, they buy more nutritious foods, and food they know low-income families need most.

Emergency food providers serve ever-growing numbers of low-income families, while at the same time face significant funding cuts from government food programs.

KEEP IN MIND...

Nonprofit organizations need funds to continue providing vital services; however, it is extremely important that you take the following relatively easy and reasonable steps to ensure that the organization is a valid, legal, nonprofit entity and that your money will actually be used effectively by the program.

Financial gifts may be restricted—you designate how the funding should be used—or non-restricted, meaning the nonprofit or charity can use it for essential needs such as staff salaries, rent or more.

As an advantage for the cash donor, the donation is tax-deductible, as long as the recipient organization is registered as a 501c3 group with the IRS. With a receipt or letter of acknowledgement from the charity, the donor can deduct the amount of your gift from your taxable income if you itemize deductions. The fair-market value of your in-kind donation (clothes, for example) is also fully tax-deductible.
Identify the type of program or organization you would like to support. Make sure the organization is a viable non-profit entity that can legally accept donations. From the national IRS website, you can easily search for any nonprofit by clicking on the ‘Charities and Non-Profits’ tab at the top, and then clicking ‘Search for Charities’ in the left hand navigation list under Topics. Alternatively, you can directly ask the organization to provide you with a copy of their letter from the IRS granting their 501c3 status: [irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html](http://irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html).

Research the organization(s) you would like to support. The following sites can help you research organizations:

- [www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org)
- [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)
- [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)
- [www.justgive.org](http://www.justgive.org)
- [www.networkforgood.org/donate](http://www.networkforgood.org/donate)

Consider making your donation unrestricted. Whether you write a check, use a credit card, or provide funding through a major gift program, unrestricted funds enable the organization to apply your donation where it is most needed.

**Actions steps for volunteers**

**Most charities are required to publish their financial statements publicly.** Guidestar is an excellent reference for exploring a charity: [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org). Though you do have to register to see an organization’s tax return, called a “Form 990,” basic registration is free and will enable you to both search for a charity and review the organization’s financial documents. The 990 is important because in it you will find: contact information, a list of Board members and affiliations, and the operating budget for recent years. From the 990, you can easily see, for example, how much a charity spends on programs, staff and technology—which helps you see where your money goes.

**A wealth of information should be available from the charity itself.** You can call and speak with a staff person, donate your time as a volunteer, ask for an annual report, check to see if the organization has a website—all of these are good ways to learn more about the organization you wish to support. Bear in mind that many feeding agencies are small, and may not have a sophisticated website or promotional materials yet.
MAKING YOUR DONATION

ONE-TIME DONATIONS
Once you have chosen which organizations to support, there are several ways to make a donation.

➢ Through a collection
➢ By check or money order
➢ As a sponsor or attendee of a fundraising event
➢ Online: through the organization’s website or, if the organization does not have the ability to accept donations online, through a reputable third party site such as JustGive.org or Network for Good.

➢ Through your employer: many of which provide matching funds (typically, companies have a form you must fill out to access matching funds). Be sure to ask your HR department about matching funds when you make your gift.

➢ Through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC): if you work for an agency or department of the federal government, you have the opportunity to make a one-time or recurring donation through your Combined Federal Campaign. For more information, please contact your local Office of Personnel Management’s Combined Federal Campaign (opm.gov/cfc) for more information. Many state and municipal governments also have workplace giving programs.

RECURRING OR LONG-TERM DONATIONS
There are additional ways to make a gift that helps support the work of organizations long-term. It is extremely important that you fully examine the charity of your choice (see above), before making donations of this type, to ensure that it is legitimate. Also, you should meet with the leadership of the organization before making a major gift or bequest. Recurring and long-term donation types include:

➢ Recurring gifts: Many charitable organizations can accept a financial donation monthly by credit card or direct debit, enabling you to spread your gift over 12 months while at the same time providing a steady source of income for the organization you support.

➢ Major gifts: Typically, this is an amount that is significant to the organization. What qualifies as a “major gift” depends on the size and budget of the organization. Gifts of this type can be in the form of stock, trusts, annuities, or bequests. A major gift can be a one-time donation or a recurring donation and may be unrestricted (the charity applies your donation to where it is most needed) or restricted (your donation supports a particular program of the charity). In some cases, an annuity or a trust may also provide you with a tax free income.

It is highly recommended that you contact both your financial advisor, and the executive leadership of the organization to learn more about their needs, and the types of donations they can accept.
# Chapter 2: Raising Money

## Hold a Fundraiser to Support an Anti-Hunger Organization

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<th>Impact-O-Meter</th>
<th>Who Can Do It</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Helpful</td>
<td>Volunteers: Adults, Kids, Groups, and Businesses</td>
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### Skills Needed
- Almost anyone can participate in the collection of food and money, but the organization and basic logistical planning might be better for adults or with adult supervision.

### Advantages
- Serves as a great way to bring people together.
- Builds skills in event planning, whether the event is small or large.
- Makes a strong impact on an organization’s anti-hunger efforts.
- Fundraising volunteers typically consider it one of the more “fun” volunteer activities available.

### Challenges
- Requires advanced planning (how much advance planning depends on the size and scope of the fundraising event).
- In order for your event to be successful, you must raise more than you spend on the event.

### Examples of Fundraising Activities
- Participate in an event committee for an organization that you care about.
- Have a dinner, BBQ, lunch, or other gathering or social event at your home or the home of a friend or family member, and ask your guests to make a donation to support an anti-hunger organization.
- Ask friends and family members to make a donation to your anti-hunger organization instead of offering gifts at your next occasion.
- Plan a fundraising event yourself such as a party or social gathering or an event you plan around an activity.
VOLUNTEER STEPS FOR HOLDING AN ANTI-HUNGER FUNDRAISER

☑ Identify the number of people you can realistically expect to attend.

☑ Discuss your event with the organization you plan to support—they may be able to help, invite people on their lists, and/or attend your event so your guests can get to know more about the organization they are supporting.

☑ Identify who will help you plan your event—for small events, it can be 1-2 people, for larger events, you will need more.

☑ Be clear about your expectations with your fellow event planners:
  ➔ How many people do you expect each to bring to the event?
  ➔ How much of their time is required in planning?
  ➔ How often will you meet?
  ➔ What will each person contribute to the success of the event? For example, one person can focus on providing food, another on invitations, etc.
  ➔ It is important to work with people who are motivated and have time or money, or both, to contribute to the event’s success

☑ Decide where you will hold the event.
  ➔ A private home or space can be just as great as an event in a restaurant or event space.

☑ Make a budget—outline how much your event will cost, including:
  ➔ Event space (bar, restaurant, event room, private home)
  ➔ Food (what will you serve, and can it be donated?)
  ➔ Drinks
  ➔ Staff, if needed
  ➔ Invitations (will you print invites, email them, put up flyers?)
  ➔ Other costs

☑ Decide how much you will charge for the event—it needs to cover the cost of the event, so the more you can have donated, the more you will raise for your event.
  ➔ Will it be a “suggested” donation where you ask each person to contribute what they can, or will it be a fixed price ticket?

☑ Choose a date for your event.

☑ Let people know about your event—you may use formal invitations, email invites, personal calls, or all of the above.

☑ Decide how funds will be collected (cash, check, and/or online donations).

☑ Decide who will manage the donations.

☑ Keep track of RSVPs, and send reminders to attendees before the event.

☑ Thank your guests for their support.
RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST PLANNING A FUNDRAISING EVENT

SKILLS NEEDED
- Must be able to allocate time to meet with volunteers and follow-up on volunteer activities.

ADVANTAGES
- Raise funds to support your organization’s work.
- Build your individual and corporate donor lists.
- Fun group activity.
- Raise your organization’s visibility in the community.

CHALLENGES
- Significant advance planning required.
- Significant staff time involved in planning.
- Must keep your event committee volunteers engaged and motivated.
- Ticket sales must exceed event costs.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION
- 3-12 months
- Events require significant advance planning based on the size of the event, the budget, and the number of items you need donated or sponsored.

STEPS FOR RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS TO HELP PLAN A FUNDRAISING EVENT

☐ Discuss the event with your existing staff: decide who will take the lead on managing the event committee, securing space, food, entertainment, media, and invitations.

☐ Approach potential event committee members: your committee should be made up of key staff, at least 1 Board member, and volunteers from your donor base, professional and/or personal network.

- Outside of your Board and staff, consider approaching potential committee volunteers with a connection to your organization or to someone within your organization, such as friends or colleagues of Board members, staff or donors.
**BEYOND THE FOOD DRIVE**

**HUNGER GROUP**

**STEPS FOR RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS TO HELP PLAN A FUNDRAISING EVENT (CONT.)**

✓ **Be clear about your expectations** with your committee members.
  ➔ How often will you meet to plan the event?
  ➔ How many tickets will members be expected to buy or sell?
  ➔ What other donated items will members be responsible for securing?
  ➔ Some committees offer incentives for volunteer members that sell large numbers of tickets (such as prizes, mention in the event program, etc.), or require a minimum ticket purchase commitment to join the committee

✓ **With your Board and staff, make decisions about the key elements of your event:**
  ➔ How many people would you like to attend?
  ➔ Will there be food and/or drinks served?
  ➔ Will you be honoring anyone in the community?
  ➔ How much money do you need to raise?
  ➔ Will there be a fixed ticket price or a suggested donation?
  ➔ Who is your target audience?
  ➔ Will you have a cash bar or include drinks in your ticket price?
  ➔ What is your budget for the event?
  ➔ Will you have a raffle or silent auction?
  ➔ How will you recognize sponsors?

✓ **Once you have made decisions on the key elements above, create a list of tasks based on your needs for the event.**
  ➔ Small events require less advance planning and up front costs and can also be very effective if you do not have a large existing donor base

✓ **Convene your first committee meeting.** Create an agenda for the meeting. At this point, you should be prepared to discuss the goals of the event, and assign key tasks, including:
  ➔ Securing needed donations: venue, food, entertainment, raffle items
  ➔ Set goals for tickets
  ➔ Identifying potential venues, and obtaining bids in writing
  ➔ Photography and audio-visual requirements
  ➔ Securing event sponsorships:
    ➔ Larger corporate sponsors typically make sponsor decisions in the 3rd or 4th quarter for the following year
    ➔ Definitely consider approaching smaller local companies or local branches of larger companies to sponsor your event, such as local bank branches, credit unions, or Target stores in your community

✓ **Decide when and how often you will meet as a group,** and set deadlines for each task.
✓ **Be sure to keep all your committee members up to date with progress on planning,** through regular communication by email and/or phone.
Develop a detailed budget for the event, including costs for:
- Venue (restaurant, event room, bar, private home, or other space)
- Food
- Drinks
- Staffing
- Invitations (if printed and mailed)
- Audio-visual equipment rental, if needed
- Rentals: if you choose a “raw” space, you will need to add costs for:
  - Tables, tablecloths, chairs, set-up and break-down

Once you have a detailed budget, you can determine what the ticket price needs to be able to cover your costs and generate an income for your organization.

Discuss your cost items with your event committee: how can they help offset key cost items through their personal and professional networks? In other words, who do they know that can provide or sponsor key cost items?
- The more cost items you can have donated or sponsored, the more you will raise at your event

Choose a date for your event.

Develop your invitations: will they be printed and mailed, or sent via email?

Decide how you will process ticket sales and collect funds: online registration, on-site by check or cash, and/or print RSVP cards by postal mail.

Decide who will process your donations in advance and on-site.

Market your event through all available media and networks:
- Your organization’s newsletters and website.
- Your individual and institutional donors.
- Your existing and past volunteers.
- Event listings in local papers (these typically require 30-60 days advance).
- Local churches and bulletins.
- Online charity event listings: [www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org) and [www.charityhappenings.org](http://www.charityhappenings.org).
- Email blasts to your personal and professional networks (be sure to have each of your committee members and honorees, if any, also send emails out to their networks).
- Personal follow-up calls.

Keep track of RSVPs, and send reminders to attendees in the weeks before the event.

Recruit any on-site volunteers you may need at the event.

Remember to have fun!

Thank your guests, volunteers, and committee members!

Have a follow-up meeting with your committee members to discuss the event:
- What was successful, what could you have done better?
- How much did you raise, relative to the cost?
RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO CONDUCT FUNDER PROSPECT RESEARCH

IMPACT-O-METER

WHO CAN DO IT

ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

SKILLS NEEDED

Must be able to supervise volunteer work; familiarity with Excel, a plus.

ADVANTAGES

- Helps identify potential funders to support your work.
- Deepens the volunteer’s understanding of funding challenges.
- Can be accomplished remotely, from any location with an Internet connection.

CHALLENGES

- You must be able to share program information with your volunteer.
- Volunteers need both a clear understanding of your work and how to search for relevant funders.
- Identifying potential funders is no guarantee of actual funding, you will still need to follow-up and submit applications.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION: Open

STEPS FOR RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS TO HELP RESEARCH FUNDER PROSPECTS

- If you have development staff at your organization, discuss the potential volunteer activity with him or her. What sources of funding do you need to target? Are there specific funding gaps you need to fill (such as general operating, existing program funds, new projects, administrative, or capital campaigns)?
- Set goals for how many prospects you would like to your volunteer to identify.
- Create a job description for your Prospect Research Volunteer.
- Post your volunteer opportunity through all available resources: online volunteer websites, publications directed to fundraising professionals, and universities and other institutions that offer degrees or certifications for fundraising professionals.
- Meet with your potential volunteers. Be sure (s)he has a clear understanding of the process of prospect research, what deliverables you expect, and in what format you would like the research (spreadsheet, database, Word document).
- Share a recent grant proposal narrative and annual report with your volunteer. The better your volunteer understands what you do, the more likely he or she is to identify prospects that are relevant to your organization.
- Decide on the process and strategy of conducting the research.
- Compile deadlines, guidelines, and application procedures for the prospect list.
RESOURCES

Websites that allow you to search for charities by focus area, such as hunger or poverty, and location:
- www.charitynavigator.org
- www.justgive.org
- www.networkforgood.org/donate

IRS Directory of Charities:
- www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html

National Association of State Charity Officials:
- www.nasconet.org/documents/u-s-charity-offices

NYS Charities Bureau:
- www.charitiesnys.com/home.jsp

Guidestar directory of charitable organizations, including contact and financial information:
- www.guidestar.org

Download free charity event planning checklists:
- www.fundraisingip.com/checklists/fundraisingchecklists.html
- sua.umn.edu/groups/forms/event_planning.pdf

Download a free charity event planning app:

Common Grant application form:
- chfs.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/635f46a0-8ef6-4ce7-a6ae-b33d3dbe35a6/0/nngcommongrantapplication.pdf

Websites to post fundraising volunteer opportunities:
- www.idealist.org
- volunteermatch.org
- serve.gov
- allforgood.org

Association of Fundraising Professionals: www.afpnet.org

Council on Foundations: www.cof.org

The Foundation Center: www.foundationcenter.org

Chronicle of Philanthropy: www.philanthropy.com

The Nonprofit Times: www.thenonprofittimes.com
Volunteering one-time or repeatedly to help collect, sort, prepare, serve, and distribute food at a food bank, food rescue group, soup kitchen, or food pantry is a good first step in learning about hunger and can enable a wide range of people to pitch in. Most agencies can’t host children under the age of 13 due to safety reasons, but most do accept young adults with adult supervision.

**When planning, it is important to keep some of these tips in mind:**

- Most agencies can’t handle large groups of people at once. Larger groups may want to start first with a local food bank, which can sometimes use groups of up to 50 people or so for food sorting and salvage activities.
- Many agencies have their volunteer spots full during the holidays.
- Some already have all the unskilled labor they need year-round.

Given that many feeding charities already have all the volunteers they need to serve food, we strongly suggest that individuals and groups consider volunteering to aid the other fundraising, capacity building, benefits outreach, and advocacy efforts outlined in other chapters.
### HELP COLLECT, SORT, PREPARE, SERVE AND/OR DISTRIBUTE FOOD AT A LOCAL FOOD BANK, FOOD RESCUE GROUP, SOUP KITCHEN, OR FOOD PANTRY

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<tr>
<th>IMPACT-O-METER</th>
<th>WHO CAN DO IT</th>
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<tr>
<td>HELPFUL</td>
<td>VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, KIDS, GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES</td>
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### SKILLS NEEDED
- Willingness and ability to do manual tasks, including set-up, preparing and serving food, and clean-up.
- Knowledge and understanding of the agency’s work is a plus.
- Consider providing your professional expertise within the agency, offer to help with administrative work, skilled volunteers are always a great asset to any agency (for more information, see Chapter 4).

### ADVANTAGES
- By helping feeding agencies in the actual food distribution and for-consumption preparation, you are literally feeding individuals and families who rely on the services provided by you and the agency you are serving.
- Since the majority of feeding agencies are staffed solely by volunteers, your time fulfills a critical need, especially when you serve the agency on a regular, recurring basis.

### CHALLENGES
- Preparing, serving and distributing food for a feeding agency can be physically taxing and may require speedy deliver of products on your part.
- Many agencies run food programs during typical business hours, making it difficult to volunteer on a regular, recurring basis. If your work makes it impossible for you to give your time during the week, be sure to check your local feeding agencies to find out which ones have weekend hours. Most sites cannot use large groups at one time.
- Some agencies have age restrictions due to safety reasons, but most do accept young adults with adult supervision.

### ABOUT WHO CAN DO IT
- Anyone can volunteer at feeding agencies, both individuals and small groups depending on the agency’s need.
- Minors and children under the age of 13 will most likely need to be supervised.
- Some individuals may need to be screened in advance depending on the agency-type and location.
- Please be sure to check with the agency to determine an appropriate group size, most cannot take a group larger than 5-7 people.
Volunteer with an agency that truly needs your help. These agencies will most likely be outside of central business districts of cities. It may take longer to get there, but it will have a greater impact on ending hunger. For directories of emergency food providers, please visit foodpantries.org or call the National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-3-HUNGER.

Consider volunteering on a regular basis. One-time volunteer projects do little to help an organization strengthen its services.

Volunteer to help with administrative projects. Helping an organization get out their annual mailing doesn't have the same appeal as serving in a soup kitchen, but is vital to the work of hunger organizations.

Volunteer with a local Meals-on-Wheels or a local department of aging to help provide senior meals, or offer to drive seniors to shopping centers or farmers’ markets.
## Recruit Volunteers for Meal Service Activities

### Activity

**Impact-O-Meter: Helpful**

**Who Can Do It:**
- anti-hunger organizations

### Skills Needed
- You, or someone in your organization, must be available to direct and supervise volunteers.

### Advantages
- Having regular volunteers helps to offset the costs of staff to run your program, enabling you to focus more resources on providing food and other services to your community.

### Challenges
- Relying solely on volunteers to run your program requires you to recruit and manage volunteers on an ongoing basis.
- Volunteer schedules and level of commitment vary. Depending on your meal service schedule, consider your community’s schools, churches and the people you serve as potential volunteers, who can come on a regular recurring basis to help run your program.
- Often volunteers want to provide the types of basic services for which you already have sufficient volunteers.

### Steps for Recruiting Volunteers for Meal Service Activities

1. **Start with your clients/customers,** let them know that you need volunteers to help with meal service related tasks. These are people who directly benefit from your program, and being involved can help them to feel empowered, while helping you to meet your staffing needs for the program.
2. **Contact your local religious institutions,** ask if you can to speak to the congregation, or post volunteer opportunities in the church bulletin.
3. **Contact your local high schools, community colleges, and/or universities,** many of which direct or organize students in volunteer projects. If your program operates after-school hours, you may be able to organize a group of students on a recurring basis.
4. **Use all available online resources to post your volunteer opportunities,** including:
   - idealist.org
   - volunteermatch.org
   - hungervolunteer.org
5. **Be sure to list your volunteer opportunities with any local Volunteer Centers** in your community.
To find volunteer centers in your area:

- www.1-800-volunteer.org

Sites to post volunteer opportunities:

- www.idealista.org
- www.hungervolunteer.org
- www.nyccah.org/for-kitchens-and-pantries/getvolunteers
- www.volunteermatch.org
- allforgood.org
- serve.gov

Job-posting sites that also list volunteer opportunities:

- www.indeed.com
- www.simplyhired.com
Volunteering to build the long-term capacity of an anti-hunger organization eases an organization’s burden of hiring staff or paying for a consultant, and it allows hunger organizations to focus more on providing a higher quality of direct services to their customers/clients. This kind of assistance provides long-term sustainability to an agency that might otherwise be at risk of closing its operations and its doors to individuals and families that depend on their services.
BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION’S LONG-TERM CAPACITY TO SERVE

One way to do this is for adults, groups, or businesses to offer professional expertise, such as finance, accounting, logistics, and more.

This skills-based volunteerism model helps the organization increase efficiency and defray costs, while the volunteer expands his or her skill-sets, and builds his or her resumé or portfolio by working with a unique client or audience. Whether you have a few hours for a one-time project, or a few hours each month, you can make an enormous impact on a hunger organization near you by volunteering to do a budget, newsletter, or long-term financial plan, provide nutrition education for special needs, update a website, or perform an audit.

EXAMPLES OF ONE-TIME SKILLS-BASED PROJECTS:

- Graphic designers create marketing materials like a newsletter, annual report or community flyer
- Accountants create a budget template or project budget
- Lawyers provide legal advice on a specific issue
- Fundraisers write a template letter or grant proposal to potential donors
- Web developers update web content
- Nutritionists design a healthy low-budget menu or recipe
- Writers/editors write content for website, newsletter, flyers, or a brochure
- Videographers create short video of an event or program in action
- Project managers help create program benchmarks or strategic plan
- Data managers help identify important data and/or a manageable way to collect or measure key program data
- Photographers take pictures of an important organizational event or program (feeding organizations should be sure to get permission for the organization to use the photo and credit the photographer for his or her work)
- Technology consultants installs software or provides basic training in a commonly used program (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)

EXAMPLES OF LONG-TERM SKILLS-BASED PROJECTS:

- Graphic designers create a range of consistent marketing materials for an organization
- Accountants work with the organization to develop a financial management plan
- Lawyers accept a hunger organization as a pro bono client
- Fundraisers create a fundraising plan, prospect list, and/or grant templates
- Event planners work with the organization to plan and execute a fundraising or community event
- Nutritionists or health professionals develop a nutrition education curriculum for soup kitchen and food pantry patrons
- Writers/editors write a selection of grant proposals or an annual report
- Videographers film and edit an interview, training workshop, or program
- Project managers help institutionalize strategy to meet benchmarks or develop a strategic program plan
- Data managers create a program database to collect and manage key program data
- Technology consultants provide basic computer skills training for anti-hunger organizations on a regular basis
Excerpt from article explaining why year-long, skills-based volunteering can help more than one-time holiday volunteering:

“It’s Thanksgiving. I wanted to bask in the holiday spirit ... I couldn’t quite believe any community food program would turn an eager volunteer away. So I went to central Harlem and started knocking on doors. Guess what? Many community food programs would indeed turn an eager volunteer away. The Metropolitan Baptist Church, which serves food Monday to Saturday, did not need any helpers, thanks. St. Michael’s Church would have welcomed me at the Saturday meal but when I stopped by, the workers were already finishing up, and in any case they had a large flock of volunteers from a local school. The folks at the Salvation Army said they were all set, too.

Sometimes people come to us and they say, ‘We want to end hunger by volunteering,’ said Mr. Berg of the Coalition Against Hunger. ‘If all you’re doing volunteering is taking a slot that someone else would have done anyway, you’re not actually reducing hunger.’ His advice to those who want to help out: ‘Please, please, please don’t do it just on Thanksgiving, and please, please, please understand, we have skills-based needs that are far more important than just food service.’ Also in the realm of the triple-please, he wants people to press their elected officials to get involved. That makes nine pleases.

