



# How to Start a Food Rescue Organization

A GUIDE BY FOOD RESCUE HERO



# Table of Contents

- 03** Introduction to Food Rescue
- 07** Introduction to Building a Food Rescue Organization
- 09** Non-profit Basics
- 12** Tips for Success
- 14** Food Donor Management
- 18** Non-profit Partner Management
- 22** Volunteer Management
- 26** Data
- 29** Next Steps for Growth
- 30** Appendix
- 31** Donor Onboarding Form
- 33** Retail Location Onboarding Form
- 34** Non-profit Partner Onboarding Form



## Introduction to Food Rescue

Overwhelmed by need in your community when limited solutions exist? Ready to make a real and sustainable change? Interested in using perfectly good, but unsellable food, that would otherwise be wasted and redirect it to people who need it?

Food Rescue is a direct response to the disconnect between food waste, hunger, and environmental sustainability. We waste up to 40% of our food globally. That translates to over 1.3 billion tons annually and means food is the #1 material in landfills.<sup>1</sup> This shouldn't happen while 1 in 5 people go hungry every day in the US. According to the United Nations, if we recover all the food that is lost or wasted, we will have enough to feed all those who are hungry, four times over. Together through the power of collective action, we can change this!

---

1. <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/196402/icode/>

## COVERING THE BASICS

### Good food belongs to people not landfills: Food Security

*"412 Food Rescue has managed to effectively end hunger in our public housing community."*

– Michelle Sandidge, Chief Community Affairs Officer HACF

In 2019, one in eight, 35 million Americans were food insecure.<sup>2</sup> Recent projections show food insecurity rates could reach up to 1 in 3 adults and 1 in 2 children in some states.<sup>3</sup>

Food Rescue can make a big impact on this problem. Based on a 2018 Food Rescue Hero Impact Survey, 90% of our food donation recipients reported an increase in food security, 92% agreed that Food Rescue helped to make ends meet and 86% reported increased access to healthier food.<sup>4</sup>

### Everyone has a right to healthy food: Increase Food Access Points

*"It is difficult to juggle three children on a two bus trip to the market. It is hard enough to carry a gallon of milk and produce, let alone afford them. I'm doing the best I can, but my kids rarely got fresh fruit and vegetables before this program."* – Mom, Philly Food Rescue participant

Many people affected by hunger and poverty live in food deserts and often lack adequate transportation and enough hours in the day to access traditional food pantries. In addition, only 15% of food provided through pantries are fresh foods.<sup>5</sup>

Creating new **food recovery and redistribution networks** that effectively deliver fresh and highly perishable food (produce, meat, dairy, bread) directly to those who need it most is vital. It is also key to bring food to where people already are – overcoming barriers to food access like transportation and time.

### Climate change requires immediate action: Environmental Impact

*"Our employees love the daily pick ups and ease of use. They are far more engaged and happy to participate. On average, 33,000*

*lbs is diverted from a landfill from one store annually!"* – David Deets, Director of Store Development and Sustainability for Brown's ShopRite Superstores

Food waste is an environmental problem. Food production uses 10% of the energy budget, 50% of the land and 80% of all freshwater consumed in the United States. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, over 97% of food waste generated ends up in a landfill generating a large portion of methane emissions.<sup>6</sup>

### There are critical gaps in our food access network: Why Food Rescue?

Food waste happens in a highly distributed network, millions of pounds wasted in hundreds of thousands of locations across the country. Usually each instance is a relatively small quantity, too small to be cost effective for trucks to recover.

We rescue highly perishable food and most of the rescues concentrate on smaller quantities of food that can fit in cars.

Food Rescue complements food banks, pantries and other hunger organizations by using volunteers to rescue highly perishable food in uncertain quantities on an irregular schedule.

We do not bank food, but rather, directly transfer surplus food from source to the recipient, perfect for small quantities of highly perishable food. The missions of the non-profit distribution partners that we work with may not be primarily to address hunger, however they serve individuals and families who are food insecure and often already there to access other critical services.

By going directly to where the consumers are located we are able to ensure that this food is used quickly - imagine that a food donation can be dropped off in the morning and by that evening it can be on someone's dinner table.

2. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99282/err-275.pdf?v=6770.3>

3. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/05/06/the-covid-19-crisis-has-already-left-too-many-children-hungry-in-america/>

4. <https://412foodrescue.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/412-Food-Rescue-Executive-Summary.pdf>

5. Fast Company, November 2017

6. <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics#what>



## THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE OF FOOD RESCUE

### Food from grocery store is rescued.

Store saves money on waste disposal, enjoys tax benefits, and employees feel good.

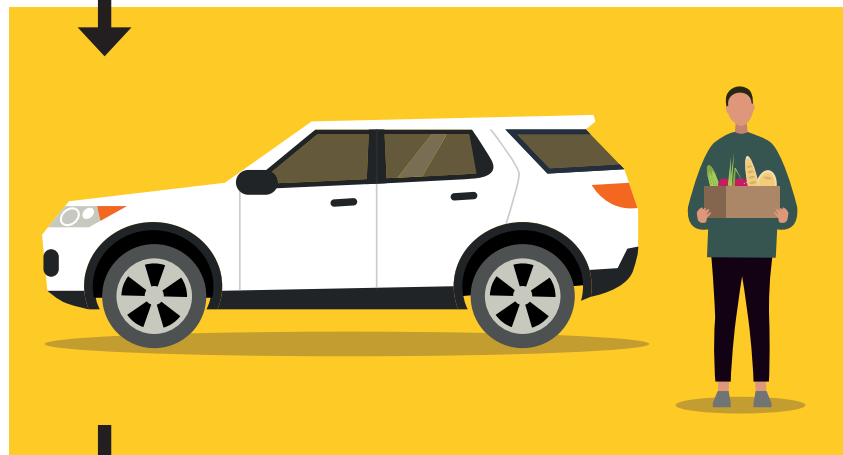


Keeping food out of the landfill reduces methane emissions!



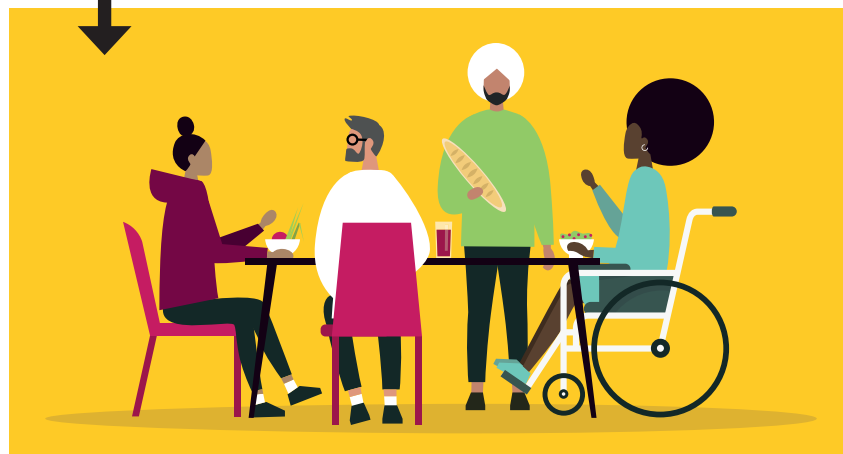
### Volunteer picks up food.

