



How to Start a Food Rescue Program in Your Community

City Harvest pioneered food rescue in New York City in 1982, and we appreciate the opportunity to share best practices with people and cities across the world and inspire the launch of similar programs. By redirecting excess food from supermarkets, manufacturers, farmers markets, and restaurants to our neighbors in need, we support our local communities and reduce the environmental impact of food that would otherwise go to waste.

Here are some steps you can take as you consider starting a food rescue program in your area.

The Need in Your Community

- Identify who is hungry in your community, and where they live.
- Do existing food pantries, shelters and senior centers have enough good quality food?
- Check with local businesses and ask if they are willing to donate their excess food.
- Reach out to other groups in your area that are working to feed neighbors in need.

Starting Up

- Decide how much food you can handle the first six months – two years.
- Recruit volunteers and/or staff to help run operations, fundraise, and develop partnerships with local food businesses and community food programs.
- Train your volunteers and staff in food safety practices.
- Determine what vehicles you will use to transport food.
- Create a name for your organization and a website, and use social media to spread the word.

Engaging Your Community

- Meet with restaurants, grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food businesses in your area and ask if they are willing to sign on as a partner and help bring in other donors.
- Contact the local health department to set up safe food handling, and meet with local elected officials and businesses to secure their support.
- Engage media, marketing, and design companies/individuals to ask about pro bono work, free advertising space, and design consulting.
- Encourage your neighbors to volunteer and develop a process for them to register.

Sustaining and Growing Your Organization

- Determine your leadership and governance structure (board of directors, advisory council, etc.).
- Decide if you want non-profit status, and engage a volunteer lawyer in your area willing to help.
- Develop a fundraising plan to sustain growth and create a budget.
- Determine if you are able and willing to expand the area you serve .

Where to Go For More Help

- Learn more through [ReFED](#), a nonprofit network committed to reducing U.S. food waste.
- Connect with [Feeding America](#), a network of hunger relief organizations in the U.S. and Canada.
- Contact City Harvest at fooddonations@cityharvest.org to learn about our food rescue model.