I agreed to help edit proposals for local hunger groups, starting with a grant application for the soup kitchen at the Greenpoint Reformed Church in Brooklyn.”
APPLY YOUR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TO BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED

- Professional experience in web design, graphic design, marketing, accounting, health and nutrition services, legal services, financial planning, fundraising, administrative management, data collection, community organizing, or care management.

ADVANTAGES

- By applying your professional skills to the work of a nonprofit, you will gain additional experience for your portfolio or résumé, and/or build skill-sets in your area of expertise. You will also build important relationships with community leaders in your area.
- Unlike meal service, which has to be performed at specific dates and times, many probono service projects can be completed at home, on your schedule, after a preliminary meeting with the organization on the project details.

CHALLENGES

- You may prefer not to engage in a volunteer project doing what you do at work, even though hunger organizations have a far greater need for your professional skills than your time stocking shelves.
- Many hunger organizations are small, with few staff or financial resources.
- Providing professional skills on a probono basis requires at least some time, patience, and a commitment to see the project through to completion.
- Interaction between the volunteer and the people served by the organization is limited.
Contact the Coalition Against Hunger about applying your professional skills as a volunteer. You may visit our site: www.hungervolunteer.org or nyccah.org/get-involved/volunteer to search for volunteer opportunities near you.

Search volunteer matching websites (listed below) for volunteer opportunities based on your skill set:
- www.idealista.org
- www.volunteermatch.org
- www.taproot.org
- www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/skillsbased-volunteering
- allfortgood.org
- www.simplyhired.com

Contact a local anti-hunger group to discuss if your skill-set coincides with an unmet need of the agency. Unfortunately, no nationwide directory exists for emergency food providers. However, you can contact your local food bank, which can connect you to kitchens and pantries in your area, or call the National Hunger Hotline toll free at 1-866-3-HUNGER or 1-877-3-HAMBRE. To find your local foodbank, visit: feedingamerica.org/Home/foodbank-results.aspx

Work with the agency to establish a timeline and clear project deliverables. Be sure that both you and the organization have a clear understanding about the project you will complete, and the time required. Do not commit to more than you have time to do—if you can only complete the project to a certain stage, let the organization know up front.

Bear in mind that in some cases the organization’s leadership may be relying on you to define the scope. Be sure to be very clear about the work you will do, how long it will take, what the result will be, and how the organization should follow-up.

Let the organization know what resources (if any) you need to complete the project.

Think of each project like part of your job, which requires you to follow through until you complete a task or project.

BEST PRACTICES

“Employing my marketing skills for the New York City Coalition Against Hunger’s Martin Luther King Jr. Serve-a-Thon allowed me to secure local in-kind donations and volunteers, as well as leverage a valuable corporate partnership for the organization. I’ve found that researching organizations and considering my long-term volunteer aspirations before contacting the nonprofit is important in optimizing my volunteer experience. Whether it’s working on a large event or a small office project, utilizing one’s professional skills wields greater, long-term impact for both the volunteer and the cause.”

- ELIZABETH FREE, SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEER
RECRUIT SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERS TO PROVIDE FREE, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

SKILLS NEEDED

➤ You need to supervise and direct the work of your volunteer(s). Also, you will need to be able to discuss a scope of work (what you need and when), and preferably the resources to implement the work of your skilled volunteer (if applicable). For example, if you have a volunteer design a new brochure, you should have the resources to print and distribute it.

ADVANTAGES

➤ Professional services are extremely expensive—often cost prohibitive. Obtaining skilled volunteers on a pro bono basis enables you to obtain services which would otherwise be unaffordable for your organization.

➤ Volunteers with professional skills can help build the organization’s long-term capacity.

➤ Engaging local businesses in your work can help expand your base of support and connect new audiences to your mission.

CHALLENGES

➤ Engaging professionals to complete important projects requires advanced planning, a clear scope of work, and some due diligence to ensure that the volunteer is capable of handling the project.

STEPS TO CREATING SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Matching a volunteer to a specific agency can be difficult. In order to maximize your volunteer experience, make sure that the organization and volunteer are a good fit!

✔ Clarify your needs. If you need a new website, brochure, or help with your budget, outline a scope of work with project deliverables and timeline.

✔ Identify who will supervise your volunteer’s work with the staff.

✔ Post a volunteer job description on one or more of the following sites:

   ▹ www.nycch.org/get-involved/volunteer
   ▹ www.Idealist.org
   ▹ www.volunteermatch.org
   ▹ www.taproot.org
   ▹ www.allforgood.org
   ▹ www.simplyhired.com

✔ Ask potential volunteers for a resumé, references, and/or portfolio.

✔ Set a clear timeline with the volunteer.

✔ Provide your volunteer with the information (s)he needs to complete the project.
RESOURCES

Finding and Posting Skills-Based Volunteer Opportunities

- www.nyccah.org/get-involved/volunteer
- www.Idealist.org
- www.volunteermatch.org
- www.taproot.org
- www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/skillsbasedvolunteering
- www.simplyhired.com
- allforgood.org

Other Resources for Volunteers, Hunger Groups, and Businesses

If you or your company is interested in partnering with the Coalition in our Strategic Volunteer Initiative, we can work with you and an anti-hunger organization in your area to create customized short-term or long-term volunteer projects. Please contact Valerie Boucard, Director of Strategic Volunteerism, at vboucard@nyccah.org to learn more.

Anti-hunger groups, many of which are small and volunteer-run, desperately need skills-based help from professionals with expertise in areas including:

- Accounting
- Web design
- Strategic planning
- Fundraising
- Legal advice
- Nutrition education and/or cooking demonstrations
- Writing and/or editing newsletters, brochures, and web content
- Marketing and communications
- Information technology
- Graphic design services
- Project management
- Customer service
- Data collection and tracking
- Budgeting
- Logistical services
“Serving on the Board of Directors of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger is a big responsibility. It means attending and actively participating in meetings, connecting the organization with resources, planning with colleagues, and carefully reviewing financial and program reports. It is a significant commitment of time and attention, which I take very seriously. There is no doubt in my mind that the efforts I make on behalf of NYCCAH are extremely worthwhile: I know that helping an excellent nonprofit group strengthen its capacity to help even more people in better ways is the single best way I can spend my time fighting hunger. Personally, the commitment is big, but the pay-off is far bigger.”

TIMOTHY BROSnan, CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, NEW YORK CITY COALITION AGAINST HUNGER
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL REAL ESTATE, MOODY’S INVESTORS SERVICE

While the Board does not generally involve itself in the day-to-day activities of an organization (which are the responsibility of the Executive Director), it does provide vital oversight functions.

Board members must be individual adults (groups or businesses cannot collectively serve on Boards, but they can recruit individuals to do so). Usually some type of professional expertise and/or the ability to donate, raise money, or provide in-kind support is expected. Serving on a Board provides nonprofit groups with vital assistance in governance which helps to build their long-term capacity-building.

An individual becomes a member of a nonprofit Board in one of two ways: either you take an interest in an organization and pursue membership or the organization takes an interest in you and requests that you join its Board.
**ACTIVITY**

**SERVE ON A NONPROFIT BOARD TO PROVIDE SUPPORT, OVERSIGHT, AND LEADERSHIP TO A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**

**IMPACT-O-METER**

**EXTREMELY HELPFUL**

**WHO CAN DO IT**

**VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS AND PROFESSIONALS**

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**NOTE SPACE**

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**SKILLS NEEDED**

- Commitment to the organization’s cause and mission.
- Ability to network, donate and/or raise funds, present new and effective ideas, and a willingness to work with a diverse group to build the capacity of the nonprofit.
- Experience with governance and/or comfortable with higher levels of responsibility, a plus.

**ADVANTAGES**

- Gain leadership experience.
- Build your experience in organizational governance.
- Apply your knowledge, skills and contacts to help an organization achieve its mission.
- Advance a social cause, while still maintaining employment in the for-profit sector.

**CHALLENGES**

- Serving as a Board member typically requires a long-term commitment—at least one year—with legal, fiscal, and administrative responsibilities; you must be able to regularly attend meetings and carefully review documents.

**STEPS FOR SEEKING BOARD PLACEMENT**

- **Meet with the organization’s leadership**—both with other Board members and with key staff (CEO, President, or Executive Director) to learn more about the organization, its finances and programs.
- **Review the organization’s financial statements** (including independent audits and 990 forms filed with the IRS)—most nonprofits are required by law to make financial statements available; you will also need to make sure the organization is legitimate, be sure to check the IRS charity director and Guidestar:
  - [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)
- **Be sure that you clearly understand Board member roles, responsibilities, and time requirements**, which vary by organization and often by state laws.
- **Interview with existing Board members** to ask questions and determine if joining the organization is a good fit.
- **Ask questions about the approval process**—new Board members must be approved by a vote of the existing Board. A disclosure of conflict of interest should be signed and reviewed annually. Be aware that there are considerable resources for individuals and organizations on Board leadership, governance, and responsibilities. You may consider training by an outside consultant or other training available in your area.
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Serving on a nonprofit Board is different from a corporate Board in some notable ways.

NONPROFIT BOARDS REQUIRE:

- **Expertise** from business people or passionate members who work in an industry that supports the organizational mission.
- **Diversity** amongst Board members, who represent various perspectives that strengthen the organization.
- Each member is expected to provide some type of monetary contribution or in-kind donation (e.g., space, professional services, items etc.) to the organization.
- Members are also encouraged to engage their companies’ interest in the organization, pro-bono services, or other forms of support (e.g., as an event sponsor, through volunteerism, or by providing matching funds).
- **Active fundraisers:** members should establish and use their connections to build visibility for the organization’s mission and to help raise funds to support the group’s work.
- **Board member should remain loyal** to the organization’s policy, mission, and growth.
- **Preparation and participation** for all Board meetings.
- Presence and monetary or in-kind support at events and fundraisers.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Each organizational Board has different roles and responsibilities. To give one example, the roles and responsibilities of Board members for the New York City Coalition Against Hunger are included here:

- The Coalition is dedicated to having a Board of Directors that fully represents the astounding diversity of New York City. The Coalition has set a goal that at least half of the members of the Board be representatives of emergency feeding programs, including food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, food rescue groups, or umbrella groups that work with such programs.
- Board members must be at least 18 years of age.
- Board members must have an interest in hunger issues.
- Board members must have a demonstrated commitment to New York City.
- Board members must be willing to contribute time and energy to the Coalition with no financial compensation for their service.

All Board members of the Coalition are expected to:

- Provide vision, energy, and insight to the organization, working consistently to increase its resources and effectiveness.
- Work to help the Coalition meet the short-term food needs of low-income New Yorkers, as well as to implement innovative solutions to the long-term poverty that causes hunger.
- Represent the organization in meetings with potential contributors, government officials, and community leaders.
- Attend Board meetings (at least four times a year) and committee meetings in person and actively participate in discussions and decision-making.
- Attend fundraising and media events sponsored by the Coalition.
- Read the minutes of meetings and all reports, including financial statements and reports by employees.
- Read any literature produced as part of the organization’s programs.
- Conduct careful oversight of the organization’s financial controls and promote and protect the assets and funds of the organization.
- Contribute money and/or help raise money from other sources.
- Review and approve an annual budget for the organization.
- Set goals for, evaluate the performance of, and determine the compensation for the Executive Director; if this position becomes vacant, select a new Executive Director.
- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived, regarding any potential personal financial gain for themselves or their family from their involvement with the Coalition.
- Ensure that the organization carries out its purposes and does not engage in unauthorized activities.
RECRUIT BOARD MEMBERS FOR YOUR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

SKILLS NEEDED

- The time and ability to identify and evaluate potential Board members.

ADVANTAGES

- Most nonprofits are in constant need of more active and effective Board members. Effective Boards provide monetary and/or in-kind support, leadership, program guidance, and fiscal oversight.
- Enhance your organization’s resources.
- Benefit from the professional knowledge of your Board members.
- Expand your base of support through Board network connections and leadership.

CHALLENGES

- Finding effective Board members is one of the most important tasks of any nonprofit organization, and also one of the most difficult. You may want to ask your existing Board members to reach out to others in their network, or recruit members to help you fill specific organizational needs. You may also consider available trainings for your existing Board members.

STEPS FOR RECRUITING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

- **Talk to your existing Board members to discuss your needs** for potential new members, what skills would be most useful, and who will be involved in the search process.
- **Define your priorities:** What qualifications are you looking for in a new Board member? What are your organization’s short, medium, and long-term goals? For example, if you are in a growth phase, you may be looking for someone with a strong financial background.
- **Develop a list of potential candidates,** and keep it current—in developing this list, look to your consistent volunteers, people in your network who are passionate about your organization, and capable of advancing the work of your organization.
- **Identify and review any possible conflicts of interest** among your candidate list.
- **Your potential candidates should interview with your Board Chair and your Executive Director** to determine if the person is a good fit—much like in a job interview.

If you have the resources to do so, you may consider recruiting through an agency or through other Board Recruitment services, you may also wish to list your Board opportunity through Bridgestar:

[bridgestar.org/Library/RecruitingBoardMembers.aspx](http://bridgestar.org/Library/RecruitingBoardMembers.aspx)
Ajit started volunteering with Neighbors Together in November 2011. What started out as volunteering at a soup kitchen turned into creating a new website and joining the Board of Directors. His experiences with Neighbors Together illustrate how volunteers can use their skills to create invaluable tools for an organization.

**How did you get involved with Neighbors Together?**
I had left my job as a scientist to focus on turning a third play of mine into a novel. The writing life can be isolating, and after talking to some friends, some of whom were/are on the NT Board, they suggested that I should volunteer at NT. I first came the week before Thanksgiving, and I volunteered 3 times a week for a few months after that.

**What made you want to volunteer initially?**
Volunteering was a way to both contribute to my community and to structure my day. I know that I write better when I have only a handful of hours to write instead of an entire day. Also, I had volunteered at a soup kitchen for two years when I was in Seattle, so when friends suggested that I volunteer at NT, I knew what the work would be like.

**After volunteering in the kitchen, how did you get involved with taking photos and working on the website?**
Documentary photography has always been an interest of mine, and with time away from work, my interest in photography has grown and grown. When I initially met Denny (Neighbors Together’s Executive Director), I had suggested that photography is something that I could offer, and she said it would be great to photograph their Thanksgiving meal. I later also photographed the Christmas meal, since both are large events. With the latter event, it was important to do something different, so I focused on portraits instead of documentary shots.

In casual conversations with Denny, she mentioned that she didn’t like the current website, and I’ve worked on many websites before. Offering to help create a new site was easy to do, given my experience, and it helps the Board’s efforts to raise money.

**Did you see there was a need to be met? Did someone on staff specifically ask you for help?**
Despite the large amount of services they provide, NT is actually a small group. So when dissatisfaction was mentioned, either about the website or about quality photos of the work being done, I knew that I could help with those items. I don’t know if there was any asking, per se. It was more of an “Oh, I can help with that. What do you think?”.

**When/How did you decide you wanted to join the Board?**
After volunteering for a few months, the Chairman of the Board, who is also a close friend, asked me if I wanted to join. In previous years, Board members had not been as active in fundraising. Being on the Board was more of a management role, but times have changed and now it’s more important for every Board member to actively fundraise. By this time, I really felt invested in the work at Neighbors Together and in the people.

There are very few Board members who volunteer there or go there regularly. Part of my desire to join the Board was to inform the Board what the concerns of someone who volunteers there can be, of what the concerns of staff members are, and to convey the experience of volunteering at NT.

**What do you want to do as a Board member?**
There are things that I want to do and tasks that the Board has to do right now. Fundraising is an important issue, so every member of the Board is focused on those efforts.

Yet should the pressure of fundraising ease up in the near future, I would love to determine ways to increase the number of regular volunteers to NT and to see how to foster that growth. We have such an easy way for anyone in NYC to volunteer. There’s no specific knowledge that they need—just the ability to stand for two hours and move their arms to serve food. In the process, they’ll have a rewarding experience that may be quite different than their normal lives.

I’d also love to streamline some of the technologies used, whether that’s the data-mining tools that the Executive Director does to summarize attendance or the software necessary to record who is at meals.
RESOURCES

For additional resources on nonprofit Board member responsibilities, building effective Boards, training and consulting:

- www.boardsource.org

For volunteers seeking Board placements and organizations looking for new members:

- www.bridgestar.org/Library/RecruitingBoardMembers.aspx

For detailed information about Board member roles, responsibilities, ethical considerations, and sample documents:

- managementhelp.org/boards/index.htm
- governancematters.org
- boardnetusa.org
- boardassist.org
SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps) provides vouchers—available electronically on cards similar to bank cards—that enable low-income families to shop for the food they need at private grocery stores and markets. For families with children, an added benefit of being enrolled in SNAP is that their children are automatically made eligible for free breakfasts and lunches at schools.

Since the modern Food Stamp/SNAP program was created in the 1970s, it has cost-effectively prevented tens of millions of American families from going hungry when they are unemployed or earn low wages, and has pumped hundreds of billions of dollars into the U.S. economy, creating U.S. jobs for those who grow, process, manufacture, ship, warehouse, wholesale, and retail food.
About half of all SNAP participants are children, and nearly ten percent are senior citizens. Most of the rest are working parents and people with disabilities.

Even though 45 million Americans benefitted from SNAP in 2011, about 28 percent of people eligible for the benefits (17 million Americans) do not receive benefits. Four out of ten eligible, working Americans remain unenrolled. There are many reasons that eligible people do not apply for, or ultimately enroll in, the program, including:

- Misconceptions about whether they are eligible, and how much in benefits they can obtain.
- Lack of time to travel to a government office, wait in line, participate in an interview, and submit multiple documents.
- General stigma, fear, and embarrassment.

Fortunately, there are concrete ways for volunteers to help potentially eligible people overcome all these barriers and to help them more easily obtain the nutrition assistance their families need.

Even though 45 million Americans benefitted from SNAP in 2011, about 28% of people eligible for the benefits (17 million Americans) still did not receive benefits.
Anyone can volunteer to do basic benefits outreach, such as handing out flyers or making phone calls. More advanced outreach requires training, access to technology, collaboration with host locations, and a background check.

SNAP outreach activities can be done alone or in small or large groups. Some are even family-friendly. Below are some other examples of SNAP outreach activities:

- **Contact your elected officials** to ask them to make it easier for eligible people to obtain benefits. See Chapter 10 on advocacy methods.
- **Make follow-up phone calls** to confirm pre-screening or application interview appointments or to inform individuals/families that it is time for them to re-certify for benefits.
- **Call in to talk radio shows, write letters** to the editors of local newspapers, and post blogs to encourage potentially eligible people to apply for SNAP and explain how they can do so.
- **Convince local businesses** (and particularly food-related businesses) to hang up posters and/or distribute flyers that encourage potentially eligible people to apply.
- **Gather data** for studies that identify barriers preventing SNAP participation.
- **Raise money** for nonprofit organizations that conduct SNAP outreach activities. See Chapter 3 for more information on raising money.
- **Make phone calls** to a targeted list of low-income families to encourage them to find out if they are eligible and, if they are, to apply for benefits.
- **Pre-screen** low-income individuals for SNAP eligibility and/or conduct SNAP application assistance (requires training).
DISTRIBUTE COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC SNAP INFORMATION

IMPACT-O-METER
EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, KIDS, GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES

Note space

SKILLS NEEDED
➢ Volunteers should be comfortable talking to people from diverse backgrounds.
➢ Additional languages in some target communities a plus, but not required.

ADVANTAGES
➢ Interact directly with low-income people in need, community-based organizations, and local businesses in your community.
➢ Students build leadership skills and play a strong role in improving community food programs.

CHALLENGES
➢ Distributing outreach materials in low-income neighborhoods may be out of some volunteers’ comfort zone, consider doing this activity in small groups and/or at local community events.
➢ Outreach is best conducted in small to mid-size groups, for safety reasons.
➢ Children under 18 should always be supervised by an adult.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION: OPEN
➢ A half-day or day of outreach in a particular community
➢ Multiple days of group outreach in under-served neighborhoods during local community events

VOLUNTEER STEPS FOR DISTRIBUTING COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC SNAP INFORMATION
✓ Download free materials on SNAP, such as flyers, brochures and posters on participating locations:
   www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm
   www.ssa.gov/pubs/10101.html
✓ Identify the neighborhood(s) where you plan to conduct outreach.
✓ Contact emergency food providers in your target neighborhood or community to find out if they conduct SNAP outreach, referral services or application assistance. To find local emergency food providers in your neighborhood, please call the Hunger Hotline toll free at 1-866-3-HUNGER or 1-877-3-HAMBRE.
ADVANCED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

There are also more advanced SNAP outreach activities, which can only be conducted by adults, and only by volunteering in very small groups or as individuals. However, companies, religious organizations, and civic groups can work closely with anti-hunger organizations to recruit their own employees/members for such activities. These activities require significant training, and would require an additional time commitment, but can often have the most significant and lasting impact in terms of providing food to struggling families. Such advanced activities include:

- **Facilitate families applying directly for benefits either online, by mail, or by fax.** Some of the most advanced projects allow volunteers to help families directly submit their supporting documentation as well. Because volunteers for such efforts may have access to personal financial data of applicants, the volunteers may be subject to background checks.

- **Go to locations in which low-income people may gather**—such as soup kitchens, food pantries, food cupboards, WIC clinics, day care centers, medical clinics, supermarkets, farmers’ markets, workplaces, churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.—and pre-screen people for SNAP eligibility using a laptop with special software.

- **Conduct SNAP pre-screening interviews** over the phone.

HOW TO SIGN-UP

- Visit the New York City Coalition Against Hunger’s online volunteer matching program at [www.hungervolunteer.org](http://www.hungervolunteer.org) to see if there are active volunteer opportunities that fit your needs and register on the site.

- Contact local anti-hunger organizations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- USDA general information about SNAP and other federal nutrition assistance programs: [www.fns.usda.gov/fns](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns)
CHAPTER 6: SNAP OUTREACH

BEST PRACTICES

THE LOS ANGELES REGIONAL FOOD BANK

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank (LARFB), recruits volunteers in the community not only to sort and pack food in their warehouse, but also to conduct outreach for the CalFresh (the name for SNAP in California) program. Because volunteers go out into communities and interact with low income families to help them apply for benefits, they look for volunteers who are patient and understanding. Confidentiality and honesty are highly priorities because volunteers often deal with personal information such as social security numbers, addresses, and phone numbers. Bilingual volunteers are also often needed, to help families submit applications in Spanish.

LARFB has two AmeriCorps VISTA national service participants focused on providing training for agencies and volunteers to provide CalFresh outreach and application assistance to low-income residents of their communities. One of the VISTAs, Kelly Archer stated:

“During my VISTA year I have found that the best way to find all these qualities in a volunteer is to look for organizational staff or volunteers who are already working with the community and would be willing to help with CalFresh in addition to what they are already doing. Volunteers can do CalFresh application assistance full-time or part-time based on the hours they have free each month.”

For example, LARFB works with Housing Service Coordinators at Adobe Communities, training them on CalFresh eligibility and application information in order to help them provide information to over 4,000 residents of their housing developments, many of whom are eligible but are not receiving CalFresh. By training these active community members, who already have a foot in the door with the community, LARFB empowers people to help their neighbors in a familiar environment. Housing Coordinators already interact with their communities and are well suited to serve as the main contact in their development for anyone who wants to find more information, ask questions or apply for benefits.