Quick and easy, feels great, and builds community.



### Food is delivered the same day.

Helps reduce hunger, reduces food budget for non-profits, and provides healthy fruits and vegetables hard to come by.





[Does Food Rescue really work?](#) We've done a study to assess the impact of Food Rescue on the people receiving the food. [Visit this link for a full download.](#)

Impact Stories from across the network:

[Food Rescue Hero Network responds to COVID-19](#)

[Prince William Food Rescue Partners with Food Rescue Hero](#)

## Introduction to Building a Food Rescue Organization

How do you bring Food Rescue to your community? There are two ways to go about this. You can start your own or propose Food Rescue to an existing non-profit in your area.







### **Before you decide what to do, start with research.**

Find out if there is an existing Food Rescue Organization (FRO) in your area:

- [GuideStar](#) is a free database of non-profits. Search by city, state, or keyword ie: Food Rescue, food recovery, hunger organizations.
- Google Food Rescue and your location to see more organizations nearby or check [Refed's innovator database](#).
- [Food Finder](#) can help identify food pantries and services in your local area.
- [Funding Information Network](#) database of non-profits that have received grants in your location for Food Rescues or other missions.

### **If you find an organization you would like to work with:**

Pursue a meeting to propose your ideas.

- Understand your value add:
  - Can you assist with a specific project or gap they might have?
  - Can you boost organizational efficiency, effectiveness?
  - Can you drive broader social and systems change?
- Try the [3C Model](#), focused on cooperation, coordination, collaboration.
- If you desire to start your own non-profit partnering with another non-profit for fiscal sponsorship is also an option as you get started, available in the next section.



## Non-profit Basics

If you wish to establish your own Food Rescue organization here are the basics.







## Why partnering with or achieving non-profit status matters in Food Rescue

### [Legal Guide to Food Recovery](#)

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996 exempts those who make good faith donations of food and grocery products **to non-profit organizations** that feed the hungry from liability for injuries arising from the consumption of the donated food.

## Advantages and considerations to starting a non-profit organization

### Advantages:

- Tax exemption/deduction
- Eligible for grants from public and private sources
- Legal entity ensures the non-profit mission is above personal interests
- Limited Liability

### Considerations:

- Planning, time, effort and resources
- Must develop reliable income streams
- Reporting annually to the IRS
- Shared control with others and subject to all bylaws and regulations
- Public information

## As you start the process of becoming a non-profit, one option is fiscal sponsorship

[Fiscal Sponsorship](#) is an autonomous arrangement which a non-profit sponsors nonexempt projects to qualify for funding opportunities like grants.

## THE FIRST STEPS TO STARTING A NON-PROFIT

### 1. Develop a name, mission and vision

Picture your successful organization ten years in the future. Consider:

- Objective– Purpose
- Advantage– How do we do things better or differently?
- Measurable Goals- What needs to be done to achieve the objective?

### 2. Choose a board of directors

Consider expertise in specific areas, experience and commitment.

### 3. Create bylaws

These are the rules and procedures your organization follows to ensure legality and productivity: [Bylaw Templates](#)

### 4. Tax-exempt status

- [IRS checklist](#) for tax-exempt applications
- The IRS provides guidance and instructions on [applying for tax-exempt status](#).
- [IRS Publication 557](#) – Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization
- Or call 1-877-829-5500 for additional support.

### 5. Key plans to develop

The below links are resources to developing your non-profit.

- [Business Plan](#)
- [Budget](#)
- [Financial Management Strategy](#)
- The Wallace Foundation's [The Skills to Pay the Bills](#)

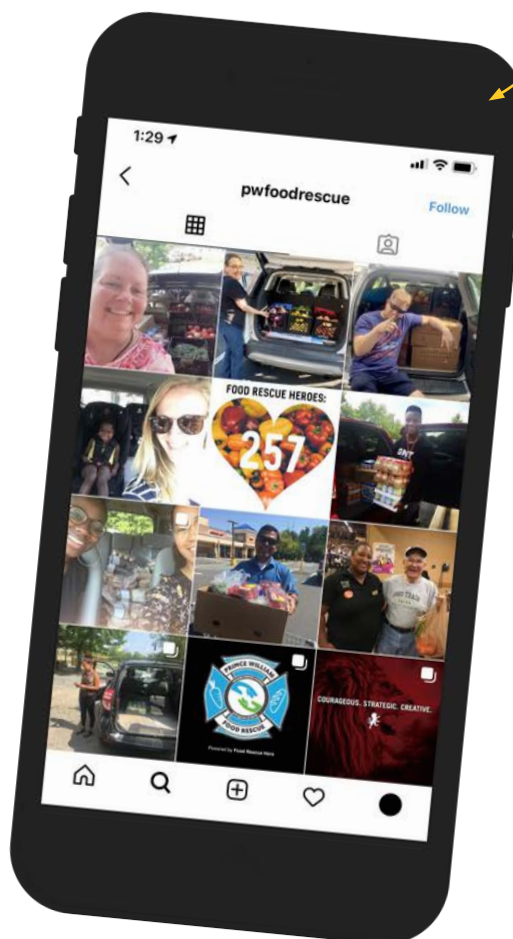
### 6. Build a website and social media presence

Consider a platform to help your organization raise donations, recruit volunteers and share your story with the community.

- The [main priorities of social media marketers at non-profits](#) are to fundraise, generate brand awareness, recruit volunteers or share news.
- Create accounts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- Generate an email list through MailChimp, HubSpot, etc.

Consider engaging a website consultant, work with our team directly, or try a online template building guide:

- Visit [A Non-profit's Guide to Building Simple, Low-Cost Websites](#)



For more information, visit [Starting a Non-profit: Guide](#) by USAGov or this [Step by Step Guide](#) by the National Council of Non-profits.

For local resources, visit [Starting a Non-profit](#) by The Center for Non-profit Resources or [Find Your State Association](#) by the National Council of Non-profits.



## Tips for Success

We have learned some lessons over the years both locally and nationally. Below are our top tips for success.



## TRUST IS CURRENCY

Food Rescue provides opportunities to connect with people from all walks of life. Trust can take on many forms. It is the CORE foundation of any network. Here are some great ways to build it.

### Reliability

**Start with what you are able to handle consistently.** The need is great. It makes sense to want to rescue as much as possible. The danger is when we commit to rescuing surplus food and we are unable to consistently show up the food donors and recipients get frustrated. Donors take significant time to gather food and partners to distribute it. Only committing to what your network can handle is key.

