

9 STEPS TO ORGANIZING A FOOD DRIVE, PLUS TIPS FOR PROMOTING!

This guide focuses on the “single-site drop-off” model, where people bring food donations to a place, on a specific date, where volunteers are waiting to receive it.

“There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.” Mahatma Gandhi

Step 1: PICK A LOCAL GROUP THAT NEEDS FOOD



Once you’ve determined what organization will benefit from your drive, use the questions in the *“Tips for Meeting an Organization’s Needs”* section below (pg. 4) to talk about your idea and how best to shape it to meet their needs.

Local food organizations often are in short supply of age-appropriate food (e.g., low sodium, low sugar, or easy to open foods) and/or culturally-appropriate foods.

Step 2: DECIDE HOW TO COLLECT FOOD



Single-site drop off: You ask people to bring food donations to one location during set hours on a specific day. Volunteers stay at the collection site.

Extended food drive: You set up multiple collection points with drop boxes where people can leave food over the course of multiple days or weeks. Volunteers collect the donations once per day.

Food aid groups often lack fresh produce to provide to hungry people.

Event-related food drive: Your team partners with a local event – like a sports game, music festival or county fair – and sets up collection sites at the event.

Step 3: ASSESS VOLUNTEER NEEDS



Establish a small committee to plan and coordinate the food drive. Select a coordinator and team leaders for individual tasks. Depending on size of your food drive, there could be 2 to 6 team leaders.

Teams can share the work, motivate volunteers/donors and hold each other accountable to deadlines. Many hands make light work!

Schedule a training session for the team leaders. Provide the leaders with background on the selected organizations, a list of key dates/times (timeline of preparation), responsibilities needed to carry out the food drive and contact information for you and the other team leaders.

The team leaders should:

- Help recruit volunteers for the food drive
- Promote the food drive with flyers throughout the community
- Ensure local media are aware of the drive
- Set up the collection site
- Lead a shift during the event
- Help coordinate food sorting and delivery after the drive

Step 4: FIND A DROP-OFF LOCATION



Identify the desired location for food drop-off and collection such as a school, local business, shopping center, faith-based organization or grocery store.

Contact the appropriate person (store manager, principal, etc.) to get permission to hold the drive there and ask if they'd like to participate in any way. When you call, make sure you have information on the food drive (the goal, the preferred date, background on the organization the food will support, etc.).

Depending on the size of the drive and the number of volunteers, you might want to hold it at multiple locations. Keep in mind, this requires more logistical organization and volunteers but will yield more food.

A location that is centrally located, with built-in traffic, a large parking lot and an inside option (in case of bad weather) is ideal.

Once you nail down a location, work out logistics with your contact there:

- Where specifically the food drive can be held (e.g., at the entrance of the store or a section of the parking lot)
- The date and the allowed hours of operation for the drive
- Inclement weather backup plan
- Where the food will be stored before pick up
- Place to accommodate the volunteers who will organize the food for pick up

NOTE: If you are talking to a retailer and they are interested, you might explore additional ways they could support the effort. Examples might include:

- Printing your flyers (the retailer could receive an acknowledgment on the flyer)
- Matching the donations raised from the public for the food drive in some way (with a dollar amount or a product donation from the retailer to the food bank or organization)
- Adding the option at the cash register for customers to donate money to the food organization you are helping

Step 5: RECRUIT AND MANAGE VOLUNTEERS

Ask your family, friends, colleagues, neighbors and faith group members to help make the food drive a success. Check with local community organizations, libraries, schools, senior citizen centers, places of worship, etc. that may already have a pool of volunteers for their own purposes. Email is a great way to keep the volunteers informed.

Develop a roster of all the volunteers. Be sure to get each person's full name and contact information so you can keep everyone informed during the planning stage.

Host a meeting three to five weeks prior to the food drive so the volunteers understand the goal of the food drive, what is required of them, the timeline of the drive, and background on the selected organization you are supporting. Provide a take-away sheet with the information from the meeting.

Develop a schedule for the volunteers so you have enough support throughout the day. Peak hours need more volunteers than the early and later hours of the event.

Communicate the schedule to all the volunteers two weeks prior to the food drive so there is time for rescheduling if needed.

Suggested tasks for volunteers include:

- Make and distribute flyers/signs for the event
- Promote the event through their contacts and local community organizations
- Staff the event (including set up and take down)
- Transport food donations to the recipient organization
- Follow-up communication, including the results of the drive and thanking the supporters

Step 6: GET THE WORD OUT – Success means promoting! See *“Tips for Generating Publicity”* on pages 4-5!