LARFB’s AmeriCorps VISTAs also developed a Prezi—described by one of their trainees as a “PowerPoint on steroids”—to train volunteers. Presentations are adapted for each cohort of volunteers, based on the community they serve. During the training presentation for Abode Communities Housing Service Coordinators, where many residents are immigrants, they spent extra time talking about immigrant regulations pertaining to CalFresh. Volunteers appreciate that LARFB takes their particular situations into account because it demonstrates both an effort to understand volunteers’ work and a vested interest in their success with the CalFresh program.

One group of volunteers will take the knowledge they gained from LARFB training to create CalFresh awareness at the 20 different Los Angeles Unified School District Parent Centers (PC), where they will be stationed for a year of service. LARFB provided the resources they need to set up CalFresh Corners in their PCs, enabling parents and students who visit their PC to see the brochures and posters, ask questions, and apply for benefits. These PCs are located throughout the school district, and serve hundreds of thousands of families. In this way, LARFB trains volunteers and enables them to make a huge impact.
Virtually any organization or institution can easily and cheaply conduct the basic SNAP outreach activities outlined in this chapter. Some of the activities can be completed as new stand-alone activities, but others (such as making confirmation calls) can only be done in conjunction with an existing SNAP outreach program.

The more advanced volunteer activities, like training volunteers to pre-screen individuals for SNAP eligibility, require more extensive staff and infrastructure. Even projects carried out by unpaid volunteers generally need paid staff or stipend AmeriCorps members to help recruit and manage the volunteers. Below are some useful resources for getting started:

**Print Resources**

- USDA provides free outreach materials online at: [snap.ntis.gov](http://snap.ntis.gov)
- To better target local, low-income communities, you can easily find census poverty data at: [factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml)

**Human Resources**

- To obtain national service AmeriCorps or VISTA participants, organizations can apply through their state’s commission on national and community service or directly through the federal Corporation for National and Community Service: [www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/overview/index.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/overview/index.asp)
- Organizations, groups, government agencies, or business seeking technical assistance on how to implement such efforts anywhere in the U.S. can also contact the New York City Coalition Against Hunger at (212) 825-0028 or volunteer@nyccah.org.

**Funding Resources**

- A number of government programs and private foundations fund staff for SNAP outreach activities. To obtain such funding from USDA, nonprofit organizations can either apply directly to USDA for grants (see [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/grants.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/grants.htm)) or be indirectly funded through a state SNAP outreach plan (see [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm) and [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/Outreach_Plan_Guidance.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/Outreach_Plan_Guidance.pdf)).

  Additional information on potential funding sources:
RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO CONDUCT SNAP OUTREACH

IMPACT-O-METER

EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT

ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED

→ Must be able to supervise volunteers, be aware of local SNAP resources, and have the ability to create and copy community specific flyers.

ADVANTAGES

→ Connecting eligible households to SNAP benefits reduces the demand for food from your program and improves food security for your clients.

→ This is an ideal activity for groups, limited only by the number of flyers you can print.

→ Helps introduce volunteers to deeper community hunger issues, while still offering a group activity.

→ Enables you to accommodate larger volunteer groups.

CHALLENGES

→ Distributing outreach materials in low-income neighborhoods may be out of some volunteers' comfort zone, you may consider having volunteers conduct outreach locally.

→ Children under 18 should always be supervised by an adult.

→ Volunteers need to be supervised by someone from your program staff.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION: Open

→ A half-day or day of outreach in a particular community

→ Multiple days of group outreach in underserved neighborhoods

→ At a community event where you have a table

STEPS FOR RECRUITING SNAP OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS

✓ Download free materials on SNAP, such as flyers, brochures and posters: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm

✓ Identify the neighborhood, community or event for the volunteers to conduct outreach.

✓ Make a calendar of events where outreach would be appropriate in your area.

✓ Contact organizers of upcoming events in your community to see if you can have a table at the event, in order to conduct SNAP outreach or offer assistance or referrals.

✓ Post your volunteer opportunity through all available online, print and local venues.

✓ If you are conducting outreach at an event, you may want to have volunteers meet you at your location and travel to the event together. This gives you time to explain the importance of the program, and your work to connect low-income families to food.

✓ Have your volunteers distribute information to passers-by, or on-site at a community event, and/or ask local supermarkets, community centers, bodegas, etc., to display information in a prominent place.
CHAPTER 6: SNAP OUTREACH

BEST PRACTICES

HELPING SENIORS RECEIVE BENEFITS IN CONNECTICUT

Special Projects Coordinator Mary Parizo expressed that she knew the volunteers’ “hearts were in it” and that many of them looked at the experience as an “eye opener to realize that people can survive on so little.” The program is expected to expand and eventually have its own space with a complete call center.

Seniors are one of the populations least likely to access SNAP benefits for which they are eligible. End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!), an anti-hunger advocacy organization, AARP-CT, and Foodshare, the Hartford area food bank, have joined forces once again to increase volunteerism in benefits outreach work for seniors.

The organizations utilized SNAP volunteers to help mail informational postcards to AARP’s members who appeared to be income-eligible for SNAP. Following the mailing, the SNAP volunteers helped call eligible members and assist them through the application process.

By helping seniors obtain benefits, volunteers change lives by ensuring low-income retirees have the food they need long-term.
FACTS AND TALKING POINTS ON SNAP/FOOD STAMPS

10 FACTS ON U.S. HUNGER AND HOW FEDERAL PROGRAMS LIKE SNAP/FOOD STAMPS COMBAT IT

Keep these facts on hand for discussions with friends, family members, neighbors, congregants, and co-workers:

#1: In 2011, more than 50.1 million U.S. residents, including nearly 17 million children, lived in households that couldn’t afford enough food.
That means that one in six Americans, and one in five U.S. children, struggle against hunger.

#2: Most hungry Americans are either low-wage workers, children, senior citizens, or people with disabilities.
USDA has found that, out of families with children suffering from food insecurity and hunger, 68 percent contained at least one adult working full-time, 10 percent had at least one adult working part-time, seven percent had an unemployed adult actively looking for work, and eight percent were headed by an adult with a disability. The main problem is low wages and few jobs, not laziness.

#3: Hungry Americans can also be overweight.
Because low-income families have more difficulty affording the most nutritious foods, and because low-income neighborhoods are often “food deserts” that lack healthy food options, hunger and obesity are often flip-sides of the same malnutrition coin. Some Americans falsely believe that some low-income people are obese because they shop poorly, fail to cook at home, or choose to eat too much fast food. But a recent study proved that the vast majority of low-income families cooked at home at least five nights a week, and desperately struggled to serve healthier food. Another new study also found that middle class people eat fast food more often than low-income people, which shouldn’t be surprising since SNAP (food stamp) benefits generally can’t be used to eat at restaurants, including fast food restaurants.

#4: One of the most effective ways to reduce U.S. hunger is to increase participation in federal nutrition assistance programs.
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as the Food Stamp Program—the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the National Summer Food Service Program, and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program all work quickly and effectively to get food to those who need it most.

#5: History proves that federal nutrition assistance programs have worked spectacularly well.
As late as the 1960s, teams of doctors were able to find pockets of Third World-style hunger and malnutrition in America, which generated significant media reaction and political attention. In response, Presidents and Congresses worked together in a bipartisan fashion to expand the Food Stamp Program and federal Summer Meals programs for children from relatively small pilot projects into the large-scale programs we know today, and also created the National School Breakfast Program, as well as the WIC Program that provides nutrition supplements to low-income pregnant women and their small children. These expansions succeeded remarkably in achieving their main goal: ending starvation conditions in America. In 1979, when investigators returned to many of the same parts of the U.S. in which they had previously found high rates of hunger, they found dramatic reductions in hunger and malnutrition, concluding: “This change does not appear to be due to an overall improvement in living standards or to a decrease in joblessness in these areas... The Food Stamp Program, the nutritional components of Head Start, school lunch and breakfast programs, and... WIC have made the difference.”

#6: SNAP prevents hunger for tens of millions of American families and boosts the economy.
SNAP provides vouchers—available electronically on cards similar to bank credit or debit cards—that enable low-income families to shop for the food they need at private grocery stores and markets. Because SNAP creates U.S. jobs for those who grow, pick, process, manufacture, ship, warehouse, wholesale, and retail food, every dollar spent on the program generates $1.84 in U.S. economic activity.
#7: Most of the people who receive SNAP are children, seniors, working parents, and people with disabilities.
About half of all SNAP participants are children, and nearly 10 percent are seniors. Most of the rest are working parents and people with disabilities. Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for benefits, and even many legal immigrants, including many with full-time jobs, are also ineligible.

#8: SNAP benefits that are illegally sold constitute only about one percent of all SNAP benefit dollars, proving that there is less fraud in SNAP than in most big businesses, nonprofit groups, or defense contracts.
Due to increased oversight and improvements to program management by the USDA, the illegal trafficking of benefits has fallen significantly over the last two decades, from about four cents on the dollar in 1993 to about one cent in 2006-08.

#9: Hungry families may be your neighbors.
While many equate hunger with homelessness, the vast majority of hungry Americans aren’t homeless; they just earn too little money to afford all the food they need. Hungry families live in urban and rural areas—and increasingly even in the suburbs. Most hungry families are white.

#10: Despite increasing SNAP participation, many eligible for benefits still don’t get them, and eligible working families have the lowest participation rates.
In 2009, more than a quarter of eligible households, and more than 4 in 10 eligible working households, did not receive the SNAP benefits to which they were entitled. There are many reasons that eligible people do not apply for—or ultimately enroll in—the program, including: misconceptions about whether they can get SNAP and how much in benefits they can obtain; lack of time to travel to a government office, wait in line, participate in an interview that often feels like an interrogation, and/or submit a large amount of documents; and stigma, fear, and embarrassment. Fortunately, there are concrete ways for volunteers to help potentially eligible people overcome all these barriers and to help them more easily obtain the nutrition assistance their families so desperately need.

SNAP BENEFITS OUTREACH TALKING POINTS
Benefits Outreach is the most meaningful exercise of strategic volunteerism aimed at lowering rates of hunger and poverty. SNAP/food stamps is the largest nutrition benefit program in the U.S. and “the cornerstone of the nation’s safety net and nutrition assistance programs.”

➤ Currently, 1 in 7 Americans receive SNAP/food stamp benefits, yet only two-thirds of eligible households are enrolled in the program. Expenditures for SNAP/food stamps in 2011 were $75.67 billion.

➤ Nationwide, SNAP benefits virtually always provide far more food than do private charities. According to NYCCAH’s 2010 Annual Hunger Survey Report, food pantries “reported the average monthly value of food they distribute per household around $98, compared to the average monthly benefit for a household receiving SNAP/food stamp benefits in NYC at $289.45.”

➤ Positive Returns: a 2008 report published by Moody’s estimates every $5 the government spends on SNAP/food stamps generates $9 in local economic activity, making it by far the most robust form of stimulus spending.

➤ More individuals and families than ever are eligible for benefits! By increasing program participation and removing systemic barriers, SNAP serves as a safeguard against the spiral into poverty for millions of Americans—an “effective and efficient” public benefit.

RESOURCES

RESOURCES FOR VOLUNTEERS INTERESTED IN SNAP OUTREACH:

USDA General Information about SNAP and Other Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs:
www.fns.usda.gov/fns

USDA Guide on How to Leverage SNAP Outreach Partnerships:

USDA Community Outreach Partner ToolKit:

Food Research and Action Center Guide to SNAP/Food Stamp Collaborations:

For the Full USDA Report on SNAP Recipients:
www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Trends2002-09.pdf

RESOURCES FOR ORGANIZATIONS INTERESTED IN FUNDING SNAP WORK:

USDA Free Outreach Materials:
www.fns.usda.gov/snap
Then click on “Info Materials” under “Browse By Subjects” (English and Spanish versions available)

USDA Free Toolkits for Outreach:
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/tool-kits.htm

Funding for SNAP through USDA Grants:
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/grants.htm

Funding through State SNAP Outreach Plans:
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm

Additional Information on Potential Funding Sources:
www.clasp.org/admin/site/documents/files/CWF_SNAP-Outreach.pdf
Child Nutrition Programs include School Breakfast, School Lunch, After-School Snacks, and Summer Meals. While such programs are vital to reducing child hunger, there is significant under-participation in both School Breakfast and Summer Meals.

**SCHOOL BREAKFAST**

Even though breakfast is the most important meal of the day nutritionally, more than half of the kids who receive subsidized school lunches do not receive school breakfasts. While many schools provide breakfast, there are a number of children who do not receive it. Providing a successful educational experience for children is one of the first steps toward creating a city that is self-sufficient.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) statistics computed by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, more than 400,000 New York City children—one in five of the city’s children—live in households that cannot afford enough food. The inability of families to afford nutritious food also adds to the city’s child obesity epidemic. There is enormous scientific evidence that these twin problems significantly hamper the ability of children to learn, and that poor nutrition leads to lower test scores, more visits to school nurses, and higher levels of tardiness and absenteeism. To be well read, children must first be well fed.
CHAPTER 7: CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

SCHOOL BREAKFAST (CONT.)
Yet according to the 2010-2011 School Breakfast in America’s Big Cities report by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), out of 26 big city school districts, New York City ranked 26th, or last place, in the nation. While participation rates in New York City are far below the national average, the problem is echoed in many other communities across the nation. According to FRAC, more than half of urban school districts across the country failed to provide breakfast to a majority of their low-income students, while districts serving breakfast in the classroom had the highest participation rates. Further, fewer than half of the children who receive free or reduced priced lunch at school, also receive breakfast.

Share Our Strength reports similar nationwide data. According to the 2012 Share Our Strength’s Teacher’s Report, three out of five teachers reported that they regularly see kids come to school hungry. Furthermore, teachers overwhelmingly believe that “there is a strong connection between eating a healthy breakfast and a student’s ability to concentrate, behave, and perform academically.”

SUMMER FOOD
The Summer Food Service Program (“Summer Meals”) is a federally-funded child nutrition program designed to provide free meals to children 18 and under during the summer months, when free and reduced price school meals are no longer available.

The summer months are a time when childhood hunger tends to increase. During the school year, free and reduced price school meals provide a significant nutritional resource for low-income children. During the summer, many children are left in a situation where they do not have consistent access to food—in spite of Summer Meals. Unfortunately, the program is vastly underutilized, and only 1 in 7 children who receive free or reduced price meals during the school year, also receive meals in the summer. Emergency food programs, which report increases in demand for food assistance during the summer months, are not equipped to meet this need. One key strategy to fill the summer hunger gap is to expand the reach of, and increase participation in, Summer Meals.

Volunteers can serve a variety of different functions at Summer Meals sites, resulting in increased participation in the program—therefore, reducing childhood hunger. While Summer Meals is a federally-funded program in which sponsors are reimbursed for each meal served to children, the funds are often inadequate to cover the full cost of program operation. Volunteers provide critical support for helping the program operate, and can help improve the program so that more children receive meals.
HELP FAMILIES APPLY FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

SKILLS NEEDED

» Volunteers will need to familiarize themselves with the application process, and important dates; basic computer skills may be required for online applications.

ADVANTAGES FOR VOLUNTEERS

» Experience one-on-one contact with adults and families.
» Directly help children obtain the healthy meals they need to learn and grow long-term.
» Play a significant role in improving school performance in your community.
» Applications are often needed for schools to be reimbursed for the meals they provide—when you help families fill out and submit applications, you also increase federal funding to your school district.

ADVANTAGES FOR SCHOOLS

» Obtain federal reimbursement for all eligible children at your school.
» Help improve school performance and reduce tardiness.
» Engage parents, students, and teachers and the community in your efforts to support healthy nutrition for students.

ADVANTAGES FOR FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

» Receiving reduced or free school meals can reduce both child hunger and monthly food costs for low-income families.
» Children concentrate and perform better in school when they are not experiencing hunger.
» Children who receive reduced price or free lunch can also receive free school breakfast.
» Schools are reimbursed for free and reduced price meals by the federal government, which means that the more eligible families submit applications, the more federal funding the school receives.

CHALLENGES

» Outreach will need to be conducted to coincide with this effort to let families know that application assistance is available.
» You will need to find an appropriate time and location to complete applications.
SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION

- Open
- A half-day or day of outreach in a particular community
- Multiple days of group outreach in underserved neighborhoods at key periods around the school year, such as August/September and June/July, throughout the summer months for Summer Meals programs

STEPS TO HELPING FAMILIES APPLY FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

- Talk to your local school administrators about the application process and participation rates at your school—find out when applications are due to the school, and if the application is available electronically or only on paper.
- Identify a location to conduct your application assistance. You may want contact a local food pantry or soup kitchen to discuss the project with the director, and asking if the agency has space for you to set up a table at key periods in the school year. Consider using space at the school itself, you will need to identify a visible location and let parents and guardians know when application assistance will be available.
- Plan for a specific day and time that you can perform the activity, and make sure families know about it.
- Be sure you have enough copies of the application and/or the resources to use the electronic application (computers with internet connections).
- Familiarize all volunteers with the application process, due dates, and importance of reaching low-income kids.
- If you are using a location off school grounds, be sure to let your school know the date(s) and duration of application assistance.
- Ask for permission from parents or guardians to submit applications directly to the school, or have families submit completed applications on their own.
- Bring all your completed applications to school in advance of the due date.
Distribute School District-Specific Information on School Breakfast

**Activity**

**Impact-O-Meter**
- Extremely Helpful

**Who Can Do It**
- Volunteers: adults, students, groups, and businesses

**Note Space**

**Skills Needed**
- Volunteers should be comfortable talking to people from diverse backgrounds, connection to local parent-teacher associations or school liaisons, a plus but not required.

**Advantages for Volunteers**
- Meet and connect with other parents, school administrators, teachers, and local businesses in your community.
- Helps improve overall school performance—studies show that kids who eat breakfast have higher math and reading scores and fewer instances of tardiness;
- Students build strong leadership skills and play a strong role in improving school food.
- Unique service-learning opportunity.

**Advantages for Businesses**
- Strengthens community relationships.
- Increases your company’s visibility by promoting School Breakfast.

**Challenges**
- Distributing outreach materials in low-income neighborhoods may be out of some volunteers’ comfort zone.
- Outreach is best conducted in small to mid-size groups, for safety reasons.
- Children under 18 should always be supervised by an adult.

**Suggested Time Frame & Duration**
- Open
- A half-day or day of outreach in a particular community.
- Multiple days of group outreach in under-served neighborhoods at key periods around the school year, such as August/September and June/July, throughout the summer months for Summer Meals programs.
CHAPTER 7: CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

VOLUNTEER STEPS FOR DISTRIBUTING SCHOOL BREAKFAST INFORMATION

☑ Download or obtain free materials on School Breakfast, such as flyers, brochures, posters on participating locations, available online at:
   - www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm
   - If you prefer to develop your own outreach materials, you can easily make and distribute your own flyers—just verify with the schools that the information is accurate and up-to-date.

☑ Contact the schools you plan to target to ensure you have accurate information on their School Meals program details and requirements. Many schools also serve as Summer Meals sites.

☑ Identify the neighborhood(s) where outreach is needed.

☑ Find events like PTA meetings, community councils, and town meetings.

☑ Distribute information to key school leaders like principals, teachers, and PTA leadership to inform them about the benefits of school breakfast.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SCHOOL BREAKFAST

➤ Child Nutrition Programs include School Meals—School Breakfast in the Cafeteria and Breakfast in the Classroom are provided for free or at reduced cost to low-income kids.

➤ Public schools limit access to school grounds to students, teachers and their parents, you must contact school administration before posting information inside the school—see if your school can include a notice in their bulletin, or in mailers to parents.

➤ In many cases, parents are required to fill out an application form so that their children can obtain free or reduced price meals.

➤ School Breakfast is extremely under-utilized. Only 48% of children who receive free or reduced lunch also receive breakfast.
# Distribute Community-Specific Information on Summer Meals Sites

**Impact-O-Meter**

**Extremely Helpful**

**Activity**

**Who Can Do It**

Volunteers: Adults, Kids, Groups, and Businesses

**Skills Needed**

- Volunteers should be comfortable talking to people from diverse backgrounds.

**Advantages for Volunteers**

- Meet and connect with other parents, community-based organizations, and local businesses in your community.
- Students build leadership skills and play a strong role in improving community food programs.
- Unique service-learning opportunity.

**Advantages for Businesses**

- Strengthen community relationships.
- Increase your company’s visibility.
- Unique team building opportunity.
- Lending credibility to the program in turn lends credibility to your business.

**Challenges**

- Distributing outreach materials in low-income neighborhoods may be out of some volunteers’ comfort zone.
- Outreach is best conducted in small to mid-size groups, for safety reasons.
- Children under 18 should always be supervised by an adult.

**Suggested Time Frame & Duration**

- Open
- A half-day or day of outreach in a particular community
- Multiple days of group outreach in underserved neighborhoods throughout the summer months for Summer Meals programs
VOLUNTEERS STEPS FOR DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION ON SUMMER MEALS

☑ Download free materials on Summer Meals—such as flyers, brochures, posters on participating locations.
  www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm
  ➔ If you prefer to develop your own outreach materials, you can easily make and distribute your own flyers—just verify with the schools that the information is accurate and up-to-date.

☑ Identify the neighborhood(s) where you plan to conduct outreach.

☑ Contact the Summer Meals Program sites you plan to target to ensure you have accurate information on their location, hours and requirement.

☑ Discuss your plan with your nearest Summer Meals Program sites to find out which ones need volunteers to conduct outreach. To find one nearest you, visit:

☑ Have enough materials for volunteers to distribute, 75-100 per person per hour of volunteer outreach.

☑ Check listings for community events for families and call and ask if you can have a table on site during the event.

☑ Distribute information to passers-by, on-site at a community event, and/or ask local supermarkets, community centers, bodegas, etc., to display information in a prominent place.

☑ If you know of summer programs for children in your area, find out if they offer Summer Meals, and be sure to let them know about the Summer Meals.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SCHOOL BREAKFAST:

➔ Child Nutrition Programs include Summer Meals, which provides meals for eligible kids during the summer months, when school is not in session.

➔ Some locations may not allow you to post or distribute flyers without authorization.

➔ Many Summer Meals programs are offered in public schools.

➔ Since public schools limit access to school grounds to students, teachers and their parents, you must contact school administration before posting information inside the school—see if your local school will include a notice in their bulletin, or in backpack mailers to parents.
### RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO DO SUMMER MEALS OUTREACH

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**SKILLS NEEDED**
- Must be able to supervise volunteers, provide local map of the area to be canvassed, ability to create and copy community specific flyers.

**ADVANTAGES**
- Connecting kids to Summer Meals reduces the demand for food from your program.
- It’s a fun way to engage volunteers in work to reduce child hunger in your community.
- This is an ideal activity for groups, limited only by the number of flyers you can print.

**CHALLENGES**
- Distributing outreach materials in low-income neighborhoods may be out of some volunteers’ comfort zone.
- Children under 18 should always be supervised by an adult.
- It can be difficult to get timely lists of community Summer Meals sites.
- Summer Meals Program site lists may not be entirely accurate, so double check that the program runs at stated hours and the location and contact information are correct before making community specific flyers.

**SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION**
- Open
- A half-day or day of outreach in a particular community
- Multiple days of group outreach in under-served neighborhoods throughout the summer months for Summer Meals programs

**STEPS FOR RECRUITING SUMMER MEALS OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS**
- Download free materials on Summer Meals—such as flyers, brochures, posters on participating locations: summerfood.usda.gov/library/toolkit.pdf
- Download list of Summer Meals Program sites from USDA FNS website, or call the National Hunger Hotline to find locations in your community: 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (Spanish).
CHAPTER 7: CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

STEPS FOR RECRUITING SUMMER MEALS OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS (CONT.)