**Stay organized and professional:** with spreadsheets or technology to improve reliability, communication and impact tracking. This makes it easy to share your vision with food donors, funders and participants.

**Plan and Communicate:** make a reliable and consistent plan and when it changes make sure to have clear communication with your network so they understand how operations are changing to improve the experience.

### Safety is trust

**Following food safety guidelines** for Food Rescue purposes is mostly common sense, especially if you are not storing or processing food. Understanding guidelines makes it possible for everyone in your network to feel secure.

- Train volunteers on [safe food handling procedures during transport](#).
- Provide online ServSafe or safety training for non-profit partners to [ensure food is distributed with time and temperature in mind](#).
- Work closely with food donors to be sure food is gathered (culled) safely.
- Consider partnerships with the health department and other non-profits.
- Plan for the inevitable: Even with the best procedures how can your team support a volunteer who gets lost or a flat tire? What is your communication plan?

### Dignity

**It's in the details:** Food Rescue has so many moving parts. It is easy to bypass the details. How food is distributed? How is the program introduced? Is the space clean? These can influence a person's experience and sense of dignity leaving them feeling nourished, supported, valued and a sense of control.

**Kind Service:** In food recovery, life can move very fast. Remembering to slow down enough to engage with others in a way that makes them feel appreciated, valued and respected. Going the extra mile for donors, volunteers and partners can really make your organization stand out.

- Listen to feedback and find ways to make the experience efficient, easy and even unique.
- Return missed calls, follow up on concerns, and avoid long hold times with a polite and professional live human.
- Show gratitude whenever possible and have fun!

### Understand your community

Identify needs, concerns and areas they most desire help.





## Food Donor Management

This chapter includes information about how to recruit and onboard food donors in general, including restaurants, food service providers, food retail businesses, and more. The first section explains the process of approaching new food donors and highlighting the multiple benefits of participating in a Food Rescue program. The second and third sections depict donor onboarding, as well as donor management for small-scale donors. Larger donors and grocery store chains that require additional assistance and are covered in the next chapter.





## RECRUITING FOOD DONORS

Reach out to large restaurants, food service providers, and food retail businesses in the area. Ask them about their food waste and any measures they use to reduce waste. Try to set up an in-person meeting to highlight the benefits of donating surplus food (as detailed below).

### Benefits of Donating Surplus Food

There are several benefits of donating surplus food and participating in Food Rescue operations. However, some retailers or store managers might need some more information about how it would not only benefit the larger community, but also their own business or organization. These are some of the most compelling reasons for businesses to donate their surplus food:

**Tax Advantages:** Most retailers can deduct the cost of ingredients plus half of the lost profits from any donated food. Local state laws may provide additional benefits as well.

**Legal Protections from Liability:** Retailers and restaurant owners are often afraid of being held liable for any donated surplus food. Be sure to tell them about the 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Law that provides store owners legal protections when they donate food.

**Positive PR and Community Relations:** Partnering with a Food Rescue organization and committing to end hunger and eliminate food waste will help foster good community relationships. The partnership can also be used in promotional materials and contributes to their Corporate Social Responsibility goals.

**Participating Competitors:** Highlight competitors and other businesses already enjoying the benefits of partnering with Food Rescue.

**Morality:** Food waste has no benefits and there is a strong argument that it is simply wrong. Doing the right thing (redirecting food surplus to communities and individuals experiencing food insecurity) feels good. Many store employees and even owners will have altruism as their NUMBER ONE reason to donate. It's great to share stories of the impact their donations could have.

**Employee Satisfaction:** Employees do not enjoy throwing away surplus food. In fact, it can create negative feelings toward the company. They would rather see this food going back to the community. Partnering with a Food Rescue organization can increase employee morale and satisfaction.

**Zero Waste Goals:** Many cities and municipalities have zero waste goals. Currently cities are primarily tackling this with incentives and outreach with a strong zero-waste message. But as we look at what's ahead, we are likely to see incentives grow and stronger policies developed around reducing food waste. More funding is being directed to measuring food waste, evaluating food waste reduction programs and policy development. Other countries are developing stronger policies now, such as banning grocery stores from throwing away food when there is a need at food banks (France) The Norwegian government has pledged to cut food waste in half by 2030. Japan, a country with very little space to dedicate to landfills, is working to educate students on reducing food waste so the next generation has a stronger understanding of the importance and practices of sustainability. Working towards these goals in sustainable ways now in our communities shows a company's leadership and commitment to the community.

**Cost Savings:** Reduce waste management and organic costs with fewer pickups.

**Rescued Food vs. Food Bank Donations:** If they already have a relationship with a local food bank, be clear that Food Rescue organizations pick up food that others do not. This includes soon-to-expire products, damaged produce, and prepared foods. Offer to work alongside any existing programs to be the "and" not the "or".

**Low Effort:** Little effort is required on the part of the food donor after setting up a regular pickup schedule and onboarding employees.

We also provide donors with an [FAQ](#) covering common concerns and questions.

### Minimum Commitment Required

The minimum commitment required from the food donor varies based on the size and set up of the business. Larger businesses

or retailers may have specific donation guidelines and processes they need to follow whereas smaller businesses may not. Generally, the following items are needed from food donors in order to set up a successful partnership.

- Onboarding time and information (see questions below)
- Packaging, storing, sorting, and preparing food for volunteers
- Coordinating pickup logistics (assisting with directions, coordinating schedule, signing for food, etc.)

## ONBOARDING FOOD DONORS

After approaching a food donor, highlight the benefits of donating surplus food, and start to build the foundations of a partnership with that food donor. Ask the following questions to get a sense of how to set up rescues with each food donor.

- What is the best time of day for pickups? What are their hours of operation?
- What is the best day of the week for pickups?
- What kind of surplus food do they normally have? Perishable, non-perishable, prepared, etc.
- Who will sign off for donations or meet with the volunteer upon arrival?
- Are there any special directions for where a volunteer should pick up food?
- Is there freezer space to store surplus food before pickup?
- Does a weekly rescue suit their needs more than one-time rescues?
- Do they have any standard procedures to follow for food donations?
- Who will be the point-of-contact for donations?

We've provided a [General Donor Onboarding Form](#) and a [Retail Location Onboarding Form](#) for you to use.

## Donation Agreement

The final step in the negotiation process is the donation agreement. It is also the

first step towards building a long-lasting, symbiotic partnership with the corporate partner. The donation agreement should be a base level donation agreement that protects from liability, loosely explains the details of the partnership. It should NOT contain promises that cannot be delivered on and should be broad, in order to allow time and experience to further shape what works and what doesn't.

## MANAGING DONORS

Keeping it simple and maintaining a positive relationship with our food donors is key.