Step 7: FINAL PREP ARRANGEMENTS

Touch base with recipient organization, your team leaders and your contact person at the drive location to confirm all details, including:

- Plans for box/crate drop-off prior to the drive and food pick-up following the drive
- Food sorting instructions (if any)
- Who will supply tables, chairs and refreshments for the volunteers?
- The staffing schedule for the day of the food drive
- 2- to 3-hour shifts are best
- Create 3 or 4 large signs that your teams can post within a block or two of the food drive on the day of the event
- Be prepared with information for people who tell you they need food. Identify the closest food pantry, as well as the closest place people can go to get assistance in applying for SNAP, the food stamp program (see the SNAP Flyer in the ‘Supplemental Materials’ section below).

Step 8: EVENT DAY



Set up the food collection site (i.e.. two tables with chairs behind them; refreshments behind the volunteer chairs, boxes/crates clearly labeled for various food types)

Post the Food Drive signs in visible areas and have flyers available

Welcome volunteers as they arrive and show them how things will work

Volunteers (not contributors) should put the food in the appropriate crate to ensure efficiency

Relax, smile and enjoy the wonderful event that is bringing together the community

When the drive is over, clean up the area and take down the signs. Leave the area the same (if

not cleaner) than when you arrived

Thank the hosting organization and the volunteers

Step 9: FOLLOW UP (within one week after the event)

Send a thank you note, call or email to all volunteers (using the method by which they prefer to be contacted). Include how much food was donated and whether there are plans for additional food drives or other volunteer opportunities.

Call or write a thank you note to the hosting organization. Again, let them know how much food was donated and convey their important role in the success of the program and the difference they are making.

While it is still fresh in your mind, develop a list of lessons learned for future events. Check in with the local food organization to see if they have suggestions to include.

Keep in touch with volunteers and local communities for further volunteer opportunities.

TIPS FOR MEETING AN ORGANIZATION'S NEEDS

Once you have selected the local program to support, get more information on their needs before implementing your plan. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. You want your plan to be well-grounded with ample information for your volunteers! Suggested areas to discuss:

- Who is a contact person to work with for coordinating the food drive?
- Is this a good time of year to receive donations? Identify a date for the food drive that works for them and you
- What types of food are in short supply?
- What specific food is needed?
- Do they need healthy, age-appropriate food, like low-sodium or low-sugar foods, and/or easy-to-open packages?
- Do they need culturally-appropriate products? (these needs will vary by local population)
- Do they need any non-food items?
- Are there any foods or packaging that they cannot accept? Can they accept fresh food?
- What quantities (e.g., large or small packages) of each food type do they prefer?
- What is their preference on how the food should be sorted at the collection site? (e.g., canned food, boxed food, condiments, etc.)
- Does the organization have boxes or crates for sorting the food?
- Determine how the food will be delivered to the organization. Can they pick it up or do you need to deliver it? When is the best time for pick up and delivery?

TIPS FOR GENERATING PUBLICITY

Make a Flyer

Be creative but also be sure to provide key information:

- Suggested foods for contribution (specific items requested by the organizations, non-perishable foods, gift cards)
- Date, time and location of the event
- Brief information on the organization that will receive the food
- Look at other food drive flyers to get ideas (see the Catholic Charities food drive flyer in the "Supplemental Materials" section below)

Distribute the Flyer

Consider the same sources used for recruiting volunteers (schools, faith-based organizations, community centers) and public places frequented by people including grocery stores, coffee shops, libraries, etc.

Word of Mouth Goes a Long Way

Spread the word to friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. Talk in person or use email or social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) to get the word out. Ask them to spread the word as well. Approach everyone with a friendly, positive attitude. Explain that it will be a fun event focused on a great cause. Use message boards – both online and the old-fashioned way.

Reach the Largest Audience

Use local newspapers, magazines, community guides, websites, radio stations and television and cable access channels to help spread the word about your food drive. The local media often welcome information about community events, and many radio and TV stations and news outlets offer online forms to simplify event promotion.

How to Contact the Media

Ask volunteers to develop a list of local editors and reporters (names, phone numbers and email addresses). Most newspapers and radio and television stations will list newsroom contact information on their websites. The reporters most interested in your announcement will be community editors.

Email basic details of the event using plain text without any fancy graphics. Put the event's date in the subject line. The email should include:

- Name of event (_____ Food Drive)
- Complete date and time of the food drive
- What organization is being supported, and how much food you are hoping to assemble for a specific cause
- Any special guests or events
- Your contact information (for further questions and possible volunteers)

The best days to send media announcements are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Publicize the Food Drive – Before and After

- Ask permission to display flyers, posters or postcards at coffee shops, libraries, malls and local businesses. Invite local businesses to participate with you.
- Ask local community members to promote the food drive through their local place of faith, clubs, community groups, etc. People are most likely to do this if they're motivated by the charity that will benefit from the donations.
- Invite a local celebrity – a congressional representative, your mayor or a radio show host – to highlight the need for food and promote the event.