✔ Contact the sites on your list to:
  ➔ Identify local Summer Meals Program sites with under-participation, which would benefit from outreach.
  ➔ Make sure the information on location and hours is accurate.

✔ Create a flyer that lists sites. To see an example, visit:
  ➤ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/outreach-materials

✔ Print enough materials for volunteers to distribute, 75-100 per person per hour of volunteer outreach.

✔ Check listings for community events for families and call and ask if you can have a table on site during the event.

✔ List your volunteer opportunity through all available channels: hungervolunteer.org, volunteermatch.org, idealist.org, allforgood.org, and through your internal networks, including newsletters, bulletins, and flyers.

✔ If you are conducting outreach at an event, you may want to have volunteers meet you at your location and travel to the event together—this gives you time to explain the importance of the program, and your work to connect low-income children to meals.

✔ Have your volunteers distribute information to passers-by, or on-site at a community event, and/or ask local supermarkets, community centers, bodegas, etc., to display information in a prominent place.

✔ If you know of summer programs for children in your area, find out if they serve Summer Meals, and be sure to let them know about Summer Meals.

✔ To further advertise for Summer Meals sites in your community through media, please see the following:
  ➤ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/media-tactics
APPLY TO SPONSOR A SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SUMMER MEALS)

IMPACT-O-METER
EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

SKILLS NEEDED
- Understanding of government funding applications and program requirements.

ADVANTAGES
- Sponsoring Summer Food Service Program sites in your community can help reduce demand at your existing food program.
- Increasing the number of Summer Food Service Program sites in your community or region improves food security for children.
- Sponsoring a Summer Food Service Program enables you to strengthen your relationships with community-based host sites.

CHALLENGES
- Sponsoring Summer Food Service Programs means that you will be responsible for managing a number of host sites in your community.
- You must be able to demonstrate your ability to handle and prepare food, as well have the staff and funding capacity to supervise host sites in your community.
- Applications are time-intensive, and require significant advanced planning (up to one year in advance, for the next summer season).

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION
- Time-sensitive
- Assess the opportunity to host or sponsor:
  - Consult other Summer Meals sponsors from the previous summer.
  - Consult local schools.
- Mandatory state-sponsored trainings typically occur in February/March for Summer Meals starting in June/July.
- Be sure to start the application assistance at least 12-14 weeks before the deadline.

STEPS FOR APPLYING TO SPONSOR A SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM
- See USDA Guidelines for Sponsors: www.summerfood.usda.gov/Sponsor.htm to determine your eligibility to become a Summer Food Service Program sponsor.
STATE AGENCIES TYPICALLY ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM IN EACH STATE, SO YOU WILL ALSO NEED TO CHECK YOUR STATE APPLICATION PROCEDURES. A DIRECTORY OF STATE AGENCY CONTACTS FOR SUMMER MEALS CAN BE FOUND HERE:


Submit your application to the appropriate state agency, with all required documents, in advance of the application deadline.

If approved as a sponsor, you must:

→ Meet funding requirements to ensure the sustainability of your program.
→ Attend trainings.
→ Locate and recruit host sites in your community or region.
→ Track and record the number of meals served.
→ Monitor host sites, and submit claims for reimbursement.
→ Arrange for meals to be delivered or prepared at host sites.
→ Train and supervise staff and volunteers.
→ Provide training for host sites.

You may provide your own meals, purchase meals through contract with an approved vendor or an agreement with a local school (note that reimbursement is increased for sponsors who prepare their own food).
## RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO HELP COMMUNITY-BASED HUNGER GROUPS & OTHER NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS HOST A SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM SITE

### IMPACT-O-METER

**EXTREMELY HELPFUL**

**WHO CAN DO IT**

ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS: SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM SPONSORS

### SKILLS NEEDED

- Basic understanding of funding applications and requirements.
- Experience assessing organizational capacity, a plus.
- Prior participation in USDA-sponsored webinar or state-sponsored training helpful, but not necessary.

### ADVANTAGES FOR SPONSOR ORGANIZATIONS

- Engages volunteers to help assess potential host sites, provide application assistance, and helps to provide essential support to your existing staff.
- Helps other community based organizations in your area through the application process.
- Helps strengthen your relationships and build strong ties with other local social service providers.
- Helps reduce costs for existing summer programs that serve meals, and are eligible for reimbursement from the federal government.
- Spreads shared costs across many sites helps make the program viable long-term.
- Increases the number of Summer Meals sites in your community or region improves food security for children—meeting shared goals.
- Engages volunteers in long-term substantive work to support your program helps to create a deep connection between volunteers and your program.

### CHALLENGES

- You will need to provide your volunteers with the training and resources to effectively help other sites through the application process.
- You may need to offer your volunteer(s) space in your office.
- Significant screening required to ensure volunteers are able to assess potential host organization's ability to meet program requirements, provide appropriate and professional follow-up, and keep accurate records.
- Applications are time-intensive, be sure to set clear expectations and benchmarks with your volunteers—you may consider setting up a shift for application assistance at your location, or assigning volunteers to specific geographic locations.
- All host sites must be approved by your state agency.
SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION

- Time-sensitive
- Be sure to start providing application assistance at least 12-14 weeks before the deadline.
- Especially relevant each year from January to June.

STEPS FOR RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS TO HELP YOU HOST A SUMMER MEALS SITE

- Discuss with your existing Program Staff to determine how volunteers can help support their work by providing application assistance, who will train and supervise your volunteers, and how volunteers will compile, track, share, and report information to appropriate program staff members.
- Develop a workplan, procedures, and benchmarks for your volunteers, as if they were on staff: include weekly or monthly time requirements, number of target applications, checklist for potential host organization assessments, filing, information sharing, and reporting — structured procedures should be in place before you recruit volunteers.
- Contact your local colleges and universities to inform them of your volunteer opportunity and needs, especially those with Social Work and Case Management programs.
- Post your volunteer opportunity through various resources: college and university lists, hungervolunteer.org, volunteermatch.org, serve.gov, as well as in other resources in your community. Be clear about required qualifications, expectations, and duration of service.
- Interview your potential volunteers, and check references. This kind of opportunity involves more responsibility than the typical volunteer role, so it is especially important that you select volunteers who have both the qualifications and the time to commit to consistent and professional service.
- Train your volunteers! Be sure they understand, and have the resources to:
  - Learn USDA guidelines for host sites.
  - Undertake the work plan they are expected to complete.
  - Compile, file, and share information with your program staff.
  - Assess organizations to determine if they meet host requirements.
  - Work with your existing program staff to achieve and document measurable results.
  - Provide follow-up as necessary.
  - Obtain valuable feedback on their work.
- Track your results, and let the volunteers know how their service have contributed to those results.
- Acknowledge your volunteers’ work and commitment.
PROVIDE APPLICATION ASSISTANCE TO HELP COMMUNITY-BASED HUNGER GROUPS & OTHER NONPROFITS HOST SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM SITES

SKILLS NEEDED

- Basic understanding of funding applications and requirements, and experience assessing organizational capacity.
- Prior participation in USDA-sponsored webinar or state-sponsored training a plus, but not necessary.

ADVANTAGES

- Deepen your professional skills in organizational assessment.
- Develop one-on-one connections with local community-based organizations.
- Make a dramatic long-term impact reducing child hunger by increasing the number of Summer Food Service Program sites available to low-income children in your community.
- Ability to track the direct impact of your work.

CHALLENGES

- Requires a significant long-term commitment, training from the sponsor organization, and possibly additional training from the State agency administering your Summer Meals program.
- Must identify a local Summer Meals sponsor in your community or region that is actively seeking new program host sites.
- Site visits and time in the sponsor organization’s office is necessary.
- Requires managing detailed records and files for potential host sites.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION

- Time-sensitive
- Assess the opportunity to host or sponsor:
  - Consult other Summer Meals sponsors from the previous summer.
  - Consult local schools.
- Mandatory state-sponsored trainings typically occur in February/March for Summer Meals starting in June/July.
- Be sure to start the application assistance at least 12-14 weeks before the deadline.
CHAPTER 7: CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

VOLUNTEER STEPS FOR PROVIDING APPLICATION ASSISTANCE TO HELP COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS HOST SUMMER MEALS SITES

✔ First, browse local hunger volunteer opportunity listings to determine which organizations need program help with Child Nutrition Programs.

✔ Identify Summer Meals sponsors in your community or region. To find a location, visit: www.summerfood.usda.gov/Sponsor.htm

✔ If you are a college or university student studying Social Work or a related discipline, also check with your campus Volunteer Director, Community Relations Director, Career Services Director or other appropriate staff to find out if a) they know of any opportunities in your area, and/or b) if you could develop an internship or independent research based on this work.

✔ Prepare your résumé or CV to highlight your qualifications.

✔ Contact your local and regional Summer Meals sponsor sites to offer your help increasing the number of local or regional host sites.

✔ Be very clear about your qualifications, references, expectations and availability—and commit to it! You should treat this volunteer position as you would a paying job, even if you only commit to 1-4 days per month.

✔ Discuss your workplan with program staff to ensure that you collect, compile, and share data they need in the appropriate format, as well as to avoid duplicating their efforts—you’re there to help.

✔ Be organized and keep detailed records of all your activities. This helps program staff to follow-up when you are not present, and prevents other volunteers from duplicating your work.

✔ Take advantage of any training available through your sponsor organization, school, USDA, or other resources that may be available.

✔ Be professional: follow your work plan and communicate any issues or problems to the appropriate program staff.

✔ Track, compile, and share your results.
**RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO PUBLICIZE SUMMER MEALS THROUGH SOCIAL & LOCAL INTERNET-BASED MEDIA**

### IMPACT-O-METER
- **EXTREMELY HELPFUL**

### WHO CAN DO IT
- ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

### SKILLS NEEDED
- Understanding of social and hyper-local internet media, a plus.

### ADVANTAGES
- Increase the number of local kids who participate in Summer Meals.
- Reduce the demand for food from your program.
- Fun way to engage volunteers in work to reduce child hunger in your community.
- Increase your program’s visibility in local media and community.
- Can be adapted to increase local awareness of your food program year-round.
- Does not require a high level of technological skill.

### CHALLENGES
- You must be able to provide content, as well as monitor your volunteers’ work on a regular basis, consider providing volunteers with a clear schedule of when updates should take place and be sure to review them before they are posted online.
- Social media and hyper-local media outlets require you to update content regularly, it is important that you continue.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW
- Hyper-local is a newly emerging platform to build community and connect people to local events, news, organizations, and other community residents. Examples include: local online news blogs, Patch.com, dnainfo.com (NYC), and topix.com.
- Social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter, are simple to use but require regular updates of new content in order to be effective. Consider asking your volunteer(s) to post updates on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.
- Words can be used as “tags” or “flags” that make your program more visible and interactive with different user groups and audiences.

### SUGGESTED TIME FRAME & DURATION
- Spring/Summer
STEPS FOR RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS TO PUBLICIZE SUMMER MEALS

- Download list of Summer Meals Program sites from USDA website, or call the National Hunger Hotline to find locations in your community: 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (Spanish).

- If necessary, familiarize yourself with social and local media in your community. If you do not have one already, sign up for free online accounts with social and hyper-local outlets in your area:
  - Facebook.com
  - Twitter.com
  - Patch.com
  - Topix.com

- Compile a list of local and community media contacts. Your local newspaper may have an online blog on which you can post information.

- Contact the Summer Meals Program sites on your list to identify local sites which locations are experiencing under-participation, and would benefit from outreach.

- Make sure the information on location and hours are accurate.

- Develop a work plan for your volunteer: the volunteer should be able to create social and local media posts that include information you gathered on Summer Meals site locations in your area, as well as update the information on a predetermined schedule. You will need to decide whether you will have your volunteer(s) follow up on responses to your posts, or whether follow-up will be conducted by your program staff. Be sure to include contact information for follow-up in each post.

- List your volunteer opportunity through all available channels:
  - hungervolunteer.org
  - volunteermatch.org
  - idealist.org
  - allforgood.org
  - serve.gov
  - Through your internal networks, including newsletters, bulletins, and flyers.

- Monitor your social and local media posts to determine effectiveness: are you getting “hits” on your Facebook, Twitter, or other social media accounts?

- To further advertise for Summer Meals sites in your community through media, please see the following:
  - bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/media-tactics
Summer Meals Outreach Day: Each summer, NYCCAH conducts a large outreach campaign aimed at increasing participation in Summer Meals. During the 2011 summer season, the Coalition teamed up in a coalition led by Share Our Strength in a day of outreach to canvass communities marked by under-participation in Summer Meals. Collectively, nearly 200 volunteers came together to canvass neighborhoods in each of the five boroughs. Volunteers met at a central location for a briefing presentation and then went out in smaller groups of 6-8 people—distributing thousands of postcards and posters in key locations in order to inform parents and kids about Summer Meals locations, hours, and access. Volunteers were given instructions, talking points, postcards, posters, community maps, and a bag to carry the materials.

Schenectady Inner City Ministries: Teams of volunteers from different local businesses go to Summer Meals sites throughout the summer to help hand out meals and spend time with children at the sites. Not only does this create positive energy at the site and help the sponsor operate the program, but it provides an opportunity for many people to learn about hunger and food insecurity in their community who may not be familiar with these issues.

Nutrition Education: In Arizona, AmeriCorps VISTAs recruited nutrition majors from the local college to provide nutrition education at Summer Meals sites. The children benefited from learning about healthy eating, and the volunteers gained experience teaching nutrition to children, as well as exposure to governmental nutrition assistance programs for children.

Community Canvassing: In Texas, AmeriCorps VISTAs recruited volunteers from the local college to do canvassing and outreach for Summer Meals. This helped raise awareness about the program in the community, and also fulfilled the requirement for students to complete a certain number of volunteer hours as part of their college experience.
BEYOND THE FOOD DRIVE

CHAPTER 7: CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

TALKING POINTS: SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM FOR KIDS

What is it?
For many kids, summer vacation is a much deserved reward for a year of hard work in the classroom. For some who rely on free and reduced-price school meals, however, the summer months can be difficult. When school is out, these kids no longer have access to school meals and their families’ budgets are often stretched to the breaking point. In fact, studies show that kids are at a higher risk for both obesity and hunger during the summer months. Many families also face the stress of providing safe, supervised, and affordable places for kids and teens to socialize, play, and continue to learn. It doesn’t have to be this way.

Who runs the program?
Summer Meals Programs are funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

What happens at the program? What activities does the program provide?
Summer Meals Programs can provide an important source of nutritious food for America’s youth during the critical summer months. The availability of free meals is also an incentive for children to participate in summer enrichment programs, which means that children are not only well-fed, but in a safe environment engaged in educational and recreational activities that can, in turn, help return them to school ready to learn.

How do you find a Summer Meals site?
To find specific dates and locations in your region visit: www.summerfood.usda.gov

What to tell parents?
➤ Provides a safe environment for children to play while parents are at work
➤ Helps families save and stretch tight budgets
➤ No paperwork or enrollment required
➤ No proof of income is necessary
➤ Activities for children
➤ Learning opportunities
➤ For all families in your community
➤ Healthy meals prepared with fresh fruits and vegetables
➤ Meals are served to children 18 and under
➤ Fights obesity

What to tell children?
➤ Fun
➤ Activities
➤ Healthy meals prepared with fresh fruits and vegetables
➤ Eat with your friends
➤ Be physically active
What to tell teens?

➤ Saves money
➤ Be a mentor to younger kids

What to tell other community members?

➤ Helps families in tough economic times
➤ Free
➤ Helps stretch tight budgets
➤ Helps families save
➤ Fun
➤ Activities
➤ Learning opportunities
➤ Safe
➤ Healthy
➤ Fight obesity
➤ For all families in your community
➤ No proof of income necessary

Summer Meals Program Details (from Share Our Strength)

➤ Meals are free to children and teens ages 18 and younger who come to a Summer Meals site.
➤ Free Summer Meals will help families save money and stretch their already tight food budgets.
➤ Food served at summer meal sites follows USDA nutrition guidelines and are paid for by the USDA.
➤ Summer Meals sites are at safe places for kids to go such as schools, churches, and community centers.
➤ Many sites offer educational and recreational activities that kids of all ages can participate in so they can eat, hang out with friends, and take part in activities offered.
➤ Parents don't need to apply to the program to get a free summer meal for their kids. They can simply bring their child to a Summer Meals site in their community and their kids can enjoy it without the hassle of having to fill out an application.
RESOURCES

To locate meal programs for children through the National Hunger Hotline, please call: 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-6-HAMBRE.

SCHOOL MEALS & BREAKFAST
For more detailed information and local statistics on School Breakfast and Lunch:
☞ frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/school-breakfast-and-lunch

Department of Education (DOE):
☞ www.opt-osfns.org/schoolfood/public1/default.aspx

Example of School Meals Brochure:

USDA Child Nutrition Program Information:
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/About/AboutCNP.htm

USDA School Meals Information:
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm

Share Our Strength:
☞ www.strength.org/school_breakfast/7_reasons_to_help_kids_get_a_healthy_breakfast_at_school
☞ www.strength.org/school_breakfast/strategies_for_closing_the_breakfast_gap

SUMMER MEALS

USDA:
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/seamless_summer.htm

USDA How to Sponsor or Host a Summer Meals Site:
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Sponsor.htm

Share Our Strength:
☞ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/about-summer-meals
☞ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/Summer-Meals
☞ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/summer-meals-evaluation-toolkit

More detailed information, local statistics, and location information on Summer Meals programs:
☞ frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/summer-programs

Example of Summer Meals Flyer:
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Outreach.htm
☞ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/outreach-materials

USDA Summer Meals Outreach:

For other Summer Meals outreach activities, please see the Sedexo Foundation Summer Meals Toolkit, available through the Share Our Strength No Kid Hungry website, for instructions that include planning a media event, writing an op-ed or letters to the editor, and placing radio ads:
☞ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals

HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS & AGENCIES FOCUSED ON CHILD NUTRITION

New York City Coalition Against Hunger:
☞ www.nyccah.org

Share Our Strength:
☞ www.strength.org

Food Resource and Action Center (FRAC):
☞ www.frac.org

USDA Food and Nutrition Service: Child Nutrition Program Information:
☞ www.fns.usda.gov/cnd
You can help fight hunger by making more fresh produce both available and affordable in low-income neighborhoods. As a volunteer, you can work to expand a Community Supported Agriculture program to serve more low-income people, provide nutrition education, lead budget grocery store tours, conduct cooking demonstrations, connect people to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) at farmers’ markets—all of which can help low-income families to obtain more fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables.
A community supported agriculture (CSA) group is a great way to get community members involved with each other and the anti-hunger movement. By paying for a membership in the CSA, participants share the growing risk with each other and the farmer. They receive produce based on the success of the growing season.

A CSA is typically organized and coordinated by a group of volunteers from the community that are referred to as the core group. To efficiently run a CSA it is useful to have distinct roles, with specific job descriptions, including what skills are involved, how long it will take each week/season, and any special equipment required to fulfill the role. The core group is responsible for running a CSA distribution site. It is important that all members of the core group share common goals and understand the role of the core group. Every member is required to volunteer during the distribution season. Having specific jobs helps keep the members focused, interested, and invested.

CSAs can be a good resource for low-income families to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables during the spring, summer, and early fall months. Some CSAs determine the cost of membership based on income so that families that might be struggling to make ends meet might still have the opportunity to obtain fresh produce during the growing season.

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger has developed a model CSA program in seven communities that brought over 100,000 pounds of fresh produce into low-income neighborhoods. We accept SNAP benefits and offer members flexible payment options to help them participate. For more information on the Coalition’s model, please see: nyccah.org/our-work/direct-food-access/farm-fresh.

FARMERS’ MARKETS
Farmers’ markets are where farmers come together to sell their produce directly to consumers. They offer communities fresh, affordable fruits, vegetables and often baked goods, meats, poultry and fish, direct from the farm. Typically held once a week or on certain days of the month during the growing season (the growing season varies by location, from 5-9 months of the year), the USDA lists over 7,000 such markets throughout the US—a 17% increase over 2010.

The Coalition has worked in tandem with market organizers, and other stakeholders, to ensure that farmers’ markets accept both SNAP and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, enabling low-income people to obtain fresh foods that are typically unaffordable.

COMMUNITY GARDENS/URBAN FARMS
Community gardens and urban farms can also be an excellent seasonal source of fresh fruits and vegetables in low-income communities, as well as a place for community members to work together to improve their neighborhood green spaces. As a volunteer, you can start your own garden in a low-income area, or join an existing community garden. You can also encourage others to plant rows for the hungry. Many gardens enable volunteers to take home a portion of the produce they grow, and/or donate excess fruits and vegetables to local soup kitchens and food pantries.

These fresh fruits and vegetables are often unavailable or too expensive in some neighborhoods. Also, individuals and families may not know how to prepare vegetables with which they are unfamiliar. As a volunteer, you can use your expertise to provide nutrition education or cooking demonstrations designed for a tight budget—you will help change eating habits, and address both hunger and obesity in practical ways that are simple to apply. These types of activities enable you to share your love of cooking, or provide nutrition education as a complement to existing community garden, CSA, farmers’ market or emergency food programs.
## PROVIDE NUTRITION EDUCATION OR COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS AT EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS, COMMUNITY GARDENS, CSA PROGRAMS, & FARMERS’ MARKETS

### IMPACT-O-METER

| VERY HELPFUL |

### WHO CAN DO IT

VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES

### SKILLS NEEDED

- Professional skills in nutrition, healthy eating, and/or cooking are required for this activity. You may also consider training through a Community Chef program.
- For resources and volunteer opportunities that do not require the above skills, please see the following sections of this chapter.

### ADVANTAGES

- You will help low-income people meet dietary needs and change eating habits.
- Professional development: build new skills and learn to apply your expertise in non-traditional settings to meet special needs groups.
- Interact directly with the people you help.
- Can be a one-time project or a recurring activity based on your availability.

### CHALLENGES

- May require additional time beyond the actual date of service (to develop menus, for example), as well as some additional training for Community Chefs.

### STEPS FOR CONDUCTING NUTRITION EDUCATION

- **Locate your nearest local community garden, farmers’ market, CSAs, soup kitchen or food pantry.**
  - Searchable USDA National Directory of Farmers' Markets: search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets
  - To find your nearest soup kitchen or food pantry, contact your local food bank. You can locate your local food bank through Feeding America's Food Bank Locator: feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx
- **Contact the program coordinator(s) or organizer with your availability to provide nutrition education and/or cooking demonstrations.** Consider Community Chef training or training through the Share Our Strength’s Cooking Matters® program: cookingmatters.org
STEPS FOR CONDUCTING NUTRITION ED (CONT.)

✔ You can conduct nutrition education in a variety of different ways, even if you only have limited time to volunteer. To see sample lessons and handouts, visit: cookingmatters.org/what-we-do/educational-outreach

✔ Familiarize yourself with the unique needs and financial limitations of the people you will serve, the average SNAP benefit is $4 per person per day.

✔ If possible, meet the people you will serve in advance so that you can try to understand their dietary needs.

✔ Work with the program coordinator to either join or plan demonstration or nutrition education events. Be clear about your availability and what resources are required (will you use food on site, purchase additional foods, can you email sample menus, etc.).

✔ Coordinate a schedule that works for both you and the organization or other location where will you will volunteer. If you cannot give your time on a regular basis, consider other ways to help low-income people improve their nutrition.
ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

➔ Be a Shopping Matters Tour Facilitator to lead grocery store tours with a focus on healthy low-cost options.

➔ Help create budget-conscious healthy menus or recipes for families or hunger organizations—these can be included in handouts, flyers, or newsletters.