A best practice for managing food donors is via regular check ins. We suggest connecting with food donors on a quarterly basis, via email or in-person to see if their needs and priorities are being met by their participation in Food Rescue. In this general check-in, consider the following questions:

- Are we meeting and preferably exceeding your expectations for this program?
- How can we improve your experience?
- Are there other considerations or ideas?
- Has personnel or quantity of food items changed?
- Are there any schedule changes?
- What data is most useful to help your organization (shrink, sustainability goals)?



Developing a regular cadence of conversation will allow the Food Rescue organization to keep track of and understand the needs of the food donor and encourage their participation. This is also a great opportunity to show gratitude or share an inspiring story from the participants.

### PRO TIP on Donor Management

Make sure you cultivate donor relationships at multiple levels. It is important to have, keep, and nurture the good will of the boss. Providing reports on impact, and reduction in their waste disposal, tax implications and social/earned media mentions are all of interest to this set.

But don't ignore store/warehouse level employees that make it happen for you. Often having a good relationship with the warehouse inventory manager is the best relationship you can have. Make sure to include these employees in social media shout outs, holiday card lists and so on.

## WORKING WITH THE FOOD BANK

The primary question from donors is "How do you work with Feeding America?"<sup>7</sup> Food Rescue complements food banks, pantries and other hunger organizations. We do not food bank, but rather, directly transfer surplus food from source to the recipient. The missions of the organizations we work with may not be to address hunger, however they serve individuals and families who are food insecure. We rescue highly perishable food and most of the rescues concentrate smaller quantities of food that can fit in cars. By going directly to where the consumers are located we are able to ensure that this food is used quickly – imagine that a food donation can be dropped off in the morning and by that evening it can be on someone's dinner table.

## How Food Rescue Can Complement Food Banks and Other Hunger Programs

1. The Food Rescue model excels at redirecting highly perishable surplus food at the store level.
2. One to one match per store provides full traceability and non perishable reclamation.
  - Existing models work very well with non perishable and warehouse level reclamation.
3. Food Rescue assures that no amount of surplus food gets wasted.
  - Most of our rescues concentrate on the "long tail" – smaller quantities that represent the daily churn of food operations. Most of these donations can fit in cars.
4. When Food Rescue organizations respond quickly to sensitive time frames, it helps food donors dump less and rescue more.
  - Food approaching sell by and expiration dates that require immediate response and direct transfer to organizations who can use them right away. This preserves quality and does not require banking.
5. By matching non-profit organizations well with the food they receive, food rescue can ensure full utilization of the surplus food.
  - Food Rescue mobilizes volunteers to pick up planned and ad hoc rescues – when the donor needs the pick up.
6. Because the Bill Emerson Act requires that food is not sold, it means there is never a cost to non-profits to rescue food.
  - Food Rescue Hero not only provides food in food deserts but also in transportation deserts – which make it difficult for families, elderly and the disabled to travel to pantries.
7. We work with non-profit organizations to ensure full utilization of the food they receive.
  - Food Rescue Hero does not give organizations more than they need.
8. We donate to food banks and pantries.
  - Food Rescue Hero does not sell food.

7. Feeding America is the national organization that supports many local food banks.



## Non-profit Partner Management

This chapter focuses on the non-profit partner experience and details why a non-profit should accept Food Rescues, how it can benefit the communities they serve, and what to expect from a partnership with a Food Rescue organization.



## APPROACHING NON-PROFITS

First, conduct a survey of local charitable food organizations to find out what is being done in your area about recovering perishable and prepared foods. If there is no other Food Rescue organization focusing on these types of foods, you may be able to fill this gap. There are usually resource lists including food pantries, soup kitchens and meal programs that you can pull from to make your list of non-profit partners. Start calling these agencies and see if they could use surplus perishable or prepared foods. Consider new partnerships like schools, daycare centers, and non-profit organizations that may serve those in need in other ways.

### Benefits of Receiving Surplus Food

These are some of the benefits other non-profits have gained by partnering with a Food Rescue organization.

- No cost access to ready-to-serve, fresh, perishable foods
- Reduce food budgets (where applicable) and increase in-kind donations
- More produce, meat, and other valuable food items
- Partnerships with local restaurants and businesses
- More volunteer involvement
- Reduced reliance on their staff and volunteers for donation transportation

### Minimum Commitment Required

The minimum commitment required depends largely on the resources and schedule of the non-profit partner. However, the main requirements can be found below.

- Onboarding time and information (see onboarding questions below)
- Preparation and storage of foods (if receiving perishable food, they need to be able to immediately serve the food to the community members or freeze the foods upon arrival)
- Coordinating drop off logistics (assisting with directions, coordinating schedule, signing for food, etc.)
- Knowledgeable about food safety

- Consistent communication (need to inform Food Rescue organization if they are unable to accept a donation ahead of time)

## ONBOARDING NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

In order to give non-profit partners and the communities they serve usable foods, you need to understand more about each non-profit. A non-profit partner who does not have a kitchen to prepare produce and meat, should only receive prepared food trays and ready-to-eat products. Similarly a perishable donation that serves 100 people should not go to a non-profit partner that sees 40 individuals per week. Ask the following questions to understand the needs and resources of each non-profit partner and match donations accordingly.

- What kinds of food does the non-profit partner need?
- Where are they located?
- Do they have a freezer?
- Do they have a kitchen to prepare produce or meat?
- How many people are they serving?
- What are their hours of operation?
- When is the best day/time to drop off food? Multiple days?
- Would a Regular Rescue be feasible?

### PRO TIP on Onboarding

If they are already receiving donations, find out if they are using it all or spending time to rehome donations or worse, throwing it out. Many non-profits are used to having to take anything offered regardless of its fitness for their organization. In order to minimize the food waste from this process always make sure a donation is the right size for a partner. Assure them that if they turn something down because it's inappropriate, you will still call them the next time.

We have included a [Non-profit Partner Onboarding Form](#) for you to use.



As you gain more non-profit partners, it may be necessary to define priorities so that the recipients with the highest need are served before those with a lower need, and to mitigate any conflicts of interest. Sort by neighborhood, number of people they are feeding, whether or not they can prepare uncooked food, etc. in order to match non-profit partners with donations more efficiently. Donations should go to the closest, highest need partner. High need indicators can include:

- Being their only source of food donations
- Lying in a transit desert
- Lying in a food swamp or desert
- Percentage of clients served that are under the poverty line.

## ServSafe Certification

Food safety is an extremely important part of the process and it is critical to mitigate the risk of serving unsafe food. There is an online ServSafe course that is available, often at a discount for non-profits. At the very least there should be a staff member that is ServSafe certified for food handling. Review the requirements with each non-profit, and explain the ServSafe Certifications and course training required for participation.

## EXPANDING FOOD ACCESS. GOING BEYOND THE PANTRY SYSTEM.

While food pantries and shelters are an obvious starting point, many organizations quickly find that the influx of fresh food from fresh rescue is too much for the existing network to handle. You will want to look outside that network for nontraditional partners such as low income housing buildings, job training programs, veterans programs, schools and the like. These organizations will expand your options for distributing food AND increasing food access. For example, working with a Head Start program could mean that parents don't have to take a separate bus to a pantry but can pick up a bag of groceries when they pick up their children. Also, many places such as low income housing sites are open outside of business hours and on weekends for delivery.

Since this is often the largest hole for food donors, you will provide value to both the receiving organization AND your food donors.

## Getting Started

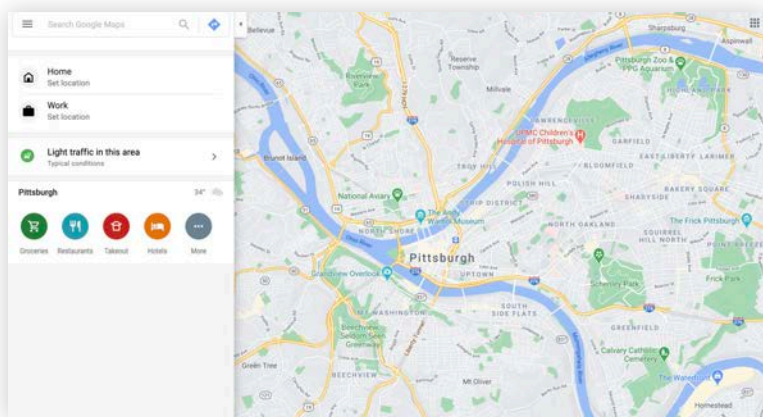
Map the gap! Create a map of all food distributions and look for areas of high need with low service. Once you identify high need/low service areas look for programs in that area. This means neighborhoods with a high density of poverty, lack of transit, and lack of access to fresh, affordable food should top your list. Suggestions for partners include:

- Senior Centers
- Head Start and low income family support centers
- Job training programs
- After school programs
- Veterans organizations
- Federally qualified health centers
- Low income senior housing
- Low income family housing
- Public housing/housing authorities

### PRO TIP on How to Create a Map

Making a custom map is easy with Google Maps. All you need is a spreadsheet or CSV file with your addresses in it, then follow these steps.

1. On your computer, sign in to **My Maps**.
2. Open or create a map.
3. In the map legend, click **Add Layer**.
4. Give the new layer a name.
5. Under the new layer, click **Import**.
6. Choose or upload the file, then click **Select**.
7. It will automatically upload.







Approach these organizations similarly to how you would approach a food program. Call and ask for the director or someone who could speak with you about donating food.

Ask them a few questions that will help them understand how this process can add value to their operations and provide assistance to those they serve. Examples:

- Are a majority of your constituents food insecure?
- Are finances or lack of access to high frequency transit a barrier to obtaining fresh healthy food for the people who use your services?
- Would regular deliveries of fresh food that you could provide on site to people who are at risk for food insecurity add value to your service offerings?
- Once you establish interest you will onboard them similarly to any other partner; interview them and determine their needs and capacity.

### Key Differentiators

Unlike a traditional food distribution site, these partners will often be creating their distribution practices from scratch at the start of your partnership. You will need to

make sure that they are trained in the basics of food distribution and food safety.

#### Steps to check for safety:

1. Review their distribution plan closely.
2. Keep in mind food temperatures and ServSafe protocols.
3. Discuss the timeframe for distribution from the time the food is dropped off.
4. Review storage facilities if appropriate – most food should be distributed that day.
5. Who is the point person? Will they be available weekly?
6. How would adhoc donations be distributed?

#### PRO TIP on Assessing the Need

Many cities and hospitals have already conducted an assessment. Check online for community surveys

Partnering with local housing authorities is a great way to expand access in your area. Housing authorities can be strong partners. Reach out to the community affairs officer or the resident services coordinator to discuss how you can work together.

## Volunteer Management

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Food Rescue. They are what make it feasible to pick up and deliver surplus food from a highly distributed network efficiently and economically. It is critical that you ensure you have a good balance of donors, non-profit partners and volunteers, to ensure smooth operations. Strong publicity will draw in many volunteers assuming you have jobs for them to do. But don't rely exclusively on word of mouth. Make sure you have a plan for recruiting volunteers. This chapter focuses on onboarding volunteers to do Food Rescues for your organization. The first section details how to find volunteers and outlines the benefits of volunteering with a Food Rescue organization. The second section includes an onboarding process for volunteers and expectations while doing a Food Rescue. The third and fourth sections offer best practices around marketing and communications, as well as social media campaigns.





## RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

### Information Sessions — Hear a Hero

When entering a new neighborhood, county or region, consider the power of relationships to help build your volunteer base. A successful strategy for recruiting volunteers is to hold a recruitment and information session at the home of an engaged volunteer or at a coffee shop, where representatives from the Food Rescue Organization can talk about the benefits of being a Food Rescue Hero and the impact to the community.

### Tabling

Setting up a table (don't forget to get permission if it is required) at local farmers' markets, events, festivals, universities, or shopping areas is a great way to recruit local volunteers. There, you can highlight the benefits of volunteering locally.

### Places of Worship

Reach out to places of worship and ask to be included in their newsletter or service circular. Many also invite speakers in and this is a great opportunity to reach a large audience.

### Virtual Events

Many organizations have found out that virtual events have a lot of benefits to them, including increased participation because of the lack of travel time and hassle. Hold virtual recruitment events or opportunities for people to learn about the organization, giving people a low bar to entry way to become informed

### Social Media and Media

Many Food Rescue organizations got their start via social media. Make sure you establish a presence with your brand identity, and organizational personality early on as a way to build those relationships with volunteers.

## Why Volunteering for Food Rescue is Appealing

Volunteers generally participate in rescues to benefit the larger community and address food insecurity. In addition to helping others, volunteers can also benefit by partnering with a Food Rescue organization.

**Simplicity and Convenience:** Most Food Rescues can be completed in a few miles and less than 30 minutes. It is easy to include a rescue in a day full of activities.

**Family Friendly:** Families are often looking for the opportunity to work together for the greater good. Food Rescue is perfect for all ages!

**Morale:** Feel good and have an impact on the environment, hunger, food insecurity, and food waste.

**Community of Food Rescue Heroes:** Volunteers become part of a larger community of Food Rescue Heroes and advocates. They are invited to volunteer appreciation events throughout the year.

**Legal Protections:** The 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Law protects individuals from any liability while donating food.

**Visible Impact:** Volunteers are uniquely positioned to meet food donors and non-profit partners, and see the impact donated food can have in the community and on food insecurity.

## ONBOARDING VOLUNTEERS

Unless you use an app, you will need to gather this information manually from your volunteers. Ideally, keep the bar low so there are few barriers to volunteering. Ask the following questions to understand the preferences and availability of each volunteer in order to better assign rescues to them.