➔ Create a cookbook of budget-conscious healthy recipes.

➔ Provide information on food assistance at your local farmers’ market—set up a table with information or download flyers from USDA and distribute them on site.

➔ Talk to your local farmers’ market about accepting SNAP, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits.

➔ Talk to your local community garden about donating fresh produce to your nearest soup kitchen or food pantry.

➔ Become a core group member of your local CSA, encourage your CSA to donate unclaimed shares to local emergency food providers.
CHAPTER 8: AIDING FARMERS’ MARKETS, COMMUNITY GARDENS & CSA PROJECTS

**ACTIVITY**

**OBTAIN DONATED FRESH PRODUCE FOR YOUR FOOD PROGRAM FROM A LOCAL FARM, FARMERS’ MARKET, OR CSA PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPACT-O-METER</th>
<th>WHO CAN DO IT</th>
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<tr>
<td>VERY HELPFUL</td>
<td>ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS</td>
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**NOTE SPACE**

**SKILLS NEEDED**

- You will most likely need to coordinate the logistics, and may be required to have access to a car or truck.

**ADVANTAGES**

- You can provide more fresh, locally grown produce to your community.
- If you are a new agency, you may not be able to obtain foods from the food bank network yet—working with local farms and markets will provide you with a consistent food source during the growing season and engage new people in your work.
- If you are an established soup kitchen or food pantry, working with local farmers will enable you to offer more fresh fruits and vegetables to the people you serve.
- It engages farmers in support of your work while reducing waste.

**CHALLENGES**

- You will only receive produce during the growing season, which varies by location, type of crop and elevation (from 4-7 months).
- Your customers may not be familiar with the produce you receive, so consider offering budget conscious recipes and/or recruiting volunteers to do cooking demos.
- Fresh produce spoils more quickly, so you’ll need to make sure you are able to distribute them quickly and have adequate refrigerated storage to hold produce.

**STEPS FOR OBTAINING FRESH PRODUCE FROM MARKETS, GARDENS & CSAS**

- **Identify local farmers, farmers’ markets, community gardens in your community.** Searchable USDA Directory of Farmers’ Markets: search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets
- **Register your organization with Ample Harvest**, a nationwide network that links community gardens to local emergency food programs: www.ampleharvest.org
- **Once you have identified your local farmers’ markets, make a call list** so you can contact each to inform them about your program, the number of people served, and your needs for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **Be sure to find out if a vehicle would be required** for you to pick up donated produce from the market or farmer, or if it is possible to have it delivered to your site.
- **Keep track of your donations**, the amount of produce you receive and the farmers and/or markets and/or gardens that donate to your organization.
- **Thank your donors!** Let them know how important their donation of fruits and vegetables are and how many people you are able to serve as a result.
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR HUNGER GROUPS

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO CONDUCT NUTRITION EDUCATION

✔ Find out if there is a Share Our Strength’s Cooking Matters® program in your area. If so, you may be able to apply as a Lead Partner agency with Share Our Strength or become a community host site through an existing lead partner in your area. For more information, see: cookingmatters.org/what-we-do/educational-outreach

If you would like to set up your own nutrition education program, with or without cooking demonstrations:

✔ Create a job description for a nutritionist, specify what you would like this volunteer to do—for example, provide budget-conscious healthy recipes on a regular basis, or offer a cooking demonstration for your clients.

✔ Define how often and in what manner you would like to offer nutrition education to your clients (for example, once a month, in person, via newsletter).

✔ Contact local nutritionists, graduate schools, and hospitals about your opportunity.

✔ Be sure you have adequate space to conduct cooking demonstrations, if you plan to do so—and discuss the idea with your current chef.

✔ Post your opportunity using available online websites like volunteermatch.org, idealist.org, and hungervolunteer.org.

✔ Get the word out to your customers.

OTHER SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

➤ Challenge people in your network—your clients, friends, colleagues, chef, etc.—to create healthy recipes on a SNAP budget, include recipes in your newsletter or on flyers to distribute to clients.

➤ Ask your local CSA and/or farmers’ market coordinator to accept SNAP or other nutrition assistance benefits—if they do already, inform your clients.

➤ Ask your local CSA, farmers’ market and/or community garden to donate excess fruits and vegetables to your food program.
BEST PRACTICES

“Volunteering for the Hell’s Kitchen Farm Project was a really great opportunity for me to get involved more in my community. I used my skills as a web designer to help build the hellskitch-enfarmproject.org website...creating the website helped with establishing the Hells Kitchen Farm project and also provided public communication and awareness. There were many other skilled volunteers that helped create this project and without them the Hells Kitchen Farm Project would not exist. It’s really nice to see people from all walks of life come together and help the community move forward in a positive way. If it wasn’t for the New York City Coalition Against Hunger’s website, I would have never connected with the Hells Kitchen Farm Project. I urge others to go there and see where they can help out too!”

TODD SUGIYAMA, HELLS KITCHEN FARM PROJECT VOLUNTEER

ADVICE FROM GREEN GUERILLAS

The best way for a volunteer to support community gardening is to become consistently involved in 1 or 2 gardens that are easily accessible. We have found that a small number of people, even just one person, participating over a longer period of time has an exponentially greater impact than 100 people on a single day.

Ideally a volunteer would be able to go to the garden twice a week for 2-3 hours each day. This allows the volunteer to build relationships with the garden members and the neighbors on the block.

Volunteers should be ready to listen to garden members and help out in whatever way is needed. There are always projects to do in a garden:

- weeding
- watering
- picking up trash along the perimeter of the garden
- tending the compost
- shoveling snow in the winter
- clearing and cleaning pathways
- repairing sheds and/or garden furniture

We think you will find that volunteering in a garden is a very fruitful and rewarding experience.
RESOURCES

Share Our Strength’s Cooking Matters® Program: cookingmatters.org

Free handout for healthy eating: foodandhealth.com/handout.php

Additional information on nutrition education: www.fns.usda.gov/fns/nutrition.htm

Sign-up to connect your food program with a Farmers’ Market: www.ampleharvest.org

Search for CSAs in your community: www.localharvest.org/csa


Search Nationwide Directory of Farmers’ Markets: search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger’s Mixed Income CSA model:
  nyccah.org/our-work/increasing-access-food-benefits/farm-fresh-food-access-program/farm-fresh-project

How to promote acceptance of SNAP and WIC benefits at local farmers’ markets:
  pps.org/pdf/SNAP_EBT_Book.pdf

See low-cost healthy recipe examples:
  www.recipefinder.nal.usda.gov

For more about healthy eating, including recommended daily allowances:
  www.choosemyplate.gov

The City Greens, local food stories from New York City:
  Featured articles about local initiatives regarding healthy food options, farmers’ markets, and people trying to make a
difference in eating habits and advocating health consciousness in the inner city and boroughs of New York City.
  www.thecitygreens.com/2010/03/31/harvest-home-farmer%E2%80%99s-market-expands-in-manhattan-brooklyn

Farmers’ Market Federation of New York:
  A non-profit organization that supports farmers’ market organizers, farmers, vendors and communities interested in
starting markets. The organization offers conferences, publishes a newsletter and provides low cost health and liability
insurance coverage for farmers, market vendors and sponsors.
  www.nyfarmersmarket.com

Department of Agriculture and Markets:
  Information on markets and farmers in NY State. You can look for farms in a particular part of the state as well as by a
specific product.
  www.agmkt.state.ny.us
Before you can raise awareness about hunger, you need to gain an understanding of the problem. Hunger, or food insecurity, is closely associated with poverty. More than 46 million Americans lived below the federal poverty threshold in 2011 while more than 50 million Americans—including nearly 17 million children—lived in homes that struggled to put food on the table.

The United States Department of Agriculture uses the phrase “food insecurity” to describe the limited or uncertain ability to obtain nutritionally adequate and safe food. While many people associate hunger with homelessness, the vast majority of hungry Americans aren’t homeless; they just earn too little money to afford all the food they need. Hungry families live in urban and rural areas—and increasingly even in the suburbs. Most hungry families are white. Hungry families may be your neighbors.

Most hungry Americans are either low-wage workers, children, senior citizens, or people with disabilities. USDA has found that, out of families with children suffering from food insecurity and hunger, 68% contained at least one adult working full-time, 10% had at least one adult working part-time, 7% had an unemployed adult actively looking for work, and 8% were headed by an adult with a disability. The main problem is low wages and few jobs, not laziness.

Hungry Americans can also be overweight. Because low-income families have more difficulty affording the most nutritious foods, and because low-income neighborhoods are often “food deserts” that lack healthy food options, hunger and obesity are often flip-sides of the same malnutrition coin. Some Americans falsely believe that some low-income people are obese because they shop poorly, fail to cook at home, or choose to eat too much fast food. But a recent study proved that the vast majority of low-income families cooked at home at least five nights a week, and desperately struggled to serve healthier food. Another new study also found that middle class people eat fast food more often than low-income people, which shouldn’t be surprising since SNAP benefits generally can’t be used to eat at restaurants, including fast food restaurants.

To learn more about hunger in the U.S. and in your community, see the ‘Resources’ section of this chapter.
WATCH A HUNGER DOCUMENTARY

Watching a hunger documentary is an easy way to introduce a group of people to the issue of hunger. Although viewing a film cannot be considered active participation in the anti-hunger movement, films like the Food Network’s “Hunger Hits Home” and Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush’s documentary “A Place at the Table” have a compelling message that engages the viewers and encourages conversation. Documentaries can be great stepping-stones for those who want to learn about the history and the current status of hunger in America.

The Food Network’s “Hunger Hits Home” is available for free viewing at www.foodnetwork.com/share-our-strength/package/index.html. You may consider asking your friends, family, or colleagues to watch it with you—just be sure to leave time to discuss the film. Consider displaying a link to the film on your Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites, and/or start a discussion group about hunger and what you learned from the film.

READ A HUNGER BOOK

Reading a hunger book can provide a person with insight on the issues of hunger and various causes, outlooks, and solutions to reduce hunger in America. This is a simple activity that can be done alone or with a discussion group. You may consider introducing one of the following at your Book Club:

- **All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?** by Joel Berg, NYCCAH Executive Director. Most up-to-date book overview on hunger in America.
- **Free for All: Fixing School Food in America** by Jan Poppendieck.
- **Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement** by Jan Poppendieck.
- **The Cathedral Within: Transforming Your Life by Giving Something Back** by Bill Shore.
- **Changing the Face of Hunger: The Story of How Liberals, Conservatives, Republicans, Democrats, and People of Faith are Joining Forces in a New Movement to Help the Hungry, the Poor, and the Oppressed** by Tony Hall.

For more book suggestions, please see the Appendix 2: Suggested Reading and Viewing.

SPONSOR A “HUNGER BANQUET”

Since 1974, hundreds of thousands of people have taken action against hunger by hosting Oxfam America Hunger Banquets in homes, campuses, schools, and places of worship around the country. While these types of banquets usually focus on international hunger, they also help place American hunger in context.

At an Oxfam America Hunger Banquet, guests randomly draw tickets that assign them to different income levels, based on the latest statistics about the number of people living in poverty. Depending on where they sit, some receive a filling dinner, while others eat a simple meal or share sparse portions of rice and water. Oxfam America Hunger Banquet guests can also take on the roles of real people from around the world and share their experiences with others. While not all guests leave with full stomachs, many gain a new perspective on the root causes of hunger and poverty—and feel motivated to do something to help. Find out why organizers and guests alike call it a “powerful,” and “life-changing” experience.
BEYOND THE FOOD DRIVE

TAKE THE SNAP/FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE

The Food Stamp Challenge was an advocacy strategy hatched by the Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger in 2006. They knew that if elected officials and the local media tried living for even just one week on food purchased with the current food stamps allotment, their efforts would call attention to the plight of low-income families who faced that struggle every week.

According to the Food Research and Action Center:

The SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge gives participants a view of what life can be like for millions of low-income Americans. Most participants take the Challenge for one week, living on about $4 per day worth of food—the average food stamp benefit.

Challenge participants are forced to make difficult food shopping choices, and often realize how difficult it is to avoid hunger, afford nutritious foods, and stay healthy. Members of Congress, governors, state officials, journalists and other community leaders have taken the Challenge and have learned first hand what it is like to try to make ends meet on the average SNAP/food stamp benefit. After paying for housing, energy and health care expenses, many low-income households have little or no money remaining to spend on food without SNAP benefits. In addition, most SNAP households report that their SNAP benefits do not last the entire month and many are forced to turn to food pantries and soup kitchens. While living on a SNAP budget for just a week cannot come close to the struggles encountered by low-income families week after week and month after month, it does provide those who take the Challenge with a new perspective and greater understanding.

CONDUCT A HUNGER SIMULATION OR “HUNGER 101”

To put hunger into perspective for a group or an individual, hunger simulations can be a very effective tool. The San Antonio Food Bank, for example, has a virtual hunger simulator that gives you the option to role-play through a real-life scenario, in which you choose one of four characters who are living in abject poverty. Each character has their own story, struggles and limits, as well as a budget that prohibits them from obtaining enough food for themselves and their families. The circumstances that the website’s users are placed in force the user to try all options to gain enough calories for the week.

Individuals who participate in these simulations get a sense for how time consuming and overwhelming the simple act of acquiring enough food can be. This type of activity can be a good introduction to hunger in America and can be used as a launching pad to get individuals actively involved in anti-hunger efforts.

Through the simulator you are given one of three options: to either go to the grocery store with the leftover money in your budget, try to obtain SNAP benefits, or to go to the soup kitchen for your needs. Placing yourself in the role of a character in one of these scenarios is very powerful and you quickly realize the disparity between those have the privilege to eat, support their families and those who do not.

Other interactive curricula or role-based hunger simulations can be found here:

- firstfoodbank.org/hunger101/idea_program.html
- www.safoodbank.org/hunger101

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS (CONT.)

Discussion Questions for Food Stamp Challengers:

→ What were your previous assumptions about hunger?
→ Were you surprised by any of the information you found?
→ How many emergency food providers exist in your community? How many people do they serve?
→ Do your local emergency food providers have enough food and funding to meet the demand for the services they provide? Do they offer services other than food (such as referrals for nutrition assistance benefits)?
→ Now that you have a new perspective on the issue of hunger, what could you do to be an advocate for the anti-hunger cause?
→ How can you work with others to reduce hunger in your community?
PARTICIPATE IN THE SNAP/FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE OR CONDUCT A HUNGER SIMULATION

WHO CAN DO IT
VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES

SKILLS NEEDED
→ No special skills required. Instructions/guidelines are needed to follow either activity (see links below for instructions).

ADVANTAGES
→ Eye-opening experience. Allows individuals or groups to experience a glimpse of the struggle of individuals and families who are food insecure.

CHALLENGES
→ To get the full effect of the simulations one needs to be dedicated for the duration of the activity.
→ This is a good learning experience, but be careful not to minimize the real struggle of low-income individuals/families.

GUIDELINES
Guidelines for SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge:
Information on Hunger 101:
🔗 www.safoodbank.org/hunger101

STEPS FOR THE SNAP/FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE OR HUNGER SIMULATION
✓ Decide who will participate in the activity with you.
✓ Dedicate yourself to carrying out the activity for the designated length of time.
✓ Follow the guidelines for either activity (available in the links above).
✓ Reflect on the activity. If taking the SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge try journaling about your experience, post it on your Facebook page, and/or share your experience with your friends, families, and colleagues.
✓ Discuss your experience with other participants if you have an entire group participating in either activity.
✓ Spread the word and encourage others to try the activities as well.
RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT HUNGER IN YOUR COMMUNITY & NATIONWIDE

IMPACT-O-METER
EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, KIDS, GROUPS, AND BUSINESSES

SKILLS NEEDED
- Willingness and ability to learn about hunger in your community.
- Basic knowledge about where to find information and material about hunger in America and in your community.

ADVANTAGES
- Help others in your family, at work, and at school understand how many people suffer from hunger and how we can change it.
- Gain a deeper understanding of a complex problem that affects millions of Americans.
- Increased awareness about hunger, the poverty that causes it, and effective solutions gives you a strong base for action.
- Connect with others in your social or professional network who care about hunger.

CHALLENGES
- You may have to overcome many misconceptions about hunger.
- Awareness alone, without action, does not reduce hunger.
**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS**

- **Include information about hunger in your community** in your newsletter, brochure, flyers, blog, or any other marketing materials about your program.
- **If your program is connected to a religious institution, discuss hunger, the poverty that causes it, and how we can work to end it, with your congregation’s study groups.** Ask if your local religious institution will offer a screening of *Hunger Hits Home*. Even if your program is not connected to a religious institution, ask your local pastor, imam, rabbi, or other local religious leaders to talk to their congregations about hunger, its causes, your program, and how to take collective action.
- **Contact your local middle schools, high schools, universities and community colleges.** Ask if they will offer a screening of *Hunger Hits Home*, and/or let you speak with students about hunger in your community, your program, and how we can work together to take action.
- **Give each of your volunteers a fact sheet about hunger in your community** and nationwide to help them understand the extent of the problem, and how they can build on their current volunteer service commitment by engaging in activities to reduce hunger long-term.

Above: Tabling at community fairs is another great way to spread the word about hunger issues and local resources.
RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT HUNGER IN YOUR COMMUNITY & NATIONWIDE

IMPACT-O-METER
EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED
➤ Willingness and ability to talk to others about hunger in your community, and understanding of the population you serve.

ADVANTAGES
➤ Increasing awareness helps to build support for your programs, which can help you in your efforts to recruit volunteers and raise money.

CHALLENGES
➤ To build awareness about hunger in your community, and how your program addresses it, you will need to both collect and present data to the public—whether through newsletters, your website, brochures, flyers, etc.
RESOURCES

The SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge Toolkit, includes facts, templates, and press materials to help you spread the word:

Hunger Simulation:
www.safoodbank.org/hunger101

More Information on How to Hold a Hunger Banquet:
actfast.oxfamamerica.org/index.php/events/banquet

HUNGER DOCUMENTARIES

Watch the Food Network Documentary Hunger Hits Home:
www.foodnetwork.com/share-our-strength/package/index.html

More Information on A Place at the Table:
www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table

OTHER RESOURCES FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT HUNGER

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger:
nyccah.org/learn-about-hunger

Information about Child Hunger from Share Our Strength:
strength.org/childhood_hunger

Feeding America General Information about Hunger:
feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america.aspx

Feeding America 2010 Hunger Study:
feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/hunger-study-2010.aspx

Bread for the World U.S. Domestic Hunger Information:
www.bread.org/hunger/us

World Hunger Education Service—U.S. Information:
www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/us_hunger_facts.htm

GOVERNMENT RESOURCES AND STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Detailed Statistical Information about Poverty in America:
www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty

Detailed Information about Food Insecurity—Nationwide and in Your Community:

Detailed Information and Statistics about Food Assistance Programs:
ADVOCACY IS CRITICAL TO ENDING U.S. HUNGER

Getting involved at the policy level is arguably the single most effective way of volunteering to fight hunger in America. With tens of billions of dollars in anti-hunger funding at stake, government actions can dramatically increase or slash hunger and poverty overnight, sometimes with just one vote or the stroke of a pen. Contact elected officials and ask them to take specific actions to reduce hunger and the poverty that causes it.

Young adults, adults, groups, and businesses all can participate. In this chapter, you will find several ways to contact elected officials that are easy to do and require no special skills. Many Americans falsely believe that elected officials will ignore them, even though the truth is most elected officials respond directly when constituents contact them—especially when there is relevant legislation pending or under debate. When you contact your elected officials, you make it clear that fighting hunger is a priority and one that they cannot ignore. As a volunteer, learning to be an advocate is an important skill that you can use for any issue you care about, it demonstrates leadership and is also at the core of what it means to be an American. Plus, it works! When you engage in advocacy, you create real change, with a long-term impact on the lives of millions of people. There are other ways you can be an advocate for long-term change, which are detailed in this chapter.

WHY FEW VOLUNTEERS FOCUS ON ADVOCACY

The idea of doing advocacy volunteering may seem overwhelming. This apprehension is rooted in our belief that volunteering for an anti-hunger organization should be limited to serving at a food pantry or soup kitchen. For some volunteers, the thought of advocacy would mean stepping out of their comfort zone or becoming obligated in a way that would require a long-term commitment they are not willing or able to make. Finally, others may believe they are not qualified enough to comprehend and communicate positions on policy. However, there are a number of ways you can be advocate for change, whether you have a few minutes or a few years.

HOW POLICY ADVOCACY CAN MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE: why five minutes of advocacy volunteering can do more than five months of serving soup

Being part of the push for a new policy or working to improve an existing one can help drive changes that have long lasting effects in the lives of individuals living below the poverty line. Often five minutes of advocacy work can be far more effective than five months of serving soup. Within those five minutes an advocacy volunteer has the opportunity to educate and enlighten others on the issues that surround hunger, to take a leadership role in reducing hunger, and to build experience in our democratic process. The first step is learning about the policies that affect hungry people.
KEY NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES CRITICAL TO REDUCING HUNGER

The following provides a brief overview of key national policies that directly affect hunger and poverty. For more information about these policies, as well as policies specific to your state, please see the Resources section of this chapter.

THE FARM BILL covers funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps), can include funding for community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and determines how much funding our government will provide for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). It is reauthorized every 5 years—the current bill is being debated now in 2012.

SNAP serves as the nation's first line of defense against hunger, helping to ensure that the poorest and hungriest people in our nation can feed their families. The program helps put food on the table for nearly 45 million low-income participants each month—the majority of whom are children, elderly, disabled, or working poor.

⇒ In 2010 alone SNAP lifted more than 5 million Americans above the poverty line.
⇒ Every $1 in SNAP is estimated to create $1.73 to $1.79 in economic activity.

It is critical that we stand together against any efforts to undermine or cut nutrition assistance for struggling families.

CREATING JOBS & ENSURING LIVING WAGES: Millions of food insecure Americans live in households with at least one person working—they just do not earn enough to afford food. One of the most important things we can do to reduce hunger, and the poverty that causes it, is to support government policies that ensure an adequate living wage, as well as supporting increases in federal and state minimum wages indexed to inflation.

THE EMERGENCY FOOD & SHELTER PROGRAM (EFSP) is the government program designed to supplement the work of front-line social service organizations, including soup kitchens and food pantries, that help people in need of emergency assistance. Funding is determined annually as a part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) budget. This is an important source of funding for emergency food providers, including soup kitchens and food pantries, throughout the nation. In 2010, this program was cut by 40%, and for the coming year—proposed cuts of an additional $20 million are being considered. Given that the majority of soup kitchens and food pantries rely on extremely small budgets (in New York City, more than half operate on less than $100,000 per year), EFSP funding is absolutely critical to their operations.
**CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION** is reauthorized approximately every five years and includes the following programs: The Summer Food Service Program (Summer Meals), the Child and Adult Care Food Program, State Administrative Expenses, the Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and other smaller pieces of the complete package of child nutrition programs. The most recent Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act was passed in 2010, and signed into law by President Obama. While we at the Coalition worked in collaboration with other hunger organizations to successfully advocate for a strong Child Nutrition bill, there is still significant underparticipation in the program. Only 1 in 7 children who receive free or reduced price lunch during the school year, also receive meals during the summer. Even though the last Child Nutrition bill pledges to end child hunger by 2015, there is still much we can do to advocate for increased participation in the program.