- Where do you live?
- Would you prefer to be On Call or take on a weekly rescue?
- What is your mode of transportation?
- What time of day do you prefer?
- What day(s) of the week do you prefer?
- How would you prefer to be contacted?

## Expectations for Volunteers

It is important to create expectations and guidelines for volunteers as well to ensure a consistent and positive experience. These are some of the expectations and information given to volunteers by Food Rescue Organizations.

- Do scheduled rescues on time and always show respect and kindness to all parties.
- Do not take food for personal consumption.
- If you need a sub or to drop a rescue, please let us know at least 24 hours beforehand.
- Report information (weight and contents of rescue) accurately and in a timely manner.
- Please call immediately if you experience any problems or issues along the way.

Be sure each rescue is scheduled, assigned to a volunteer and clearly communicated is crucial. Starting with a master schedule and easy communication plan is a great first step. Using an app or platform with volunteer engagement, scheduling, and management built in may be a clear next step.

## ONGOING MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing is an important part of the process. Through various kinds of marketing and communications, you will attract your three groups of partners needed to make a Food Rescue organization work. The three groups are Food Donor Organizations, Non-profit Partners and Volunteers.

You will connect with each of these groups using the following types of activities and others to create awareness, then draw them closer to you through increasingly personalized communications.

**SEO:** Optimizing your website using certain keywords that are likely to be used by each of your three partner groups. Make it easy for prospective Food Donor Orgs, Non-profits and Volunteers to find you. Brainstorm a list of key words/phrases for each and make sure they appear on your website - ideally on the home page and in title tags.

**Media:** Getting the media to cover your organization's operations will help to get the word out.

**Website:** Your website should have clear Volunteer, Food Donor Org and Non-profit sections.

**Social Media:** Create a video to show the simple process and the 3 components and share.

**Network:** Ask friends, family, the organization's board and staff to spread the word, giving people a strong call to action for how to get involved.

**Community Outreach:** Have a table at Farmers Markets; connect with vendors and shoppers.

**Data Management:** Create an organized way to manage your data such as a CRM (customer relationship management) system to help you keep track of all of your contacts in the three categories (Volunteers, Food Donor Orgs and Non-profit Partners).

**Follow-up:** When you meet someone who is a good prospect to be a food donor organization or non-profit partner make sure you enter their information into your CRM and follow up with an email outlining the next steps for them. Prospective volunteers should be encouraged to take a concrete next step (sign up for a rescue, attend a training) and once they do that, you can enter them into your CRM.

**PRO TIP** Ask food donors for support with a free cup of coffee or appetizer for Food Rescue Heroes or including a table tent in the restaurant about your organization.





## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS & BEST PRACTICES

Social media should be more than just an afterthought or aside. You need a strategy, a plan, and a consistent approach to help build your brand and your community of supporters.

1. Your strategy should start with a consistent “voice” reflecting a brand personality, one that resonates with your community of supporters. Everything should flow from that voice.
2. Create a schedule with appropriate posting frequency on every platform. For example, twitter should happen multiple times a day whereas Facebook and Instagram should be once or twice a day at most. The exception to this rule is if you are using Facebook to get volunteers for rescues.
3. Get to know what the community wants. Track which posts get the most interaction and adjust your approach accordingly.
4. Build your audience by partnering with local businesses and influencers that have a following and relate to the mission. Have them post about you--donating to you, doing a food rescue, or just loving the cause.
5. Consider Facebook ads to boost your audience at key junctures. It is an affordable and effective way to widen your reach.
6. Collect content from your volunteers. Don't be afraid to ask for pictures of exactly what you need!
7. Respond in a timely manner to comments, questions, or suggestions.

As for what to post, certain tropes just work. Make sure to have a rotation of key content. Keep a folder of pictures and quotes to use when needed. You should always have posts that do the following:

- Quotes reflecting impact – volunteer  
“I never realized how much food was being wasted”
- Sharing pics and telling stories of rescues
- Encouraging others to share on social

- Overflowing trunkload of food to be donated
- Pictures of volunteers with non-profit partners
- Volunteer with donor from warehouse
- Quotes from donors/non-profit organizations
- Pictures of kids on rescues

Likewise there are things you should avoid posting as well

- Posts/pictures objectifying recipients to elicit a sympathy response (sad looking kids, elderly people with tears in their eyes)
- Pictures of unsafe food rescue conditions or that could be construed as such (a trunk full of trays of prepared food on a hot summer day)
- ONLY pictures of one thing (i.e. just food pictures, or just volunteers) mix it up
- Off mission posts, i.e. separate your personal and organizational accounts



## Data

Keeping accurate data is critical to being able to track metrics, demonstrate success, show progress and spot trouble areas. From the start keep a record of your rescues. This chapter focuses on what to track, how to track it and what good data hygiene looks like.

## WHAT DATA SHOULD BE TRACKED

Data is key. Good data helps us gauge the results of our efforts, showing us if we are rescuing more or less food at any given time, and help us pinpoint problems and improve. Data also holds us accountable, helps us demonstrate our impact in the community and makes us more attractive to partners **including funders** such as foundations. If you onboard using the templates provided you should have the information critical to success. Communication channels, food safety status, availability, and other pertinent data is in those intake forms. Also, food traceability is important to many food donors. Rescue data however doesn't exist unless you capture it. For rescues you should track:

- Date
- Food donor
- **Category type** of food in the donation and **weight** of items in each category
- Non-profit partner receiving donation
- Volunteer
- Optional: method of transportation
- Optional: volunteer rating
- Optional: miles food traveled