**REDUCING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION** in Nutrition Assistance Programs, including SNAP, WIC, School Meals, and Summer Meals. These programs, in particular, have substantial barriers that limit participation among hungry people who are eligible. Each state is able to set certain types of limits regarding who can access the program. For more information on the policies in your state, please see the Food Resource and Action Center’s website: [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)

State mandates for participation in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are an important way that states can ensure low-income children receive the food they need. Sadly, fewer than half of the children who receive free and reduced priced lunch at school also receive breakfast. For the 1 in 5 kids living in food insecure households nationwide, breakfast is critical to helping them to learn and grow. School Breakfast programs vary considerably by state. Because School Breakfast is reimbursed by the federal government, serving breakfast to low-income students not only reduces tardiness and helps them perform better in school, but also brings federal dollars directly into the school district. You can take action in your state by supporting state-wide legal mandates to ensure that all or certain schools are required to participate in the program. For more information on School Meals in your state, please see the 2012 Food Research and Action Center’s School Breakfast Scorecard: [frac.org/pdf/school_breakfast_scorecard_2010-2011.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/school_breakfast_scorecard_2010-2011.pdf)
In addition to working at the city, state and federal levels of government to achieve concrete results on the policies described above, the Coalition also advocates for change through the following programs:

- **Community Empowerment and Education:** At the Coalition, we believe one of the single most effective ways to spread the word about relevant and timely policy issues of importance to the anti-hunger and anti-poverty movement is to take positions against policies which stymie economic self-sufficiency. We also empower community members with education on policies that can end hunger and reduce poverty.

- **Action Alerts:** “Call/Write your local, state, or federal representative.” “Sign-on...” “Join us to discuss and learn more about...” These phrases are incorporated in the Coalition’s Action! Alerts. The Alerts, which are developed and disseminated to a large listserv and posted to our website, consist of a brief, easy-to-explain synopsis of pending legislation or an issue which has recently arisen. Every Alert does two things: (1) informs the reader about an important concern related to hunger or poverty, and (2) requests an action be taken. To sign up for the Coalition’s Action Alerts, please visit: nyccah.org/get-involved/get-newsletters

- **Food Action Boards (FABs):** Through the work of its community organizers, the Coalition has developed a multi-faceted curriculum including media relations, letter writing, lobbying, and issues in poverty and economic development. The curriculum takes approximately 20 weeks to complete and takes place on-site at various food pantries and soup kitchens. While the trainings are open to the public, the target audience is the clients of pantries and kitchens. We work with low-income people to both increase understanding and empower them to take action on the policies that directly affect them. It doesn’t end with information, we bring our FAB members to City Hall, to Capitol Hill, to meet face to face with legislators or to provide testimony so that our elected officials are aware of the human side of the policies they enact.

For more information on how to get involved in the Coalition’s advocacy programs, or how you can learn more about concrete legislative action, please see ‘Resources.’
CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS ABOUT THEIR HUNGER POLICIES THROUGH PHONE CALLS OR LETTER WRITING

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED

- Patience and determination!
- The ability to communicate clearly in writing and/or orally (see Resources for sample letters).
- An interest and willingness to contact your elected officials.

ADVANTAGES

- As an organization on the front lines serving hungry people, your input is valuable to elected officials.
- You will be active in supporting policy that directly affects your organization’s funding.
- Your efforts help elected officials and decision-makers understand the reality.
- It’s an opportunity to join other groups in collaborative efforts to improve hunger policy.

CHALLENGES

- If you are a 501c3, or your funding is primarily from government, your activities related to legislation are restricted.
- You may not have time to respond to numerous policy initiatives—you may consider joining an Action Alert that lets you sign on to a letter or petition (these can take as little as 5 minutes). Please see the following:
  - www.frac.org
  - www.nyccah.org/get-involved/advocate
## Activity

### Contact Your Elected Officials About Their Hunger Policies Through Phone Calls or Letter Writing

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**Most Helpful**

**Volunteers:** Adults, kids (with help from an adult), groups, and businesses

**Skills Needed**

- Patience and determination!
- The ability to communicate clearly in writing and/or orally (see ‘Resources’ for sample letters).
- An interest and willingness to contact your elected officials

**Advantages**

- Professional development opportunity to increase your skills in government relations and civic action.
- You will participate in civic process and help to enact real change on the policy level.
- You will gain the opportunity to meet and interact with decision-makers.

**Challenges**

- Results are not immediate or guaranteed.
- Though they do respond, it is not always easy to reach an elected official directly by phone (you will most likely talk to a staffer or aide), so you may have to call more than once.
- You may have to engage groups to increase your effectiveness.
WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR OP-ED ABOUT HUNGER IN YOUR COMMUNITY

IMPACT-O-METER

MOST HELPFUL

SKILLS NEEDED

Ability to write and state your case in a clear, compelling way.

ADVANTAGES

- Publications and media coverage increase visibility of hunger in your community and the importance of your program.
- Coverage in media, including on news websites and publications, helps you to attract new supporters to your program and the need it serves.
- Media coverage such as editorials or op-ed pieces also provide small organizations an increased sense of legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

CHALLENGES

- It is not easy to get published, try smaller newspapers, blogs and other media outlets to bring your op-ed to a public audience.
- You may not have the time to research media contacts to pitch your piece, consider working with a volunteer to compile local media contacts.
WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR OP-ED ABOUT HUNGER IN YOUR COMMUNITY

IMPACT-O-METER
MOST HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS, STUDENTS (WITH HELP FROM AN ADULT)

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED
➔ Ability to write and state your case in a clear, compelling way.

ADVANTAGES
➔ Professional development opportunities: develop writing samples with the possibility of publication, gain experience and skills in press and media relations, and/or increase your visibility or web presence.
➔ Publication or posting can be in blogs, Twitter, or other social media.
➔ You will stimulate debate and help inform others on key issues in hunger policy.

CHALLENGES
➔ Writing tends to be a solitary activity.
➔ Hunger and poverty can be controversial issues, be prepared for some people to publicly disagree with you or post responses to your letter.
➔ Actually being published is more challenging in a large national publication than in smaller, local, or regional publications.

CHAPTER 10: PUBLIC POLICY & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

STEPS FOR WRITING AN EDITORIAL, OP-ED OR LETTER TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

The steps for writing an editorial, op-ed or letter to an elected official are the same for both volunteers and hunger organizations. However, if you are a nonprofit organization, some of your activities may be restricted. Please see the Nonprofit Advocacy and Policy Guide from Independent Sector for more information.

➔ Familiarize yourself with a specific bill or issue.
   For continually updated information on hunger policy nationwide, visit the Food Research and Action Center:
   frac.org/leg-act-center

➔ Know your audience.
   If looking to write an op-ed or letter to the editor, try submitting to a local paper. If writing a letter to a legislator make sure to address a specific individual. For elected officials, depending on the issue or bill, you may wish to contact your state or district representatives and/or representatives on the Committee that oversees the issue you are writing about.
ACTION STEPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

STEPS FOR WRITING AN EDITORIAL, OP-ED OR LETTER TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL (CONT.)

☑ For op-ed or editorials:
   First identify the publications in which you would like to publish the letter, then call or check the online directions for submissions to each newspaper and be sure to follow them (it could take 4-6 weeks before your piece is published). You may also consider online publications, and blogs with a wide audience.

☑ Make a plan of what you want to include.
   You may want to write an outline or draft, adapt a sample letter on a particular issue, or simply sign on to an existing letter or petition.

☑ Keep your letter clear and to the point.
   Do not overwhelm the reader with too much information (most publications will give you guidelines for the length). If you are writing your own letter, back up your argument with some recent statistics and examples, and have others read your draft and give feedback on its clarity.

☑ Plan accordingly when sending letters.
   For op-eds and letters to the editor plan to send the letter a month before you want it to appear in media. For a letter to the legislator, expect 2-4 weeks before the letter is received by your representative and be sure to include a return address.

☑ Forward your letter to friends, family and colleagues.
   Once you have submitted your letter, be sure to pass it along to your personal contacts. You may also want to post it on your Facebook page, tell others about your action on Twitter, or simply email a copy to your network and invite them to write their own letter on hunger, or sign on to yours.
We believe that the single most important emerging trend is empowering low-income, food insecure people to play leadership roles in the anti-hunger movement. No social movement in history has been won without the people most impacted in leadership roles. That is why people who struggle against hunger are absolutely vital in this movement. For a number of years, FAB members have been joining us on Hill visits, at policy conferences, and at press conferences, and their presence has forced policy makers and the media to take our collective arguments more seriously.
START OR JOIN A FOOD ACTION BOARD (FAB)

**IMPACT-O-METER**

**SKILLS NEEDED**

- Willingness to learn and teach others.
- Community organizing experience.
- Experience with media, or experience providing training or developing a curriculum, a plus.

**ADVANTAGES**

- Professional development: gain experience in community organizing, developing and providing training in civic action, and developing effective curricula for different audiences.
- If you are starting your own FAB, you can create a schedule that works for your members.
- You will empower yourself and low-income people through this process.
- Long-lasting effects with high impact.

**CHALLENGES**

- This is a time-intensive activity that will require regular weekly or bi-weekly attendance for a number of months.
- It is not easy to coordinate schedules of low-income volunteer members, many of whom may have frequently changing obligations.
START A FOOD ACTION BOARD (FAB)

IMPACT-O-METER
MOST HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS AND NONPROFIT LEADERS

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED

➤ Willingness to learn and teach others.
➤ Community organizing experience.
➤ Experience with media, or experience providing training or developing a curriculum, a plus.

ADVANTAGES

➤ You can create a leadership development program with few resources; and empower your clients to take action on shared priorities.
➤ You will gain the opportunity to present real-life compelling testimony to elected officials and the media in your area.
➤ Excellent service-learning tool for students.

CHALLENGES

➤ Encouraging regular attendance is difficult, you may consider tangible incentives such as a completion certificate, attendance requirements to meet officials, and/or job recommendations.
➤ You may need help developing a curriculum. Please contact NYCCAH for more information, templates, or to inquire about starting a Food Action Board at your site.
The steps for conducting a Food Action Board are the same for volunteers and hunger organizations alike. However, if you are a hunger organization, consider using your own space to conduct FAB meetings.

☑ Plan your curriculum. Who are your target members? You may wish to engage others in your school, your church, your neighborhood, your local soup kitchens or food pantries. Your audience will be an important part of planning your curriculum.

☑ Choose people who will lead your FAB. You should have at least one person who is familiar with the issues on which you plan to advocate; it is also helpful if you can identify someone who has experience in training and/or community organizing.

☑ Define your goals. Outline your goals and how you will work together. Who will be responsible for what? Are there costs involved? What do you want your FAB to achieve?

☑ Recruit members. Once you have developed a curriculum and identified 1-3 leaders (which can include yourself), you will need to recruit other members to participate. You may want to focus on smaller groups of up to 10 people in order to be able to give personal attention to each participant.

☑ Secure a location. Find a place to hold your FAB meetings. You may consider a church or other religious institution, community center, school, soup kitchen, or food pantry—which may be able to offer you free meeting space.

☑ Spread the word. Reach out to people who have experienced hunger to let them know about the program, how it would help them to develop new skills and take action on policies that affect them personally—be clear about the time frame, duration, and what will be expected of them, as well as what you will offer.

☑ Take attendance at meetings. To be effective and to be able to measure the results of your work, you will need to keep people engaged and attendance is a priority.

☑ Combine your training with real life experience as much as possible. If you are going to write letters to elected officials, be sure to send them. If you offer training on telling your story to the media, then be sure to reach out to the media. You can find a directory of media contacts here: [www.50states.com/news](http://www.50states.com/news)

☑ Recognize your FAB members’ hard work. Acknowledge completion of the program with a ceremony or certificate to build a sense of accomplishment within the group. Invite your top FAB participants to lead a new group or be a leader of your next group to help them further advance their leadership skills and expand your efforts.
CHAPTER 10: PUBLIC POLICY & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

RESOURCES

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger
50 Broad Street, Suite 1520, New York, NY 10004
Phone: 212-825-0028
\( \text{www.nyccah.org} \)

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is one of the nation’s premier policy organizations working at the federal and state levels on fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals.
820 First Street, NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-408-1080
Fax: 202-408-1056
\( \text{www.cbpp.org} \)

Feeding America (Formerly America’s Second Harvest) The Nation’s Food Bank Network provides emergency and supplemental food to low-income Americans through a nationwide network of member food banks and food rescue organizations. You can find more information about their agencies throughout the United States—all of which need donations of money, food, and volunteer time—by going to the Feeding America website.
35 E. Wacker Drive, #2000, Chicago, IL 60601
Phone: 800-771-2303
Phone: 312-263-2303
\( \text{www.secondharvest.org} \)

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) is a leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and under-nutrition in the United States. FRAC works with hundreds of national, state, and local nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and corporations to address hunger and its root cause—poverty. FRAC’s website often has updated “action alerts” explaining how people can contact their Representatives about pending hunger legislation and funding.
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 540, Washington, DC 20009
Phone: 202-986-2200
\( \text{www.frac.org} \)

WHY (World Hunger Year) is a leading advocate for innovative, community-based solutions to alleviate hunger and poverty. WHY challenges society to confront these problems by advancing models that create self-reliance, economic justice, and equal access to nutritious and affordable food. WHY uses its extensive contacts to create networking opportunities for grassroots organizations.
\( \text{www.whyhunger.org} \)
GENERAL POLICY RESOURCES

Independent Sector Advocacy Rules for Public Charities and Community Foundations:
  ➽ www.independentsector.org/lobby_guide

Independent Sector Reference Materials for Legislative Advocacy:
  ➽ www.independentsector.org/advocacy_resources

Food Research and Action Center:
  ➽ frac.org/leg-act-center

To Sign-up for Policy Action Alerts from the NYC Coalition Against Hunger:
  ➽ www.nyccah.org/get-involved/advocate

The President’s Jobs Bill (also known as the American Jobs Act):

Detailed Information about the 2012 Farm Bill:
  ➽ www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/farm-bill-101

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Information about the 2012 Farm Bill:
  ➽ sustainableagriculture.net/category/2012-farm-bill

Detailed Information about the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2010:
  ➽ www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/111/hr5504

LETTER WRITING RESOURCES

Directory of Newspaper Media Contacts by State:
  ➽ www.50states.com/news

Sodexo Summer Meals Letter to the Editor:
  ➽ bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/statelocal-campaigns/writing-op-ed-or-letter-editor

Sample Letters to an Elected Official:
  ➽ www.publicanthropology.org/Yanomami/General/Criteria-Examples.htm

Sample Letter to the Editor or Op-ed:
  ➽ unitedoptout.com/flyers/op-ed-template-2
CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE PRESIDENT, SENATE, AND CONGRESS

The Office of the President:
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Phone Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
TTY/TTD Comments: 202-456-6213
TTY/TTD Switchboard: 202-456-2121

U.S. House of Representatives (Congress):
Phone Comments: 202-224-3121
TTY: 202-225-1904
How to find your representative by zip code:

The United States Senate:
The U.S. Senate is located in three buildings. Please see the following website for your U.S. Senator’s contact information:

State Representatives and State Senators:
To find your State Representatives, refer to the National Conference of State Legislators directory:
The AmeriCorps program is a federally-funded national service program, a sort of “domestic Peace Corps,” that enables people of all ages and background to serve their communities in full-time and part-time voluntary service. AmeriCorps members serve through a network of local and national nonprofits, receive a monthly stipend during their service and full-time members also receive an educational award once service is complete. “AmeriCorps members ‘get things done’ while building community, opportunity, and responsibility.”

AmeriCorps service is perfect for people who seek a more structured way to make a strong long-term impact reducing poverty and strengthening community organizations, while gaining concrete work experience through highly structured service opportunities.
AMERICORPS STATE & NATIONAL PROGRAM
Engages members in direct service and capacity building to address critical community needs.

AMERICORPS VISTA PROGRAM
Engages members in work with community organizations and public agencies to create and expand programs that build capacity and bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

AMERICORPS NATIONAL CIVILIAN COMMUNITY CORPS (NCCC)
Engages members in direct, team-based national and community service to strengthen communities and develop leaders.

While numerous social service organizations nationwide use AmeriCorps members to fight hunger, the two largest anti-hunger AmeriCorps programs are run by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and the Ohio Federation of Second Harvest Food Banks.

AmeriCorps members focus on building the long-term capacity of the organizations they serve. In 2011, the Coalition’s Anti-Hunger Opportunity Corps’ activities included the following:

→ Technology work, including website development and/or graphic design
→ Creating and/or implementing new marketing strategies
→ Creating and institutionalizing new programs
→ Volunteer recruitment and management
→ Outreach to vulnerable populations
→ Fundraising and development

To learn more about AmeriCorps, as a member or as a host, please see americorps.gov.
HOST AN AMERICORPS PARTICIPANT THROUGH THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE OR AS A SUBGRANTEE THROUGH AN EXISTING PROGRAM

IMPACT-O-METER
EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
ANTI-HUNGER AND OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

NOTE SPACE

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

→ Your organization must have the capacity to supervise your AmeriCorps member.
→ AmeriCorps members have a broad range of experience, from recent graduates to seasoned professionals.
→ Once you are approved as a host, members apply to your program as they would to a traditional job; you will have to interview applicants to find the best fit.

ADVANTAGES

→ You can have a full-time or part-time staff person for a year, focused on building your organization’s capacity.
→ You can apply directly to AmeriCorps, or as a sub-grantee through an existing program.

CHALLENGES

→ The application process is competitive, and requires matching funds.
→ You must have clear detailed outcomes of what your AmeriCorps member would accomplish, as well as the resources to supervise your member and meet federal match requirements.

STEPS FOR HOSTING AN AMERICORPS PARTICIPANT

✔ First, determine your eligibility to host an AmeriCorps member—if you are eligible, you will need to submit an application, to learn more about requirements, see: americorps.gov/for_organizations/overview

✔ Discuss the proposed grant with your program staff and leadership. Do you have the financial and staff resources to host an AmeriCorps member? If not, you may consider hosting a member as a local partner site through a larger program—please note that organizations each have different requirements for local partners.

✔ Develop clear, measurable outcomes—what would this person do for your organization? How would it build your long-term capacity?

✔ Submit a successful application and post your service opportunity through the AmeriCorps website, to which interested members will apply.

✔ Once you have interviewed and selected your AmeriCorps member(s), it is important that they complete their service term—be sure the relationship is meaningful for both your organization and your AmeriCorps member(s).

To host a larger group of AmeriCorps members visit the AmeriCorps website: americorps.gov
CHAPTER 11: AMERICORPS NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM

GIVE A YEAR OF SERVICE WITH A HUNGER ORGANIZATION THROUGH THE AMERICORPS STATE, NATIONAL, OR VISTA PROGRAM

IMPACT-O-METER
EXTREMELY HELPFUL

WHO CAN DO IT
VOLUNTEERS: ADULTS (17 YEARS OR OLDER)

NOTE SPACE

SKILLS NEEDED
→ The commitment to fulfill your service requirement (usually 10 months or 1 year).
→ Patience, and the willingness to get the job done.
→ Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
→ Positive, can-do attitude.

REQUIREMENTS
→ An application process is required to join AmeriCorps.
→ Some, but not all, organizations interested in hosting an AmeriCorps member request that applicants have completed some college or a 4-year degree.
→ Completing an AmeriCorps application does not automatically reserve you a placement. You must also apply to the organizations that post on the AmeriCorps website. It is from this organization list that you will gain a position of employment.
→ You must attend required training prior to the start of your service year.

ADVANTAGES
→ Build new skills and significant work experience in the nonprofit sector.
→ On-site training is provided.
→ AmeriCorps offers an educational award of up to $5,500 for those who complete a year of full-time service.
→ There are both direct and indirect service opportunities.
→ Student loans are deferred during service year.
→ Serves as a great way to make a strong, long-term impact on reducing hunger.

CHALLENGES
→ Monthly pay for AmeriCorps is intentionally set at the poverty level, based on the location of your service.
→ AmeriCorps typically requires a one-year commitment.
→ Some programs prohibit employment during your service year.
“We have had an amazing experience with our VISTA. Tracy has really helped us build the capacity of the organization. We’ve seen a lot of growth, directly as a result of her work. She built a database to bring us from paper to a computer-based system, she’s raised funding to support our work, and put valuable systems in place. VISTAs have so much to bring to the table, it’s important to allow them to share and implement their ideas. It’s also important that the work we give them builds their resumés. Our VISTAs have gone on to very good jobs, and our relationship doesn’t end with the year of service.”

DR. MELONY SAMUELS (LEFT), EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BED-STUY CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNGER

STEPS TO BECOMING AN AMERICORPS MEMBER

☑️ Explore the AmeriCorps website and research which program interests you most:
   🌐 americorps.gov/for_individuals/overview

☑️ Choose between AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps. You may also consider the AmeriCorps Summer Associate Program.

☑️ Create a personal profile on the AmeriCorps website.

☑️ Browse the listed opportunities and click “apply” to all those that interest you.
   ➔ After you apply you will be contacted for interviews from interested organizations.
   ➔ Organizations will make an offer based on your profile and their needs, you may be able to chose the program that best suits your interests
   ➔ Your service does not begin until you have secured a position with an organization, and completed Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) training.

☑️ Start your year of service!

Note: If you chose to do your service at an organization outside of your home area, some of your moving costs may be reimbursed.
BEST PRACTICES

The Coalition’s extraordinary AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA teams represent a great example of how effective these programs can be—both for AmeriCorps members and for host sites. Our current 110-member team includes VISTAs based in our office, focused on Volunteer Management and Fundraising, as well as members based at hunger organizations large and small in New York City, New York State, and in 17 states across the nation. Collectively, between 2010 and 2012, our team recruited over 9,000 volunteers, submitted more than 50 grant applications—generating nearly $500,000 in funding and in-kind donations for their programs—as well as created and implemented dozens of new programs.

Through our New York City based program, our “Anti-Hunger and Empowerment Corps,” engages a diverse, high-quality team of AmeriCorps members to both feed more hungry New Yorkers and to enable more low-income people to move towards self-sufficiency.

Designed specifically to meet the unique needs of small, volunteer-led feeding charities throughout the city, the Corps uses a mix of 2 full-time and 21 part-time members - broken down into four work teams - to meet well documented community anti-hunger and anti-poverty needs by carrying out detailed work plans to achieve concrete, measurable goals. The 22 AmeriCorps Members in this program perform vital work, strengthen communities, advance their own educations and careers, and enhance an ethic of civic service.

The city’s pantries and kitchens, which collectively feed more than one million low-income New Yorkers, desperately need the help that the Corps provides. According to NYCAH’s 2011 survey, the majority of these agencies reported that demand for food increased over the last year, while the food and funding they received decreased. This “food distribution resources gap” forced several agencies to shut down entirely. Of the agencies that were able to stay in business, limited resources forced more than half to ration their food by either turning away hungry New Yorkers, reducing portion sizes, and/or cutting hours of operation.

Each of our AmeriCorps programs continue to play an important role in helping reverse these trends by enabling faith-based and community agencies to:

→ Create and implement new Volunteer Management and Benefits Access programs
→ Provide technical assistance and training to community-based organizations in their area
→ Conduct pre-screening sessions to determine client eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
→ Write and submit grants to increase funding
→ Conduct and coordinate hands-on nutrition education activities
→ Develop websites, newsletters, and outreach materials
→ Create and expand community gardens
→ Help emergency food programs collect and serve or distribute food for low-income families
→ Provide outreach and logistical service support for the Federal Summer Food Service Program
BEST PRACTICES

“I chose to be a VISTA because I wanted to work for an organization that was involved with alleviating hunger in a new city. VISTA service enabled me to live somewhere new and more importantly, to help families receive the assistance they need to have proper nourishment.

As a VISTA, I started a community supported agriculture program that provided low-income families a low-cost option to receive fresh fruits and vegetables from a local farmer. I was able to connect with a wide range of people and to learn about the situation of hunger in NYC and the United States. Now, as the Coalition’s Director of Child Nutrition Programs, I work with VISTAs to engage them in meaningful work that will help families have healthy lives.”

JOSH ANKERBERG, CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM DIRECTOR & FORMER VISTA LEADER, NEW YORK CITY COALITION AGAINST HUNGER
RESOURCES

For more information about the AmeriCorps National Service Program:

www.americorps.gov

For more information about the Impact of the AmeriCorps Program:

www.americorps.gov/about/role_impact/index.asp

For more information about the NYC Coalition Against Hunger’s AmeriCorps Programs:

nyccah.org/our-work/national-americorps-anti-hunger-program

If you are interested in joining the NYC Coalition Against Hunger’s AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, or Summer Associate VISTA programs as a member, or if you are interested in hosting an AmeriCorps member through partnering with the Coalition, please contact:

→ Vicki Dumbuya, NYCCAH National Service Program Coordinator:
  212-825-0028 x219, vdumbuya@nyccah.org

→ Reggie Miller, NYCCAH AmeriCorps VISTA Program Coordinator
  212-825-0028 x206, rmiller@nyccah.org

→ Amanda Cowgill, NYCCAH National AmeriCorps VISTA Program Coordinator
  212-825-0028 x222, acowgill@nyccah.org

For individuals interested in joining an AmeriCorps Program:

www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/overview/index.asp

For organizations interested in applying to host AmeriCorps members:

www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/overview/index.asp

www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/index.asp

www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/index.asp

For more information about the Corporation for National Service:

www.nationalservice.gov
One person, or a small group, can make a big difference in the fight against hunger, especially if their energies are targeted towards the types of activities that result in the largest impacts.

Many of the activities detailed in this toolkit are particularly well suited to individuals and very small groups. We strongly encourage small groups to consider conducting outreach on government nutrition assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), and/or Summer Meals outreach—outreach can be a fun way to support team building, while helping connect needy families to food resources long-term (see Chapters 7 and 8 for details). One of the single most effective ways small groups can help fight hunger is through advocacy—work together in a letter writing campaign and/or call or write your elected officials and ask them to support legislation that both improves wages for low-income, working families and provides a strong nutritional safety net. See Chapter 10 for more details on how you can participate in effective advocacy efforts.

If you are an individual, and still want to help feeding organizations with meal service, one of the most effective actions you can take is to become a long-term volunteer with a hunger organization. The vast majority of emergency food providers are small, volunteer run organizations that need people on a regular basis—not just around Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Being a “regular” allows you to make a long-term impact at an agency that depends on volunteers. Because most agencies do not have the resources to hire paid staff for every position, these food pantries and soup kitchens come to rely heavily on the volunteers that come back time and again to help. To find an agency that is compatible with you make sure to take location into account. Find an agency that really needs you but that is also close and convenient enough for you to get to on a regular basis.

Becoming a long-term volunteer has many benefits. Not only do you take some stress off agency staff but you can develop lasting relationships with service participants and organizational leadership.
“These volunteers are what we call ‘regular volunteers,’ volunteers who are willing to come week after week in order to help out. Most of the volunteers like Katrina or Sunshine have been coming to volunteer at our food pantry for more than three years. What sort of compensation do we give to these volunteers? Our thanks from the bottom of our hearts, and a small pantry bag as a token of gratitude. When we look for volunteers we are constantly looking for people like Katrina and Sunshine. Though it is amazing that people are willing to come to help out on days like Thanksgiving or other holidays, it is rather difficult managing that many volunteers only for one day out of the entire year. This, however, does not mean we should disparage the volunteers who decide to help out on the holidays. We are always grateful that people took the time to think of those who are less fortunate and decided to do what they can out of sheer kindness of their hearts.”

CHARLES YOO, DEVELOPMENT & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, GREENPOINT REFORMED CHURCH

As an individual, you can also explore Board membership with a hunger organization. This long-term opportunity not only develops your leadership skills, but also helps organizations to be more effective. See Chapter 5 for more details on being a Board member.

Although most agencies do not have the capacity to support large groups, smaller, committed groups can be just as effective as individuals. Groups, whether they are affiliated through business, religion, or have civic ties, can work with an agency in a specific way that satisfies the needs of both volunteers and the agency. If you are a small group of colleagues, you may wish to provide pro bono or professional services to an organization through your company. Groups can essentially “adopt an agency” and work with the organization to build its capacity long-term. For example, if you work in accounting or finance, you and/or a small group of colleagues could help a hunger organization by improving their accounting systems, training staff on how to use basic accounting software, or helping an organization to develop and implement a financial plan. The same is true if you are in marketing, design, data management, technology, customer service, or legal service. Talk to your HR representative and/or see Chapter 4 for more information.

The key to effective volunteering is being aware of the actual needs of the agency where you give your time. An individual or a small group should set out to examine hunger organization needs and how you can help meet those needs to affect positive, long-lasting change.
Student and youth volunteerism has been on a slow rise. Many factors contribute to the frequency in which youth volunteer including but not limited to age, gender, race, parents' education, school service requirements, and future plans. Students and youth who participate in volunteer services are more likely to have a more positive physical, psychological, and academic well-being.

Whether you are a teenager who would like to have better quality food for lunch or a college or graduate student concerned about food security issues, you can take concrete action to improve access to healthy food in your school and community! Student and youth volunteers of all ages and stages can make valuable contributions as both volunteers and advocates. Because hunger prevention is so important to your physical and mental development, and because so many hunger programs are geared to reducing hunger among children and young adults, your presence and active participation in hunger programs helps address your needs.

If you are a student who would like to do more to fight hunger in your community, there are a number of different ways you can not only make your volunteer service more effective, but also develop important leadership skills. Skills that will help you not only help reduce hunger in your community, but also help you stand out to colleges, universities, and potential employers as well as enable you to enact real change in both your school and your community.

School aged students can help by creating, supporting, and attending programs such as school lunch, school breakfast (Chapter 6), school farms or gardens (Chapter 7), and the Summer Food Service Program (Chapter 6). You can increase awareness of hunger programs (Chapter 8) in your school and community, conduct outreach on nutrition assistance programs, and/or advocate for better policies at your school (Chapter 9).

College students offer additional skills that can be useful as a volunteer. Students at universities can contribute to research, outreach (Chapters 5 and 6) and legislative advocacy (Chapter 9) through volunteer programs and/or internships.
CHAPTER 13: HOW STUDENTS CAN BEST HELP

HOW STUDENTS CAN BEST HELP PROGRAMS THAT ENGAGE STUDENTS IN VOLUNTEER WORK TO REDUCE HUNGER

Both school aged students and college students can participate in programs that focus on reducing hunger. Programs that promote student involvement are:

→ The Campus Kitchen Project donates unused food from college campuses and delivers the food to those who need it most.
  
  www.campuskitchens.org/national/news/113-mentoring-program-brings-meal-recipients-to-college

→ Slow Food USA in School teaches children about food through hands-on experiences such as planting, growing, and harvesting their own food.
  
  www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/programs/details/slow_food_on_campus

→ National Gardening Association engages youth by having them participate in growing their own food:
  
  www.kidsgardening.org

→ The New York City Coalition Against Hunger and Share Our Strength engage youth in Summer Meals outreach both in New York City and nationwide.
  
  The Coalition also develops unique service learning opportunities for student groups who want to understand and do more to reduce hunger. You can learn to advocate for increased participation in School Breakfast, healthier food at lunch, while older students can learn to work for long-term change the policy level by participating in community mapping or research. If you, or your school, is interested in unique service learning opportunities, please contact Valerie Boucard, Director of Strategic Volunteerism: vboucard@nyccah.org.

HOW TO CHOOSE A PROGRAM TO PARTICIPATE IN

Students should participate in the anti-hunger movement in a way that interests them. It is often easier to gain support for a cause if it directly affects the audience. By pushing for improvement of school lunch and an increase in the school breakfast program participation, students can tackle the issue of hunger in a way that is very real to them.

You can also enhance your understanding of American government through service learning opportunities that enable you to actively participate in food policy at the local, state, and federal levels of government (Chapter 9).

RESOURCES

Share Our Strength Kids Kick Hunger Program
  
  nokidhungry2.org

Youth Service America
  
  www.ysa.org

Kids Against Hunger
  
  www.kidsagainsthunger.org

You can apply for funding for your project!
  
  www.ysa.org/grants
There are a number of ways that companies can encourage their employees to volunteer their time to end hunger. Whether you represent a small business or a large corporation, you can “adopt” a local anti-hunger nonprofit group or emergency food provider, and enable your employees to apply their unique skills as a volunteer.

Professionals can commit time and manpower toward increasing a nonprofit’s capacity one task at a time. Because the skill sets of a professional work place often vary, so too can the projects that the corporate group decides to take on. Your company’s team building activities can be focused on activities that help build the capacity of community organizations to reduce hunger long-term, depending on your company or team’s expertise. Business groups can assist with financial management, legal issues, fundraising, accounting, data collection, web design, and marketing materials or strategy. Such tasks are often the most difficult or foreign to a nonprofit. By tackling issue after issue, a corporate group can make a strong impact in nonprofit sustainability and success.
Whether you engage your employees in a day of service, focus your team on longer-term pro bono work (Chapter 4), support employees in nonprofit Board membership (Chapter 5), encourage giving through a matching gift program (Chapter 2), or pursue an active role in policies that affect hunger (Chapter 10), you will make a strong impact while increasing your brand recognition and visibility in communities where you have a presence and helping your employees to develop important leadership skills.

CONSIDER HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN:
- Promote long-term, skills-based projects through pro bono work with anti-hunger organizations
- Organize or support a fundraising event to benefit an anti-hunger organization
- Serve where there is the greatest need, for more than one day a year
- Volunteer for advocacy and public awareness projects
- Build volunteerism into your Corporate Social Responsibility strategy

BEST PRACTICES

JIMMY DEAN, HILLSHIRE FARM & SHARE OUR STRENGTH PARTNERSHIP

In November 2010, Jimmy Dean® officially signed on as a five year partner of Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry® Campaign, a national campaign to end childhood hunger in America. During the inaugural year of the partnership, Jimmy Dean focused on building genuine support for the cause among employees and establishing No Kid Hungry as a driver of the internal culture before announcing the partnership to external audiences. For Jimmy Dean, it was critical that the brand “walked the talk” and immediately began putting their commitment into action by participating in volunteer service activities and by spreading awareness of the No Kid Hungry campaign and the issue of childhood hunger among Jimmy Dean employees and the larger Sara Lee family.

The Jimmy Dean team, along with members of the larger Sara Lee family, participated in eight service activities during the first year all aimed at making a direct impact against hunger in their local Chicago communities. Service activities ranged from hosting food drives, to educational programs and snack pack donations held at Sara Lee headquarters to time volunteered at local Chicago food banks and soup kitchens. In addition, all employees were encouraged to take the NKH pledge and help spread the word to colleagues, friends and family members. Within the first five months of the partnership, 100% of Jimmy Dean employees had taken the No Kid Hungry pledge.

Through education, pledge-taking and participation in monthly service activities, Jimmy Dean effectively demonstrated their passion for the NKH campaign and their commitment to making a lasting impact in the fight against childhood hunger in America. Recently, Hillshire Farm® announced their commitment to NKH, signing on as a long-term partner. In 2012, Hillshire Farm will work in tandem with Jimmy Dean and on their own brand specific NKH efforts to continue rallying internal support for the cause, ultimately working towards ending childhood hunger in America.
RESOURCES

City of London’s Corporate Citizen Report on how employee volunteering helps build competencies and leadership while addressing community needs:

To participate in the New York City Coalition Against Hunger’s Volunteer Program as a corporate partner, please contact Valerie Boucard, Director of Strategic Volunteerism, at vboucard@nyccah.org or 212-825-0028, ext. 210.

Points of Light Foundation Corporate Institute:
www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute

Hands On Network for Skills-Based Volunteering:
www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/skillsbasedvolunteering

Taproot Foundation:
www.taprootfoundation.org

Taproot Foundation White Paper on the Benefits of Probono Consulting for Businesses and Nonprofit Organizations:

Skills-Based Volunteering Resources:
www.nationalserviceresources.org/sbv

Deloitte Probono Case Studies:
www.deloitte.com/view/en_US/us/About/Community-Involvement/Pro-Bono-Service

Corporation for National & Community Service’s A Billion + Change Program, to learn about how your company can engage volunteers in solving community problems:
www.nationalservice.gov/about/initiatives/probono.asp

Volunteer Match Corporate Engagement:
www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/clients
APPENDIX 1: RESOURCES

How to Find Volunteer Opportunities Near You

- **Hunger Volunteer**: [www.hungervolunteer.org](http://www.hungervolunteer.org)
- **New York City Coalition Against Hunger**: [www.nyccah.org/vms/search](http://www.nyccah.org/vms/search)
- **VolunteerMatch**: [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)
- **Idealist**: [www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org)
- **United We Serve**: [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)
- **Feeding America**: [feedingamerica.org/get-involved/volunteer.aspx](http://feedingamerica.org/get-involved/volunteer.aspx)
- **Share Our Strength**: [cookingmatters.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://cookingmatters.org/get-involved/volunteer)
- **All for Good**: [www.allforgood.org](http://www.allforgood.org)
- **Volunteer.gov**: [www.volunteer.gov](http://www.volunteer.gov)
- **New York Cares**: [www.newyorkcares.org](http://www.newyorkcares.org)
- **Catchafire**: [www.catchafire.org](http://www.catchafire.org)

To locate your nearest emergency food provider, call the Hunger Hotline toll free at:
1-866-3-HUNGER or 1-877-3-HAMBRE

**ConAgra Foods Foundation Food Drive Toolkit**:
- Customizable poster to promote your food drive:
  - [www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Drive-Poster.pdf](http://www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org/downloads/organize/Food-Drive-Poster.pdf)
- Customizable list of suggested food donations:

**Ample Harvest**, internet-based campaign enabling Americans who grow food to easily share excess harvest with local food pantries:
- [www.ampleharvest.org](http://www.ampleharvest.org)

**Feeding America**, directory of food banks and affiliate organizations in your area:
- [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)

**Local Harvest Directory of Farmers’ Markets**:
- [www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets](http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets)

**USDA Agricultural Marketing Service**, national directory of farmers’ markets:
- [www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FARMERSMARKETS](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FARMERSMARKETS)
  - Then click on “Find or Add a Farmers’ Market Near Me”

**USDA National Agricultural Library - Alternative Farming Systems Information Center**, directory of CSA farms:
  - Then click on “Find a CSA Farm”

Chapters 1:
Collecting Food for Anti-Hunger Organizations
Chapter 2: Raising Money for Anti-Hunger Organizations

Websites that allow you to search for charities by focus area, such as hunger or poverty, and location:
- www.charitynavigator.org
- www.justgive.org
- www.networkforgood.org/donate

IRS Directory of Charities:
- www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html

National Association of State Charity Officials:
- www.nasconet.org/documents/u-s-charity-offices

NYS Charities Bureau:
- www.charitiesnys.com/home.jsp

Guidestar directory of charitable organizations, including contact and financial information:
- www.guidestar.org

Download free charity event planning checklists:
- www.fundraisingip.com/checklists/fundraisingchecklists.html
- sua.umn.edu/groups/forms/event_planning.pdf

Download a free charity event planning app:

Common Grant application form:
- chfs.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/635f46a0-8ef6-4ce7-a6ae-b33d3dbe35a6/0/nngcommongrantapplication.pdf

Websites to post fundraising volunteer opportunities:
- www.idealista.org
- volunteermatch.org
- serve.gov
- allforgood.org

Association of Fundraising Professionals: www.afpnet.org

Council on Foundations: www.cof.org

The Foundation Center: www.foundationcenter.org

Chronicle of Philanthropy: www.philanthropy.com

The Nonprofit Times: www.thenonprofittimes.com
APPENDIX 1: RESOURCES

Chapter 3: Helping at Agencies by Preparing, Serving, and Distributing Food

To find volunteer centers in your area:
- www.1-800-volunteer.org

Sites to post volunteer opportunities:
- www.idealista.org
- www.hungervolunteer.org
- www.nyccah.org/for-kitchens-and-pantries/getvolunteers
- www.volunteermatch.org
- allforgood.org
- serve.gov

Job-posting sites that also list volunteer opportunities:
- www.indeed.com
- www.simplyhired.com

Directory of Emergency Food Providers by state:
- feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx
- foodpantries.org
- whyhunger.org/find-food

Emergency Food Providers in New York City:
- www.nyccah.org/hungermaps

Meals-on-Wheels:
- www.mowaa.org

Chapter 4: Building the Long-Term Capacity of Anti-Hunger Nonprofits

Finding and Posting Skills-Based Volunteer Opportunities
- www.nyccah.org/get-involved/volunteer
- www.idealista.org
- www.volunteermatch.org
- www.taproot.org
- www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/skillbasedvolunteering
- www.simplyhired.com
- allforgood.org

Chapter 5: Serving on the Board of Directors of Anti-Hunger Nonprofits

For additional resources on nonprofit Board member responsibilities, building effective Boards, training and consulting:
- www.boardsource.org

For volunteers seeking Board placements and organizations looking for new members:
- www.bridgestar.org/Library/RecruitingBoardMembers.aspx

For detailed information about Board member roles, responsibilities, ethical considerations, and sample documents:
- managementhelp.org/boards/index.htm
- governancematters.org
- boardnetusa.org
- boardassist.org
Chapter 6: Helping Connect Eligible Families to SNAP (Food Stamp) Benefits

RESOURCES FOR VOLUNTEERS INTERESTED IN SNAP OUTREACH:

USDA general information about SNAP and Other Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs:
- [www.fns.usda.gov/fns](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns)

USDA guide on How to Leverage SNAP Outreach Partnerships:

USDA Community Outreach Partner ToolKit:

Food Research and Action Center Guide to SNAP/Food Stamp Collaborations:

For the full USDA Report on SNAP recipients:
- [www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Trends2002-09.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Trends2002-09.pdf)

RESOURCES FOR ORGANIZATIONS INTERESTED IN FUNDING SNAP WORK:

USDA free outreach materials:
- [www.fns.usda.gov/snap](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap)
  Then click on “Info Materials” under “Browse By Subjects” (English and Spanish versions)

USDA free toolkits for SNAP Outreach:

Funding for SNAP through USDA grants:

Funding through State SNAP Outreach Plans:

Additional information on potential funding sources:

Chapter 7: Child Nutrition Programs

SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST

For more detailed information and local statistics:
- [frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/school-breakfast-and-lunch](http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/school-breakfast-and-lunch)

Department of Education (DOE):

Example of school meals brochure:

USDA Child Nutrition Program information:
- [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/About/AboutCNP.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/About/AboutCNP.htm)

USDA School Meals information:
- [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm)

Share Our Strength:
- [www.strength.org/school_breakfast/7_reasons_to_help_kids_get_aHealthy_breakfast_at_school](http://www.strength.org/school_breakfast/7_reasons_to_help_kids_get_aHealthy_breakfast_at_school)
- [www.strength.org/school_breakfast/strategies_for_closing_the_breakfast_gap](http://www.strength.org/school_breakfast/strategies_for_closing_the_breakfast_gap)
Chapter 7:
(Cont.)

SUMMER MEALS

USDA:
- www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer
- www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/seamless_summer.htm

Share Our Strength:
- bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/about-summer-meals
- bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/Summer-Meals
- bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/summer-meals-evaluation-toolkit

For more detailed information, local statistics, and location information on Summer Meals programs:
- frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/summer-programs

USDA Summer Meals Outreach:

For other Summer Meals outreach activities, please see the Sedexo Foundation Summer Meals Toolkit, available through the Share Our Strength No Kid Hungry website, for instructions that include: planning a media event, writing an op-ed or letters to the editor, and placing radio ads:
- bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals

HUNGER ORGANIZATIONS FOCUSED ON CHILD NUTRITION

New York City Coalition Against Hunger:
- www.nyccah.org

Share Our Strength:
- www.strength.org

Food Resource and Action Center:
- www.frac.org

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Child Nutrition Program Information:
- www.fns.usda.gov/cnd

Chapter 8:
Aiding Community Gardens, Farmers’ Markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Projects

Share Our Strength’s Cooking Matters® Program: cookingmatters.org

Free handout for healthy eating: foodandhealth.com/handout.php

Additional information on nutrition education: www.fns.usda.gov/fns/nutrition.htm

Sign-up to connect your food program with a Farmers’ Market: www.ampleharvest.org

Search for CSAs in your community: www.localharvest.org/csa


Search Nationwide Directory of Farmers’ Markets: search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets
Chapter 8: The New York City Coalition Against Hunger’s Mixed Income CSA model:
nyccah.org/our-work/increasing-access-food-benefits/farm-fresh-food-access-program/
farm-fresh-project

How to promote acceptance of SNAP and WIC benefits at local farmers’ markets:
pps.org/pdf/SNAP_EBT_Book.pdf

See low-cost healthy recipe examples:
www.recipefinder.nal.usda.gov

For more about healthy eating, including recommended daily allowances:
www.choosemyplate.gov

The City Greens, local food stories from New York City:
Featured articles about local initiatives regarding healthy food options, farmers’ markets,
and people trying to make a difference in eating habits and advocating health consciousness
in the inner city and boroughs of New York City.
www.thecitygreens.com/2010/03/31/harvest-home-farmer%E2%80%99s-market-
expands-in-manhattan-brooklyn

Farmers’ Market Federation of New York:
A nonprofit organization that supports farmers’ market organizers, farmers, vendors and
communities interested in starting markets. The organization offers conferences, publish-
es a newsletter and provides low cost health and liability insurance coverage for farmers,
market vendors and sponsors.
www.nyfarmersmarket.com

Department of Agriculture and Markets:
Information on markets and farmers in NY State. You can look for farms in a particular
part of the state as well as by a specific product.
www.agmkt.state.ny.us
Chapter 9: Raising Public Awareness

The Food Stamp Challenge Toolkit, includes facts, media advisory and press release:

Hunger Simulation:
www.safoodbank.org/hunger101

More Information on How to Hold a Hunger Banquet:
 actfast.oxfamamerica.org/index.php/events/banquet

To Watch the Food Network Documentary Hunger Hits Home:
www.foodnetwork.com/share-our-strength/package/index.html

For more information on A Place at the Table:
www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table

OTHER RESOURCES FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT HUNGER

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger:
nyccah.org/learn-about-hunger

Information about Child Hunger from Share Our Strength:
strength.org/childhood_hunger

Feeding America General Information about Hunger:
feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america.aspx

Feeding America 2010 Hunger Study:
feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/hunger-study-2010.aspx

Bread for the World U.S. Domestic Hunger Information:
www.bread.org/hunger/us

World Hunger Education Service—U.S. Information:
www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/us_hunger_facts.htm

GOVERNMENT RESOURCES AND STATISTICAL INFORMATION

For detailed statistical information about poverty in the U.S.:
www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty

For detailed information about food insecurity, nationwide and in your community:

For detailed information and statistics about food assistance programs:
Chapter 10: Public Policy and Legislative Advocacy

GENERAL POLICY RESOURCES
Independent Sector Advocacy Rules for Public Charities and Community Foundations:
> www.independentsector.org/lobby_guide

Independent Sector Reference Materials for Legislative Advocacy:
> www.independentsector.org/advocacy_resources

Food Research and Action Center:
> frac.org/leg-act-center

To Sign-up for Policy Action Alerts from the NYC Coalition Against Hunger:
> www.nyccah.org/get-involved/advocate

The President’s Jobs Bill (also known as the American Jobs Act):

Detailed Information about the 2012 Farm Bill:
> www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/farm-bill-101

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Information about the 2012 Farm Bill:
> sustainableagriculture.net/category/2012-farm-bill

Detailed Information about the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2010:
> www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/111/hr5504

LETTER WRITING RESOURCES
Directory of Newspaper Media Contacts by State:
> www.50states.com/news

Sodexo Summer Meals Letter to the Editor:
> bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/statelocal-campaigns/writing-op-ed-or-letter-editor

Sample Letters to an Elected Official:
> www.publicanthropology.org/Yanomami/General/Criteria-Examples.htm

Sample Letter to the Editor or Op-ed:
> unitedoptout.com/flyers/op-ed-template-2

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE PRESIDENT, SENATE, AND CONGRESS
The Office of the President:
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
> www.whitehouse.gov/contact/write-or-call
Phone Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
TTY/TTD Comments: 202-456-6213

State Representatives and State Senators:
Chapter 11: 
AmeriCorps National Service Program

For more information about the AmeriCorps National Service Program:  
🔗 www.americorps.gov

For more information about the Impact of the AmeriCorps Program:  
🔗 www.americorps.gov/about/role_impact/index.asp

For more information about the NYC Coalition Against Hunger’s AmeriCorps Programs:  
🔗 nyccah.org/our-work/national-americorps-anti-hunger-program

If you are interested in joining the NYC Coalition Against Hunger’s AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, or Summer Associate VISTA programs as a member, or if you are interested in hosting an AmeriCorps member through partnering with the Coalition, please contact:

➤ Vicki Dumbuya, NYCCAH National Service Program Coordinator:  
212-825-0028 x219, vdumbuya@nyccah.org

➤ Reggie Miller, NYCCAH AmeriCorps VISTA Program Coordinator  
212-825-0028 x206, rmiller@nyccah.org

➤ Amanda Cowgill, NYCCAH National AmeriCorps VISTA Program Coordinator  
212-825-0028 x222, acowgill@nyccah.org

For individuals interested in joining an AmeriCorps Program:  
🔗 www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/overview/index.asp

For organizations interested in applying to host AmeriCorps members:  
🔗 www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/overview/index.asp  
🔗 www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/index.asp  
🔗 www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/index.asp

For more information about the Corporation for National Service:  
🔗 www.nationalservice.gov

Chapter 13: 
How Students and Youth Can Best Help

Share Our Strength Kids Kick Hunger Program  
🔗 nokidhungry2.org

Youth Service America  
🔗 www.ysa.org

Kids Against Hunger  
🔗 www.kidsagainsthunger.org

You can apply for funding for your project!  
🔗 www.ysa.org/grants
Chapter 14: How Businesses Can Best Help

City of London's Corporate Citizen Report on how employee volunteering helps build competencies and leadership while addressing community needs:

To participate in the New York City Coalition Against Hunger's Volunteer Program as a corporate partner, please contact Valerie Boucard, Director of Strategic Volunteerism, at vboucard@nyccah.org or 212-825-0028, ext. 210.