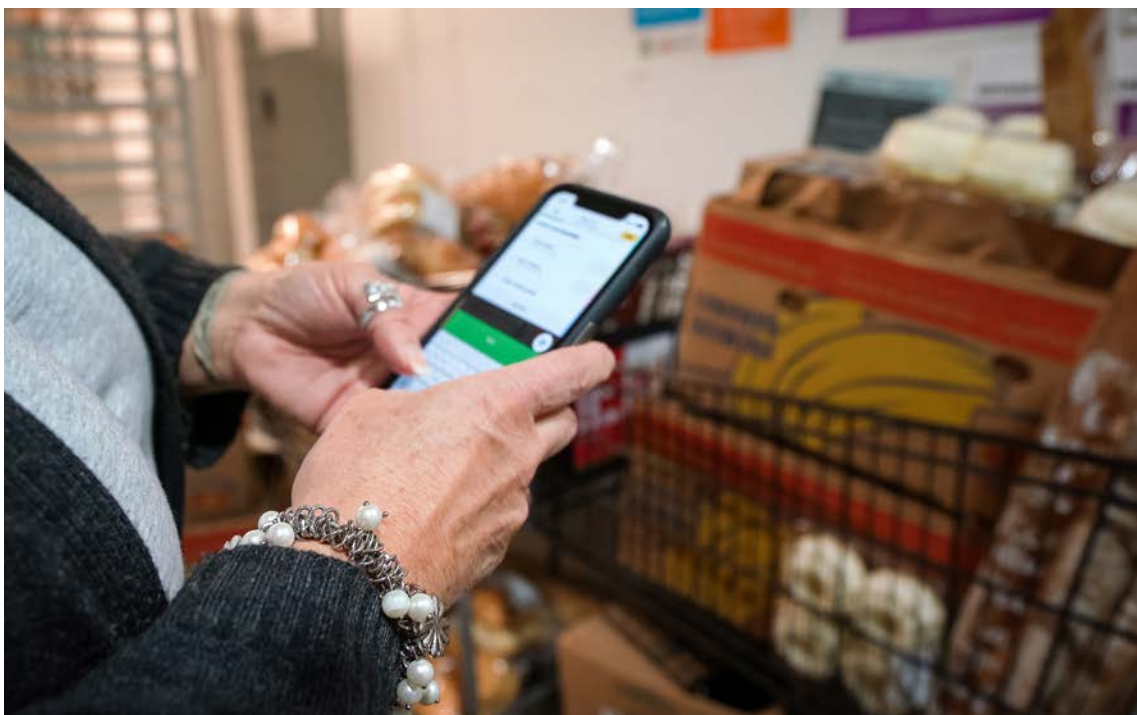
Most of those are self explanatory but let's talk about tracking **WHAT** you rescue. Different organizations track the type of donation differently. Some keep very granular information about donations. However, that can be difficult to aggregate. At the same time, simply keeping a total weight doesn't give enough information. You may want to break it down into food types. An example would be:

- Baked goods
- Meat and protein
- Non Food
- Non-perishable
- Other
- Prepared -individually packaged
- Prepared - Trays/Multi-serving
- Produce
- Other

**PRO TIP** Food Rescue is usually fresh rescue. Don't include things like canned vegetables in the produce category. Demonstrating to funders that a high percentage of your rescues are fresh, healthy food, difficult to access by people in food deserts, is a great way to show your value!

Other helpful data to track is missed rescues and the reason the rescue was missed. Why is this important? It helps you identify and fix problem areas and allows you to provide a high level of service to partners. Missed rescues are the number one way to sour a relationship with a food donor or non-profit. Being able to recognize trends in this manner will help you keep everyone happy. For example, if there is a particular food donor or cluster of food donors that you can never find a volunteer to go to, outreach in that area to build your volunteer base can solve the problem.





## HOW TO GET AND TRACK DATA

The first step to tracking data is getting data. For one time donations, a food donor will reach out to you and give you a description of what and how much they are donating. But this description may or may not be accurate. Try to get verification from either a volunteer or the non-profit of the donation content and weight. You can provide simple bathroom scales to your non-profit partners or volunteers to get an accurate weight, or you can estimate following guidelines on standard weights.

For recurring rescues the content and weight will not have a donation intake call where the food donor will give you the weight. Of the three nodes of a rescue, the food donor is the least likely to be able to provide a weekly summary and weight of a donation (with some exceptions). Places like Panera or Whole Foods put their baked goods into a bag and it either goes to a rescue or to a garbage but they spend as little time and effort on it as possible. The two best options are your volunteer and your non-profit. We've had better luck getting reports from our volunteers than our non-profit partners. Have your volunteers send you a picture of the donation and the weight/content. Weight can be determined either by standard estimates or by a scale in their car.

Google sheets or excel are a great, cost effective way to track data as you begin. We've provided a link to a sample data tracker for this purpose. A technology platform that can track data in real time and filter information can also be a logical next step.

## DATA HYGIENE

Be sure to use [data validation](#) in Google Sheets or Excel to reduce spelling variations. This means you create a range of acceptable options for filling in any cell. For example if the cell is indicating that the rescue consisted of "produce," data validation will ONLY allow a user to enter "produce" not "prd." or "prod." or "produce". Data aggregation is only as good as your data hygiene! It may not seem like a big deal to add together the columns of "porduce" and produce to determine the total tonnage of produce rescued, but the bigger you get the more problematic that becomes. The more fields you can standardize this way, the more useful your data will be. Similarly, with recurring rescues, having a template for those and making sure to fill in the data weekly will help you ensure accurate information and reduce problems from lingering without being noticed.

# Next Steps for Growth

## OUR SOLUTION

Food waste happens everywhere, everyday. Unfortunately, so does hunger. This means that you have a lot of room to grow. As you scale, keep your donors, non-profit partners and volunteers balanced, so you can provide the best possible service to all of your partners.

You will also need to grow your tools with your operations and infrastructure. What is your vision and is there capacity to support it?

There are plenty of tools available to help manage data, financial donors, communications and operations that are low cost for non-profits. Tools like salesforce, mailchimp, routarific, etc. can help you manage your increasing activity. The more streamlined and integrated those tools are, the more time you can commit to the work you are passionate about!

The Food Rescue Hero app is one of several that can help you manage the details. Our logistics, community engagement and technology platform is unique because it was built in tandem with our scaling Food Rescue organization. We started with spreadsheets and maps too. As we discovered new solutions and ways to streamline, we added them to Food Rescue Hero. Our technology team and engineers are fully interwoven into our Food Rescue team. Together we run rescues and data reports, interact with volunteers, food donors, and non-profit partners and constantly update our platform based on those interactions. Our technology and Food Rescue model are proven, because we allow successes and challenges across our nationwide network to inform our updates. We understand the beauty and grit in this work. It takes unique tools and key building blocks to accomplish this vision. Therefore, we provide training, strategy, and community network support for our network partners.

Our app manages the process of connecting Food Rescue opportunities with your non-profit partners via volunteer drivers. With ad hoc and weekly Food Rescue scheduling, safety measures, push notifications and

detailed GPS directions, it makes it easy for volunteers to jump in and stay engaged. Additionally the platform will aggregate and filter data, so you never miss out on recording impact like pounds of food, types of food or traceability for food donors and tax receipts. Data is vital to tell the story of how you are changing your community and also useful when approaching funders.

We partner with Food Rescue organizations in cities across the U.S and Canada. In every stage of your organization's growth, finding the best long term path takes the guesswork out of developing a solution for your community. It's easy to adopt when you are ready. From our low monthly cost starter app to a fully customized white label platform. Find out more about it at [www.foodrescuehero.org](http://www.foodrescuehero.org).

Thank you for taking the time to explore our start up guide! We would love to share more helpful resources and solutions to help your organization. The need is so great. We can only do this if we work together. If you have additional questions, sign up for an upcoming webinar or email us at [info@412foodrescue](mailto:info@412foodrescue).

**“Technology is just a tool.. A way for us to realize our own propensity to do something for each other... We know that people want to find their purpose. Can we make doing good a part of our daily life? And what are the ways we can create technology to make that happen?”**

**FOOD RESCUE HERO FOUNDER & CEO,  
LEAH LIZARONDO**



# Appendix

## FAQS ABOUT FOOD RESCUE

### 1. Mission of Food Rescue

To end food waste and get perfectly good food into the hands of those who need it.