Points of Light Foundation Corporate Institute:
www.pointsoflight.org/corporate-institute

Hands On Network for Skills-Based Volunteering:
www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/skillsbasedvolunteering

Taproot Foundation:
www.taprootfoundation.org

Taproot Foundation White Paper on the Benefits of Pro bono Consulting for Businesses and Nonprofit Organizations:

Skills-Based Volunteering Resources:
www.nationalserviceresources.org/sbv

Deloitte Pro bono Case Studies:
www.deloitte.com/view/en_US/us/About/Community-Involvement/Pro-Bono-Service

Corporation for National & Community Service's A Billion + Change Program, to learn about how your company can engage volunteers in solving community problems:
www.nationalservice.gov/about/initiatives/probono.asp

Volunteer Match Corporate Engagement:
www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/clients
APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED READING AND VIEWING

BOOKS: SUGGESTED FICTION AND NON-FICTION


A Place at the Table
- Directed by Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush. 2012; Participant Media, Release Date TBD.
  A documentary recently purchased by Magnolia Films, with an expected release date in March 2013. The film examines the hunger crisis in America, as well as those working to find solutions.

Gandhi
- Directed by Richard Attenborough. 1982; National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC).
  The movie demonstrates how a peaceful, grass-roots social movement can bring a mighty empire to its knees.

Harlan County, USA
- Directed by Barbara Kopple. 1976; Cabin Creek.
  An enormously powerful documentary about striking Kentucky coal miners in 1972.

Hoop Dreams
- Directed by Steve James. 1994; Kartemquin Films.
  This documentary provides a gripping chronicle of talented urban youth who hope for a chance to make it rich in the N.B.A. Yet, not only does this film provide a riveting narrative about individuals people can easily care about, it also aptly places their stories in a deeper social context. The movie questions why our society continues to promote the myth that basketball is a serious way out of poverty, instead of dealing with the realities that millions are afflicted by a broken education system, dilapidated housing, joblessness, teen pregnancy, and fragmented families.

Hunger Hits Home
- Online. Directed by Dan Cutforth and Jane Lipsitz. April 2012; Food Network.
  A recent documentary film that takes a hard look at child hunger through the eyes of different people who deal with hunger issues on a regular basis, including hungry people, and activists.

Mr. Deeds Goes to Town
- Directed by Frank Capra. 1936; Columbia Pictures.
  Like in most Capra films, the radical message is often overlooked because the storytelling and acting are so masterful. Set in the height of the Great Depression, the movie is about Longfellow Deeds, a man who surprisingly inherits millions and then frolics in a lavish lifestyle. Confronted by a dispossessed farmer who scolds him for ignoring the plight of millions of Americans on the brink of starvation, Deeds decides to use his money to purchase farms for homeless families if they agree to work the land to grow their own food for a number of years. Tellingly, in a recent re-make, rather than providing hungry people with food-producing land, the Deeds character buys everyone in the town Corvettes.
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Directed by Frank Capra. 1939: Columbia Studios.
Senator Jefferson Smith: “I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine. All you people don’t know about lost causes. Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them; because of just one plain simple rule: ‘Love thy neighbor.’... And you know that you fight for the lost causes harder than for any other. Yes, you even die for them.” That says it all.

My Man Godfrey

Directed by Gregory La Cava. 1936; Universal Pictures.
A screwball comedy about a socialite who falls in love with a homeless man she hired to impersonate her butler.

Pather Panchali

Directed by Satyajit Ray. 1955; Government of West Bengal.
Satyajit Ray’s story of Apu, a boy born into a bitterly poor family in rural Bengal, where starvation is the norm.

Seven Samurai

Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 1954; Toho Company.
This masterpiece works as both an action epic and a movie of ideas, with astonishing acting, dialogue, direction, and set design. While it is most noted for its epic swordfights, people never forget what they are fighting about in the first place: preserving the poor village’s precious rice supply from bandits.

Sullivan’s Travels

Directed by Preston Sturges. 1941; Paramount Pictures.
In this classic Preston Sturges satire, a movie director, played by Joel McCrea, longs to make a socially relevant drama, and travels the country undercover, posing as a penniless “hobo,” to supposedly develop empathy. Making the point that the non-poor can never truly understand the harsh impact of poverty, the movie turns on a dime from rollicking comedy to stirring drama. As relevant today as when it was premiered in 1941, Sullivan’s Travels reminds us that merely showing empathy for a problem—such as by volunteering at a soup kitchen—is no substitute for enacting structural economic and social change society-wide.
**APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED READING AND VIEWING**

**FILMS: SUGGESTED VIEWING (CONT.)**

*The Grapes of Wrath*

- Directed by John Ford. 1940; Twentieth Century Fox.
  
  Henry Fonda is unforgettable in this John Ford adaptation of the classic John Steinbeck novel about an Oklahoma farm family, who, after losing their land during the Great Depression, become migrant workers and move to California. The movie shows both what happens to real people when the private enterprise system collapses and how New Deal government programs countered the problem and literally saved lives. Nothing beats Fonda's closing speech: "I've been thinking about us, too, about our people living like pigs and good rich land layin' fallow. Or maybe one guy with a million acres and a hundred thousand farmers starvin'. And I been wonderin' if all our folks got together and yelled...I'll be everywhere. Wherever you can look—wherever there's a fight, so hungry people can eat, I'll be there." This movie may make people cry but it will also inspire action to solve society's seemingly intractable problems.

*Trading Places*

- Directed by John Landis. 1983; Paramount Pictures.
  
  Often viewed as little more than a light comedy vehicle for Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd, this film has a serious subtext. On a whim, two ultra-wealthy titans of finance decide to swap the lives of one of their wealthy, Harvard-trained lieutenants (Aykroyd) with that of a poor street hustler (Murphy). In short order, Murphy is a model citizen and Aykroyd is a petty crook, demonstrating that economic and social status in America is now more frequently the result of how someone was born than how intrinsically virtuous they are.
10 FACTS ON U.S. HUNGER & HOW FEDERAL PROGRAMS SUCH AS SNAP EFFECTIVELY COMBAT IT

Keep these facts on hand for discussions with friends, family members, neighbors, congregants, and co-workers:

#1: In 2011, more than 50.1 million U.S. residents, including nearly 17 million children, lived in households that couldn’t afford enough food.
That means that one in six Americans, and one in five U.S. children, struggle against hunger.

#2: Most hungry Americans are either low-wage workers, children, senior citizens, or people with disabilities.
USDA has found that, out of families with children suffering from food insecurity and hunger, 68 percent contained at least one adult working full-time, 10 percent had at least one adult working part-time, seven percent had an unemployed adult actively looking for work, and eight percent were headed by an adult with a disability. The main problem is low wages and few jobs, not laziness.

#3: Hungry Americans can also be overweight.
Because low-income families have more difficulty affording the most nutritious foods, and because low-income neighborhoods are often “food deserts” that lack healthy food options, hunger and obesity are often flip-sides of the same malnutrition coin. Some Americans falsely believe that some low-income people are obese because they shop poorly, fail to cook at home, or choose to eat too much fast food. But a recent study proved that the vast majority of low-income families cooked at home at least five nights a week, and desperately struggled to serve healthier food. Another new study also found that middle class people eat fast food more often than low-income people, which shouldn’t be surprising since SNAP benefits generally can’t be used to eat at restaurants, including fast food restaurants.

#4: One of the most effective ways to reduce U.S. hunger is to increase participation in federal nutrition assistance programs.
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as the Food Stamp Program—the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the National Summer Food Service Program, and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program all work quickly and effectively to get food to those who need it most.

#5: History proves that federal nutrition assistance programs have worked spectacularly well.
As late as the 1960s, teams of doctors were able to find pockets of Third World-style hunger and malnutrition in America, which generated significant media reaction and political attention. In response, Presidents and Congresses worked together in a bipartisan fashion to expand the Food Stamp Program and federal Summer Meals programs for children from relatively small pilot projects into the large-scale programs we know today, and also created the National School Breakfast Program, as well as the WIC Program that provides nutrition supplements to low-income pregnant women and their small children. These expansions succeeded remarkably in achieving their main goal: ending starvation conditions in America. In 1979, when investigators returned to many of the same parts of the U.S. in which they had previously found high rates of hunger, they found dramatic reductions in hunger and malnutrition, concluding: “This change does not appear to be due to an overall improvement in living standards or to a decrease in joblessness in these areas.... The Food Stamp Program, the nutritional components of Head Start, school lunch and breakfast programs, and... WIC have made the difference.”

#6: SNAP prevents hunger for tens of millions of American families and boosts the economy.
SNAP provides vouchers—available electronically on cards similar to bank credit or debit cards—that enable low-income families to shop for the food they need at private grocery stores and markets. Because SNAP creates U.S. jobs for those who grow, pick, process, manufacture, ship, warehouse, wholesale, and retail food, every dollar spent on the program generates $1.73-1.79 in U.S. economic activity.
#7: Most of the people who receive SNAP are children, seniors, working parents, and people with disabilities. About half of all SNAP participants are children, and nearly 10 percent are seniors. Most of the rest are working parents and people with disabilities. Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for benefits, and even many legal immigrants, including many with full-time jobs, are also ineligible.

#8: SNAP benefits that are illegally sold constitute only about one percent of all SNAP benefit dollars, proving that there is less fraud in SNAP than in most big businesses, nonprofit groups, or defense contracts. Due to increased oversight and improvements to program management by the USDA, the illegal trafficking of benefits has fallen significantly over the last two decades, from about four cents on the dollar in 1993 to about one cent in 2006-08.

#9: Hungry families may be your neighbors. While many equate hunger with homelessness, the vast majority of hungry Americans aren’t homeless; they just earn too little money to afford all the food they need. Hungry families live in urban and rural areas—and increasingly even in the suburbs. Most hungry families are white.

#10: Despite increasing SNAP participation, many eligible for benefits still access them, and eligible working families have the lowest participation rates. In 2009, more than a quarter of eligible households, and more than four in ten eligible working households, did not receive the SNAP benefits to which they were entitled. There are many reasons that eligible people do not apply for—or ultimately enroll in—the program, including: misconceptions about whether they can get SNAP and how much in benefits they can obtain; lack of time to travel to a government office, wait in line, participate in an interview that often feels like an interrogation, and/or submit a large amount of documents; and stigma, fear, and embarrassment. Fortunately, there are concrete ways for volunteers to help potentially eligible people overcome all these barriers and to help them more easily obtain the nutrition assistance their families so desperately need.

SNAP BENEFITS OUTREACH TALKING POINTS

Benefits Outreach is the most meaningful exercise of strategic volunteerism aimed at lowering rates of hunger and poverty. NYCCAH’s benefits outreach team focuses the Food Stamp Program. Now known as SNAP—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—it is the largest nutrition benefit program in the U.S. and “the cornerstone of the nation’s safety net and nutrition assistance programs.” *

- Currently, 1 in 7 Americans receive SNAP benefits, yet only 2/3 of eligible households are enrolled in the program. Expenditures for SNAP in 2011 were $75.67 billion.
- According to NYCCAH’s 2010 Annual Hunger Survey Report, food pantries “reported the average monthly value of food they distribute per household around $98, compared to the average monthly benefit for a household receiving SNAP benefits in NYC at $289.45.” Nationwide, SNAP benefits virtually always provide far more food than do private charities.
- Positive Returns: a 2008 report published by Moody’s estimates every $5 the government spends on SNAP generates $9 in local economic activity, making it by far the most robust form of stimulus spending.
- More individuals and families than ever are eligible for benefits! By increasing program participation and removing systemic barriers, SNAP serves as a safeguard against the spiral into poverty for millions of Americans—an “effective and efficient”* public benefit.

CHILD NUTRITION TALKING POINTS

VOLUNTEER SHEET: SUMMER MEALS

What is it?
For many kids, summer vacation is a much deserved reward for a year of hard work in the classroom. For some who rely on free and reduced-price school meals, however, the summer months can be difficult. When school is out, these kids no longer have access to school meals and their families’ budgets are often stretched to the breaking point. In fact, studies show that kids are at a higher risk for both obesity and hunger during the summer months. Many families also face the stress of providing safe, supervised, and affordable places for kids and teens to socialize, play, and continue to learn. It doesn’t have to be this way.

Who runs the program?
Summer Meals programs are funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

What happens at the program? What activities does the program provide?
Summer Meals programs can provide an important source of nutritious food for America’s youth during the critical summer months. The availability of free meals is also an incentive for children to participate in summer enrichment programs, which means that children are not only well-fed, but in a safe environment engaged in educational and recreational activities that can, in turn, help return them to school ready to learn.

When is the program?
To find specific dates and locations in your area visit www.summerfood.usda.gov

What to tell parents?
→ Provides a safe environment for children to play while parents are at work
→ Helps families save and stretch tight budgets
→ Safe
→ No paperwork or enrollment required
→ No proof of income is necessary
→ Activities for children
→ Learning opportunities
→ For all families in your community
→ Healthy meals prepared with fresh fruits and vegetables
→ Meals are served to children 18 and under
→ Fights obesity
APPENDIX 3: TALKING POINTS

TALKING POINTS: SUMMER MEALS (CONT.)

What to tell children?
- Fun
- Activities
- Healthy meals prepared with fresh fruits and vegetables
- Eat with your friends
- Be physically active

What to tell teens?
- Saves money
- Be a mentor to younger kids

What to tell other community members?
- Helps families in tough economic times
- Free
- Helps stretch tight budgets
- Helps families save
- Fun
- Activities
- Learning opportunities
- Safe
- Healthy
- Fight obesity
- For all families in your community
- No proof of income necessary

Summer Meals Details from Share Our Strength
- Meals are free to children and teens ages 18 and younger who come to a Summer Meals sites.
- Free Summer Meals will help families save money and stretch their already tight food budgets.
- Food served at summer meal sites follows USDA nutrition guidelines and are paid for by the USDA.
- Summer Meals sites are at safe places for kids and teens to go such as schools, churches, community centers and other places that are safe for kids and teens to go to.
- Many sites offer educational and recreational activities that kids of all ages can participate in so they can eat, hang out with friends and take part in activities offered.
- Parents don't need to apply to the program to get a free summer meal for their kids. They can simply bring their child to a Summer Meals site in their community and their kids can enjoy it without the hassle of having to fill out an application.
How old must children be to volunteer?

Individual children and groups of children above 13 can generally volunteer for most types of projects, provided that they are accompanied by sufficient adult supervision.

Many food banks, soup kitchens, food pantries prefer not to host children under the age of 13, because the safety risks are too great—and the value of the work performed by small children is too low. Honestly, bringing children that young to such agencies often creates unnecessary work and worries for those agencies.

However, even children below 13 (but above five) can usually help with other anti-hunger efforts including school breakfast and summer meals outreach efforts that distribute flyers and in certain types of community garden work.

For each type of volunteer project, the requirements for age, physical ability, and emotional maturity are ultimately set by the agency or group sponsoring the project, but we strongly suggest that parents respect the limitations they set. Just as is perfectly OK to tell a child that certain TV shows or movies are too adult for them right now, it is fine to say the same about volunteer activities.

Children should learn at a young age that it is more important for their volunteering to be effective and truly needed than it is for them merely to feel good about themselves.

What kind of activities can young people undertake?

Of course, children can—and should—aid food drives, help with food distributions, and work in community gardens. But just as it is vital to speak to them about the true causes of and solutions to hunger, it is important to help them consider long-term, more effective ways to fight the problem.

At the age of 14, I started working on efforts to improve the educational policies of my local school system, so I’m a big believer in engaging children not only in direct service, but in broader social change activities, at a relatively young age.

This handbook gives concrete ways for young people to organize and conduct projects to:

- Increase participation among fellow students in school breakfast programs.
- Increase participation among fellow students in school lunch programs.
- Improve the nutritional quality of school meals.
- Educate their peers about good food buying, eating, and exercise habits.
- Raise awareness about the causes of—and solutions to—America’s hunger problem.
- Contact elected officials to ask them to support specific bills and funding requests.
- Develop their own projects to reduce hunger.

Just as we challenge adults to fight hunger both with their hearts and their heads in order to be most effective in the long-term, we do the same with youth.
What should we tell children about hunger and anti-hunger programs?

All parents must decide themselves, based on their personal values and beliefs and the age and maturity of their children, what to tell their kids about why people are hungry, why they are volunteering, and what role volunteers play in solving (or not solving) the hunger problem.

One of the most useful parts of volunteering in hunger projects is when children and other volunteers learn to dispel stereotypes they have. Incidentally, most of the misconceptions held about hunger by children are the same misconceptions held by adults. So everything in this section about the importance of communicating honestly with children also applies to adults.

Personally, I prefer telling young people the complete truth. If children are old enough to visit an anti-hunger project, they are old enough to learn the full reality of the hunger problem. I tell them that the main reasons we have hunger and food insecurity in America is that too many people—including too many parents—aren’t able to get jobs during these tough economic times, and many of those that are working are only able to work part-time and/or are paid low wages—so they don’t earn enough money to meet all their families’ needs. I also tell them the problem in America is now so big that even when relatively large government food programs are combined with far more limited charitable efforts, that’s still generally not enough help to meet all the needs of all hungry families.

Conversely, I believe that giving children a false lesson about hunger is worse than giving them no lesson at all. For instance, I believe it is problematic to leave children with the false impression that just volunteering occasionally is seriously solving a problem that systematically impacts 50 million Americans throughout the year, or that families receiving the help are so grateful that they are now happy and have all their needs fulfilled. I believe that if children are old enough to volunteer at a soup kitchen or food pantry, they are also old enough to know that soup kitchens and food pantries are not the chief long-term solution to this problem and that many families receive only partial help at such agencies.

Out of the tens of millions forced to utilize food pantries and soup kitchens, most utilize food pantries, which tend to serve working families. However, even though soup kitchens serve fewer people than food pantries, they tend to require more volunteers because they are more labor-intensive. Soup kitchens tend to serve homeless people, some of whom are more stereotypical clients, suffering from mental illness and/or substance abuse. Thus, if you volunteer at one of those types of agencies, it is important that children understand that other kinds of agencies exist and who those other types of agencies serve and why. Bluntly put, if you volunteer at a soup kitchen—and your children see many homeless people, some of whom may be mentally ill and/or abusing substances—it is important to help your children understand that they are only a small sub-set of who is hungry. Children need to know that true hunger defies all stereotypes, and that hungry Americans look, dress, and act all types of ways.

When I visit soup kitchens with volunteers, if the soup kitchen is open only once or twice a week for one or two meals a day, I ask volunteers if they believe people should eat three meals a day and what happens to the people eating on site if the site isn’t open for three meals each day. Similarly, at a food pantry, I ask the agency to tell volunteers how many days worth of food they are providing. When most agencies tell the volunteers that they only provide food for three or four days, I ask the volunteers to imagine how people survive the rest of the month. If the feeding agencies sometimes run out of food and have to cut off the lines, reduce portion sizes, or reduce their hours of operation, I think it’s important for volunteers to learn that too.

I also think it’s important for children to begin to understand that not every problem has an immediate easy solution that they can implement, on their own, merely through their good will.

Just as most of us agree it would be wrong to tell a child that disabled veterans will get their legs back just because we send them “get well” cards in the hospital, I think we should agree that it’s equally wrong to give them the false impression that their part-time volunteer activities will end hunger. In both instances, it is vital to make clear that giving helps and is indeed a worthy thing to do, but that such aid doesn’t always solve every problem completely.

That’s why I try to help children understand that, to truly end hunger, we will need to collectively work together as Americans to rebuild our economy, create living wage jobs, and ensure that we have adequate government safety nets for low-income Americans.

Yes, these are complex ideas for children, but I still maintain that, if they are old enough to see people suffering first-hand, they are old enough to be told the truth about the ways to truly relieve their suffering.
The truth is, that for every dollar of food distributed by a food bank, soup kitchen, or food pantry in America, more than 15 times that amount of food is distributed by government programs such as SNAP (food stamps), WIC, school lunches and breakfast, and Summer Meals for children. Thus, to help children truly understand the solution to hunger, it is important for children understand the vital role that government plays.

Moreover, as we teach our children that one key way to be a “good person” is to volunteer to aid the less fortunate, I believe it is imperative to teach that being a good person also requires being a good citizen. That would including taking it upon yourself to learn the issues, register to vote and then vote, and that you should make educated decisions to vote for people who agree with you and take concrete actions to advance your view of solutions. A good citizen should also regularly contact elected officials to ask them to support issues you care about, or even run for office or work on campaigns. Just as I tell adults, I tell children this reality: that five minutes spent contacting your elected officials to prevent massive cuts in SNAP or to ensure greatest access for low-income children to school breakfast, can do more to effectively fight hunger than five months of serving soup. Getting even more involved in politics and policy can accomplish even more.

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