### 2. Why is it important to not waste food?

We waste up to 40% of our food globally — translating to over 1.3 billion tons annually. In the United States, we waste 62.5 million tons and spend \$218 billion a year (or 1.3% of our GDP) in “growing, processing, transporting, and disposing of food that is never eaten. In the United States, 1 in 7 are hungry. According to the United Nations, if we recover all the food that is lost or wasted, we will have enough to feed all those who are hungry, four times over.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, over 97% of food waste generated ends up in the landfill. This comprises the single largest component of municipal solid waste, generating a large portion of U.S. methane emissions (a greenhouse gas 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide.)

40% of food going to waste translates to 20 pounds of food per person per month, worth \$165 billion a year. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 52% of fruits and vegetables go to waste, food that supplies that highest quality nutrition required to prevent obesity and disease.

### 3. Why does perfectly good food get thrown away?

- Over ordering of food.
- Food is not “pretty” enough to sell.
- Food is packaged incorrectly.
- Leftover food from events.

### 4. How does Food Rescue work?

Food Rescue works with local food businesses (such as grocery stores, restaurants, produce wholesalers, farmer’s markets, etc.) to rescue their surplus food and deliver it to community based organizations (such as a shelter or family support center), where the food is then given to those who can use it.

Volunteers, or Food Rescue Heroes as we call them, are at the core of Food Rescue’s success. They are the ones who pick up and deliver this food so that it does not get wasted.

### 5. What is the liability for food donors?

There is none! Thanks to the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act](#), except in cases of gross negligence, a food donor is protected from liability when donating surplus food to a non-profit organization for the purpose of helping the food insecure.

### 6. How is Food Rescue different from a food bank?

Food Rescue complements food banks, pantries and other hunger organizations. We do not food bank, but rather, directly transfer surplus food from source to the recipient. The missions of the organizations we work with may not be to address hunger, however they serve individuals and families who are food insecure. We rescue highly perishable food and most of the rescues concentrate smaller quantities of food that can fit in cars. By going directly to where the consumers are located we are able to ensure that this food is used quickly - imagine that a food donation can be dropped off in the morning and by that evening it can be on someone’s dinner table.

### 7. How does Food Rescue ensure that the food is going to people who need it?

Prior to being placed, all donations are vetted through a personal contact at the receiving organization. A Food Rescue staff member will call the organization and ask if they would like the food and if so, how much they can take. We do this to ensure that we are not only delivering food that people want, but also in a realistic quantity that can be given away instead of becoming food waste.

### 8. How are you sure that people who receive the food are not wasting it?

The University of Pittsburgh conducted a study of Food Rescue’s drop off sites and found that of all recipients, 90% were using the food themselves and if they were not using it themselves they were giving it to friends and neighbors.

# Donor Onboarding Form

ONBOARDING COMPETITION DATE:

DONOR NAME:

DONOR ADDRESS:

MAIN PHONE:

TYPE OF DONOR			
	CATEGORY		FOOD PANTRY
	BAKERY		GROCER
	CORPORATION		MANUFACTURER/PRODUCER
	DISTRIBUTOR		NON-PROFIT
	EDUCATIONAL		OTHER
	EVENT FESTIVAL		RESTAURANT
	FARM		UNCATEGORIZED
	FARM MARKET		

CONTACTS		
NAME	TITLE	EMAIL

OTHER PHONE		
DEPARTMENT	CONTACT	PHONE



## Donor Onboarding Form (cont.)

WHAT ARE THEY DONATING?			
	BAKERY		NONPERISHABLES
	DAIRY		PREPARED FOOD MULTISERVING
	MEAT & PROTEIN		PREPARED FOOD INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED
	NON FOOD ITEMS		PRODUCE

WHAT ARE THEIR OPERATING HOURS?	
	SUNDAY
	MONDAY
	TUESDAY
	WEDNESDAY
	THURSDAY
	FRIDAY
	SATURDAY

DO THEY WANT TO SCHEDULE A REGULAR PICKUP?	
YES	NO
PICKUP DAYS	HOW OFTEN TO THEY ANTICIPATE HAVING DONATIONS?
PICKUP WINDOW	

WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS?

AGREEMENT SIGNED? YES | NO

NOTES:

# Retail Location Onboarding Form

ONBOARDING COMPETITION DATE:

LOCATION NAME:

LOCATION ADDRESS:

MAIN PHONE:

CONTACTS		
NAME	TITLE	EMAIL

WHICH DEPARTMENTS ARE WE PICKING UP FROM:

PICKUP DAYS:

PICKUP WINDOW:

TIME OF PRODUCE CULL/STALES PULL:

WHERE TO ASK FOR PICKUP:

WHERE IS THE PICKUP STORED:

SIZE OF DEPARTMENT:

NOTES:

# Non-profit Partner Onboarding Form

ONBOARDING COMPETITION DATE:

NON-PROFIT NAME:

ADDRESS:

MAIN PHONE:

IS THIS A BRANCH OF ANOTHER ORGANIZATION?: YES | NO

IF YES, WHAT IS THE PARENT ORGANIZATION?:

TYPE OF SERVICE ORGANIZATION			
	FAMILY CENTER		PANTRY
	LOW INCOME HOUSING-SENIOR AND DISABLED		SENIOR PROGRAM
	LOW INCOME HOUSING-UNRESTRICTED		SHELTER
	MEALS ON WHEELS		SOUP KITCHEN
	OTHER		YOUTH PROGRAM

CONTACTS			
NAME	TITLE	EMAIL	PHONE

WHAT CAN THEY RECEIVE?			
	BAKERY		NONPERISHABLES
	DAIRY		PREPARED FOOD MULTISERVING
	MEAT & PROTEIN		PREPARED FOOD INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED
	NON FOOD ITEMS		PRODUCE

WHAT IS THEIR STORAGE CAPACITY?	
	REFRIGERATED
	FROZEN
	NONPERISHABLE



# Non-profit Partner Onboarding Form (cont.)

DO THEY HAVE A KITCHEN TO PREPARE FOOD? YES | NO

IS THERE SOMEONE ON STAFF SERVSAFE CERTIFIED? YES | NO

WHAT ARE THEIR OPERATING HOURS?	
	SUNDAY
	MONDAY
	TUESDAY
	WEDNESDAY
	THURSDAY
	FRIDAY
	SATURDAY

DO THEY WANT TO RECEIVE A REGULAR DONATION?	
YES	NO
BEST DAYS	HOW OFTEN TO THEY ANTICIPATE WANTING DONATIONS?
DESIRED DELIVERY WINDOW:	

WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS?

AGREEMENT SIGNED? YES | NO

NOTES: