

# Charity Food Programs That Can End Hunger In America

By John M. Arnold, Executive Director,  
Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan, Inc.

## Introduction

# We can end hunger in America.

**T**he average community in the United States already possesses—and is likely already expending—enough resources to end hunger five times over, but likely is meeting only about one-fifth of the need because of how those resources are being mobilized and employed.

These facts are a result of a research study of hunger relief programs conducted in 1994-96 by Michigan State University, which became known as the Waste Not Want Not Project.

This research was prompted by a study of Michigan's Kent County conducted in mid-1993 by the Heart of West Michigan United Way, which concluded that hunger was the area's most pressing unmet need. Technically, hunger was tied with child abuse and neglect for the number one spot, but since significant aspects of that abuse and neglect included kids going hungry, hunger took the spotlight.

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September, 2004

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With generous support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America World Hunger Program.

## Hunger's reach

The United Way explained that research had not revealed starvation, but “had found hunger’s fingerprints everywhere.” It didn’t matter where they looked or what issue they looked into, hunger was always lurking in the shadows, having either caused or at least having exacerbated the problem. Problem pregnancies and the incidence of premature low birth-weight high-risk babies often linked back to poor prenatal nutrition. Kids too listless or restless to pay attention to their lessons in school often tracked back to the fact that they were simply too hungry to care. In altogether too many classrooms school lunch was the only predictable food in many children’s lives.

Teens living in what is now known as “food insecurity” were much more likely to have health problems, get into trouble, use drugs or alcohol, drop out of school and attempt suicide than were teens who have reliable food access.

All age levels, if hungry, were more likely to commit crimes such as purse snatching, shoplifting, mugging, and breaking and entering in pursuit of food or the means to get food.

Women were more likely to engage in prostitution. Both sexes were more likely to experience health and mental health problems. Both were more likely to succumb to the temptations of drug and alcohol abuse in order to block out—at least temporarily—the pain, humiliation, fear and anger that comes from not having enough to eat or not being able to feed one’s family in the so-called “richest country in the world.”

Child abuse and other domestic violence often tracked back to that same stress. People would be on edge from being hungry or from being worried about food, and some spark—a crying baby, a whining child or a

resentful comment—would trigger violence with occasionally tragic results.

Senior citizens too often had to choose between having food and getting the medicine or medical care they needed, or between having food and heating their home.

Obviously ending hunger wouldn’t eliminate drug and alcohol use, prostitution, domestic violence, or any of the other problems, but hunger was such an evident and obvious cause or contributing factor in so many specific instances of all of them that it was the United Way’s conclusion that we simply had to eliminate hunger if we ever hoped to make our community the kind of place we want it to be.

## The research

My agency, Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan, Inc., is western Michigan’s regional nonprofit clearinghouse for donated food on its way from the food industry to churches and charity agencies that provide food aid to needy people. As fast as the agencies we served were drawing food from us, we were easily replacing that food with equal or better products. So we were genuinely at a loss as to what else we should be doing.

However, we began to suspect that there were some very widespread practices in the charity food distribution system that could be improved.

So we went back to the United Way with a request that they conduct or fund a thorough review of how the charity food system worked, with an emphasis on discovering how people in the charity food distribution network could work more efficiently and effectively. The result was a two year \$264,000 Heart of West Michigan United Way grant to the food bank to enable us to contract with Michigan State University to conduct that

**The research revealed that the gap between resources and the unmet need is a result of shortcomings in how these abundant resources are distributed.**

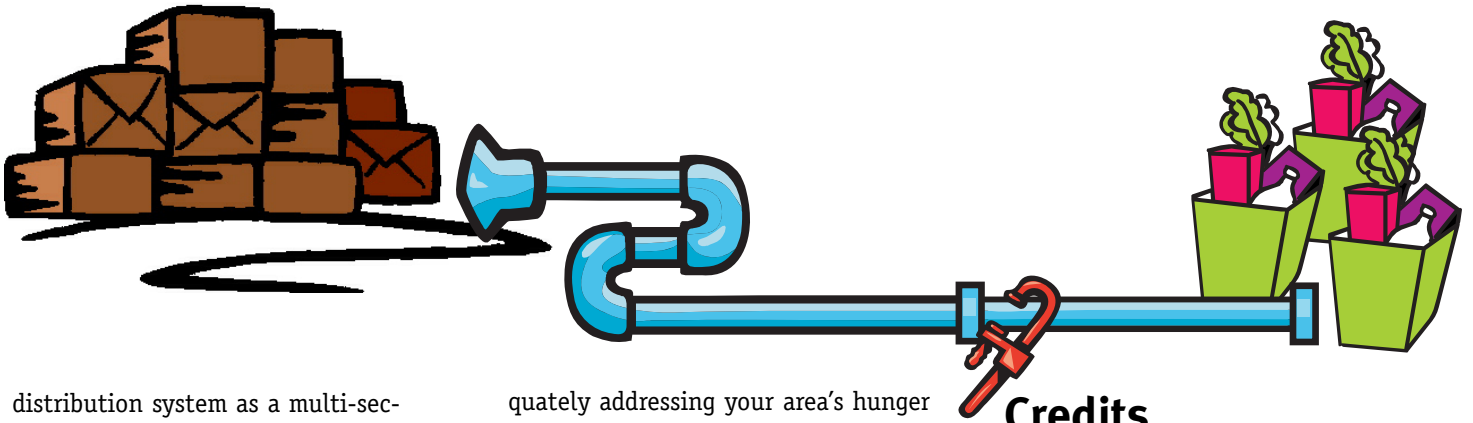
research. We worked very closely with them, often doing parallel research in order to corroborate or test various findings, or pursuing our own lines of inquiry.

## Shortcomings revealed

The research concluded that while we have five times the resources needed to end hunger, we could only address one-fifth of the problem. The research also suggested several ways that charity food distribution centers can close this gap, bringing more food to more people who need it, more effectively and efficiently. The research revealed that the gap between resources and the unmet need is a result of shortcomings in how these abundant resources are distributed.

To most easily grasp the significance of the historic problems of the charity food distribution system and the significance of the Waste Not Want Not improvements, it will be most helpful for you to visualize the





distribution system as a multi-sectioned pipeline. Our research examined each section of that pipeline to determine its carrying capacity. Could it move adequate food resources to meet the area's need, or did it need to be enlarged or unclogged in some way? For example, if the average family seeking food aid needed seven to 10 days worth of help, but the average agency was providing them with only three days worth of help, our research flagged that as a section of the pipeline that needed to be enlarged or unclogged.

The operative belief behind our work is that there is enough food available to charity agencies to end hunger, and that gravity will naturally draw that food toward the needy unless or until that flow is interrupted or constricted. What began as a mighty river can shrink to just a drop in the bucket. That is precisely what our research suggests has happened in community after community across the United States, and is why efforts to end hunger in those communities are failing to meet the need. Enlarge the pipeline or unclog it where needed, and the end of hunger in your locale can be brought to well within your reach.

## About this book

This book outlines about a dozen very specific tools that you, your agency and your community can employ toward reaching a goal of ade-

quately addressing your area's hunger problem. You will know absolutely how to end hunger—not abstractly or by means that rely on forces, events or resources beyond your control.

In reading this book, you may feel that it criticizes your agency or some practice of your agency. If that happens, please take consolation in my discomfort on the same score. In 1984 I authored the first nationally circulated how-to handbook on how to run a food pantry. Much of what was in that book is what I now am now admonishing people to stop doing. Every time you wince, trust that I am squirming with you!

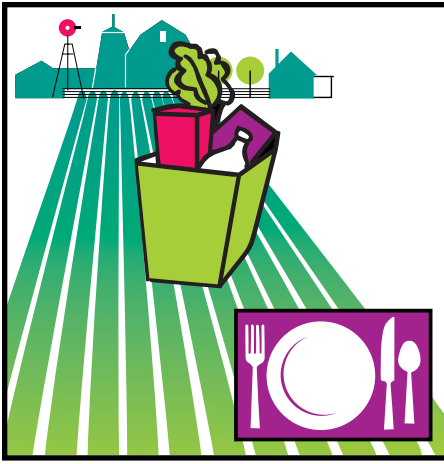
Also, take heart in the fact that not all food assistance agencies have to implement 100 percent of this book in order to bring ending hunger within reach. At the back of the book is a score sheet you can use to assess your practices with respect to the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations. A perfect program will score 127.6. A less-fully-aligned agency will score less. It is possible to score as low as 0.0009. All we need in order to bring ending hunger within reach is an average score of 70. So if your agency cannot fully undertake some of the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations, don't worry! Just be aware that not doing some of these things only means you should do some of the others a little more fully. Get your score up to 70, and we end hunger.

## Credits

If there is value in this product, the thanks for it are due to many people and organizations whom I would like to acknowledge: My own board and staff, The Heart of West Michigan United Way, the Waste Not Want Not Project staff, Michigan State University, many other food bankers around the country who have tested these methods and have provided wonderful feedback and affirmation, and last but not least, the countless charity agency staff, volunteers and clients who have so patiently taught me so many things over the 20+ years I have been doing this work. Any errors or problems that may exist in this document I humbly claim as my own.

*John M. Arnold, September 2004*





# Chapter One: Understanding “Hunger” and “Ending Hunger”

**Where there  
is poverty,  
there will  
almost always  
be hunger.**

**T**o end hunger in the United States we need to understand the hunger problem and to understand what “ending hunger” is and what it is not. Understanding this will help you understand why certain approaches in dealing with hunger make more sense than other approaches.

## Scope of hunger

Hunger in the United States is the result of too many people simply not having enough money to cover all their basic needs. How many people? One of the most common misconceptions about hunger in the United States is that between one and two million people are hungry or are just a meal or two away from it. Would that it were so! **The real number is between 30 and 40 million people.** Not all of them are hungry right now, but most are able to avoid that only by short-changing some other critical need. For example, by not getting needed dental or medical care, by not paying the rent on time or by dropping their diet to levels that should not exist in America, like watering down the infant formula, feeding the children ketchup sandwiches or eating food scrounged from garbage cans.

## Poverty creates hunger

When you think “hunger,” think “poverty.” Where there is poverty, there will almost always be hunger. And across America few problems are more intractable than poverty. The government has been tracking poverty only since 1959, but since then they have annually tallied how many people in the United States have incomes at or below the poverty level. It has never been less than 11.1 percent of us. That is one in nine people. That is the best we have ever done. More often the percentage is two or three points higher, up to as high as 15 percent, which is one in seven of us. In good economic times only one in nine people may need help, rising to as many as one in seven people when there is an economic downturn or some other poverty-increasing event or trend.

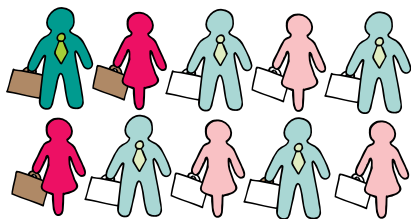
So the bad news is that the number of people who likely need food aid is much higher than most people think, involving nearly as many millions of people as were in need during the Great Depression!



The good news is that most of those who are hungry at any given moment are only temporarily in that condition. Government studies show that approximately 70 percent of those who are needy at any given moment will cycle out of it within 4.5 months. How can that be? Because most American households are only a paycheck or two away from being in need. All it would take to put them in need is a significant drop in or the loss of their income or some unexpected large expenses.

## Who's hungry?

Up to 70 percent of all Americans are at risk. They are getting along okay, and then they lose their job or their work hours are cut back, or their purse gets stolen, or the transmission goes out in the car, or a child gets sick and suddenly there aren't enough dollars to cover the household's needs. These are the types of reasons why people seek food aid. Not because they are multigenerational welfare recipients or are people who don't know how to budget, work or cook. They are just like you or me, but on the other side of bad luck. They've been thrown for a loop by circumstances and for a couple of months they need help. But as soon as possible they will get back on their feet and you will never see them again.



## Hunger relief is important

Hunger is only rarely ennobling or uplifting. Hunger hurts. Hunger can tear people and families apart emotionally, physically and sometimes spiritually. It can cause people to seek relief in drink or drugs, or to strike out in helpless fear, frustration and humiliation.

You may have heard people self-righteously claim that they would never steal anything, only to have someone counter with, "But what if your family was hungry?" The original speaker would then sheepishly admit that in that instance they might indeed "do something desperate."

As many as one in 10 people in your community face that exact dilemma today. Their family is hungry. They need your help. Bless you for meeting that need! But keep in mind that in this context "ending hunger" does not mean that we somehow can or are directly reducing the number of people who might from time to time need food assistance, how often they might need help, or how much help they will need. As a general rule, the only things that significantly reduce need levels are economic booms, increases in wages, construction of low-income housing and increases in government aid programs. Food pantries don't provide these. We provide food.

Some will immediately object that providing food to hungry people is only a band-aid. Indeed it is. But you know what? Sometimes a band-aid is exactly the right tool for the job.

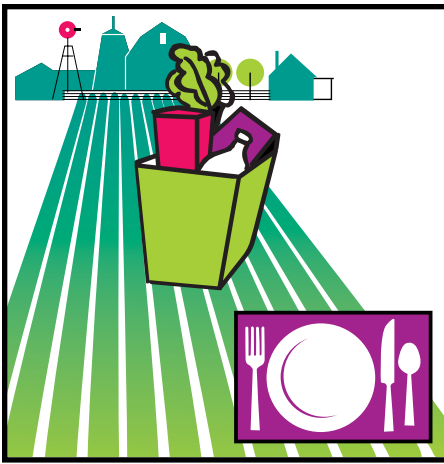
There is certainly a place and a role for those who pursue long-term

## Most American households are only a paycheck or two away from being in need.

solutions to hunger. I pray every day for their success. But in the parable of the babies floating by us in the river, you and I have our own role to play. There are people and families who are hurting and suffering right now, and we have the ability to help those people. Just as we might splash out into the river to rescue individual babies, we have the ability to feed the hungry. It is the right thing for us to do. So although several of the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations later in the book do speak to how agencies like yours and mine can play a very significant role in achieving long-term solutions to poverty and hunger, in general the operative definition of "ending hunger" in our work is the goal that:

"Whenever anyone in the geographic area we serve ever experiences a time of needing food assistance, they can readily access timely, adequate, appropriate assistance sufficient to see them safely through that time of need."

That is the outcome the ideas in this book will enable you to achieve.



## Chapter Two: Estimating Your Community's Charity Food Needs

**Most communities have only about one-fifth of the capacity they need to end hunger.**

If your objective is to end hunger in your community, you need to measure your results or you won't know the impact of your efforts. Are you meeting 10 percent of the need, or 85 percent or 30 percent? The only way to know is to determine what 100 percent of the problem equals, which in this case means knowing how many pounds of food aid are likely needed per year.

A simple formula exists for estimating that need. It is based on the only two studies of need that I am aware of that dared to toss a number on the table. They were very different studies, but their estimates came out just pocket change different from each other. The formula should predict within a few percentage points approximately how many pounds of food aid per year is required to reach your area's needy families in order to make your area hunger-free.

The formula is simple: Multiply the number of people in the area who have incomes at or below the poverty level times 234 pounds. The result is the best estimate of your community's annual charity food assistance need.

The two simplest ways to estimate the number of people in poverty in your community are to call the reference desk at your local public library or to visit the U.S. Census Bureau Web site at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

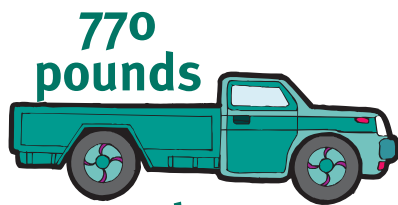
This method of estimating need does not suggest that only people with incomes below the poverty level need help, or that anyone in particular needs 234 pounds of food aid. Rather, it simply recognizes that poverty and hunger keep close company and at approximately this ratio of people to need.

### Estimate how many food pantries will meet the need

Parts of ending hunger have more to do with physics than philosophy. The reality of charity food programs in America is that very few of them have the luxury of being housed in a facility designed for that activity or of having a large truck or trucks for transporting food. Most food programs, quite frankly, are squeezed into a corner or a room of a church basement and have only their volunteers' own personal vehicles available for food transportation purposes. These limitations significantly limit the program's food-handling capacity without regard to the area's need.

For example, suppose only one volunteer is willing or able to go and pick up food from the program's primary food source, ideally the area's regional nonprofit food bank, and that they are willing to perform that volunteer task





x 52 weeks

**40,040 pounds per year**

just once per week. The carrying capacity of the volunteer's vehicle multiplied by 52 weeks equals the food program's carrying capacity. Or suppose the program has very limited food storage space or is able to be open just a few days per month. These factors will also define how much food can be handled.

In light of these fairly typical constraints, the average charity food assistance program in America probably has an annual carrying capacity of about 40,000 pounds. Recognizing this fact is of huge importance to United Ways, food banks, community foundation, and others who seek to end hunger in entire communities or states.

After several estimates of food needs in many communities across the United States, and estimates of these community's carrying capacities, it has been determined that most communities only have about one-fifth of the capacity they need to end hunger. In some cases communities have respond-

ed by developing ways to enhance existing agencies' carrying capacity. That works. But in many areas, there is a need for more groups to get involved in distributing food aid to the needy.

### **Creating enough distribution to end hunger**

Unless you have already done a thorough search or a development and recruitment effort such as this before, chances are excellent that there are already many more food assistance provider agencies in your community than you are aware of. The easiest way to begin identifying them is by checking with the following organizations in more or less this order:

- 1** If you are not the area's food bank or food rescue organization, check with your area's food bank or food rescue organization.
- 2** Check with your area's information and referral service.

- 3** Check with your area's United Way.
- 4** Check with your area's public welfare offices about food pantries they know of.
- 5** Check with your area's cooperative extension and public health offices.

In the meantime, if you are researching an area larger than your own immediate community, contact whatever company produces your local phone directory and ask them to send you or to help you secure phone books (yellow pages) for all communities not covered by your local phone book. Phone directory information may also be available online through a service like [www.switchboard.com](http://www.switchboard.com). Search these directories' under the headings "food," "human services," "social services," and other headings you can think of for additional charity food aid agencies your other searches may have missed.

Contact every church, temple, synagogue and mosque by mail or by phone to see if you can recruit them into becoming a part of your charity food assistance system. Tell them about the size of the hunger problem, about the consequences of hunger and about the number of food pantries needed to end hunger in your area. If they weren't willing or able to open or operate their own food pantry, get them to commit to at least helping support the pantries other groups were running.

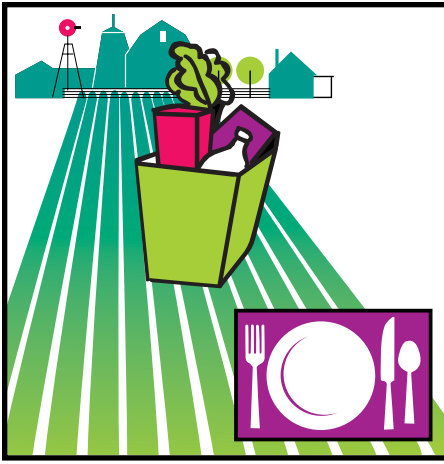
Send out press releases to try to get media coverage of the pantry search and development effort, and seek out opportunities to present the subject to local civic clubs, United Way boards, ministerial alliances and other interested groups.

In most communities, the above efforts can get you 70-80 percent of the way to finding, developing and recruiting the number food pantries required to end hunger in your area.

## **First Calculations**

When the Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank first did these calculations, we were horrified to learn that in order to end hunger we needed to have at least 1,100 agencies drawing and distributing food in our 40-county service area. The shock and dismay came from the fact that at the time we were only serving about 275 agencies.

In other words, our service area lacked the necessary food distribution capacity to end hunger. It was like trying to fight a big house fire with a teacup! We needed to get more churches and charity agencies drawing and dispensing food. And now, a decade later, we have 1150 groups working with us. Those who seek to end hunger across whole communities, counties and states must give serious attention to this issue.



## Chapter Three:

# Making Sure That Food Distribution Agencies Are Accessible to the Needy

**Mobile units enable us to increase the number of groups we serve and expand our distribution.**

**H**istorically, the only kinds of organizations that have been able to participate in charity food distribution efforts have been those small number of groups who:

- Have a building, *and*
- That building is located where the need is, *and*
- That building's layout will support a food pantry, *and*
- Have enough extra space in that building to accommodate food handling.

These limitations exclude up to 80 percent of all eligible churches and other nonprofit organizations from direct participation in charity food distribution efforts. For example, a church might have a building but the building might be located in a more wealthy part of town where having a pantry would make no sense. Or they might have a building but it might have no space to house a pantry. Or they might have a space but it might be on the seventh floor of an office building, or otherwise not be a reasonable space for housing a food pantry. Add on to these limitations the myriad of nonprofit groups that don't generally have buildings such as civic clubs, Boy or Girl Scout troops, 4-H clubs and student organizations, and what you find is

that we have been trying to fight hunger with both hands tied behind our back! In many communities the need for a building so constricts the pool of available players as to push ending hunger hopelessly out of reach.

### Using beverage trucks as mobile food pantries

In 1998 it dawned on our food bank that if we had the kind of trucks that beverage companies use to deliver beer, soda pop, and bottled water to stores—the trucks with pallet-size bays up and down their sides—we could use those trucks as mobile food pantries, eliminating the need for groups to have a building in order to be able to give out food. If they could borrow a parking lot for a couple of hours, they could become an active player in the struggle to end hunger.

We now own four such trucks and dispense more than 500,000 lbs. of food from them per month at locations scattered all over the nine-county area served by our main warehouse. The program we run is very simple. A church or nonprofit group that wants to begin hosting mobile pantry distributions simply signs up to use our services, and then schedules with our mobile food pantry manager the dates, times and places where they would like to host distributions.

Once they have scheduled with us, they can then recruit a dozen or so volunteers to work for about three hours, and can begin their outreach efforts to notify the people they hope to serve of when and where the distributions will take place. Then on that day we load one of our mobile pantry trucks with food and drive it to the site.

The host agency sets up tables around the truck and their volunteers load the tables from the truck. The scene ends up looking like a little farmer's market. Clients are then able to take a walk around the truck, helping themselves to the goods they can use. Most people take between 25-50 pounds of goods, which is all that the average person can carry. When they are done, the agency loads any leftovers back on the truck, and it goes away.

## Do mobile food pantries work?

All of my food bank's largest user agencies are now almost exclusively mobile pantry users. The largest of them distributed 500,000 pounds from the trucks in 2003. And since late 1998, we have done 3500 distributions involving more than 22 million pounds of food working with hundreds of organizations in dozens of communities.

What the mobile units permit us to do is mobilize a much larger circle of players into supplying food to the needy, which enables us to increase the number of groups we serve, and expand our distribution into communities and neighborhoods we haven't been able to reach before.



For more information on the mobile pantry concept, contact John Arnold at [johna@wmgleaners.org](mailto:johna@wmgleaners.org).

## The entire effort to reduce or eliminate hunger fails if the needy lack reasonable access to food aid.

### “Reasonable access” means:

- That there are enough agencies distributing food to handle the volume of food needed.
- That those agencies are distributed across the geographic area so that no rural needy person is more than 10 miles from a food aid source and no urban needy person is more than 8 to 10 blocks from such aid.
- That people who may be in trouble and seeking food aid for the first time can readily find those agencies.
- That agencies are open enough hours so that people who need help have a realistic chance of getting it, even if their work or other schedule is not particularly flexible.

## Accessibility

In the early 1990s when accessibility revelations first dawned on us, we got out a state highway map and drew little circles around the names of towns that had charity food pantries. What we found was that less than half the communities in our service area had such services, and that in a depressingly large number of cases the nearest food aid access was 30-50 miles away from the needy. In our bigger cities we did the same sort of location plotting on a city map, and again found large areas without food aid services. You can't end hunger if the needy can't get the food!

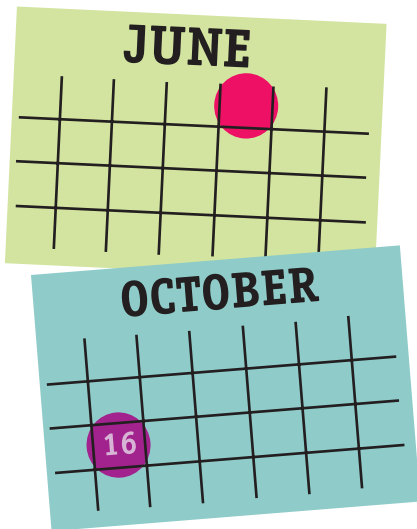
## Publicize Your Food Pantry

It is equally important that provision be made for people being able to find out about your food aid program. We recommend at least six specific steps to accomplish that:

- 1** Make certain that everyone in your parent organization—for example, your congregation's members and staff—knows about the program.
- 2** Make certain that your community's information and referral system has current, accurate information about your services and hours of operation.
- 3** Make certain that your county's public welfare, Social Security, unemployment and public health and safety offices know about you.
- 4** Send a letter or brochure with information on your services to every public school, church, synagogue and mosque in the area you serve.
- 5** Make sure your area's legislators know about you—their constituent services staff do a lot of information and referral work.
- 6** Last but not least, take advantage of opportunities for publicity in your local media.

People should do their charitable acts in secret, but food pantries need to be known about. So if some excuse arises, don't be shy about letting your local media know about that. For example, your distribution passes some milestone such as the number of years open, the number of families helped or the pounds of food handled; or sets some new record, such as “families seeking help increase 25 percent;” or has some noteworthy experience, like “former client returns to head pantry,” or “Boy Scout builds shelving to help area's needy.” This isn't bragging. It increases the likelihood that people

who need to find you will be able to. Events or updates can also be publicized on National Hunger Awareness Day—the first Thursday in June each year—or on World Food Day, which is October 16.



## Operating Hours

Historically, many food programs have been open when it was the most convenient for their volunteers. While you have to respect volunteers' needs, the whole point of these programs is to serve the needy. Many of the needy are working people or are families with children or ailing family members who need to be cared for. They can't always juggle those other responsibilities as well as they might want to in order to be able to get to the pantry when it is the most convenient for the volunteers who are staffing it. So try as best you can to have your pantry open at least once a week in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening and on the weekend. This gives your clients some real options in being able to access the help they need.



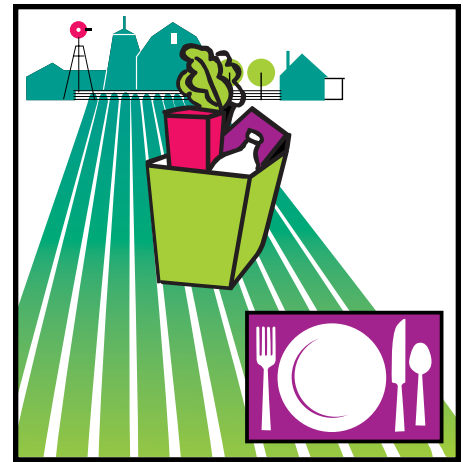
# Chapter Four: Reducing the Cost of Ending Hunger Up to 25 Percent

Perhaps nothing is more traditional, wholesome or all-American than gathering up and giving food to the needy. Whether through a community wide canned goods drive or food collection barrels in churches or at people's workplaces, it is an almost universally accepted practice for people who wish to help the less fortunate to go to the store or their kitchen to get actual cans, jars, boxes or bags of food for that noble purpose. That is a good thing. There is no such thing as a bad container of food given in love and charity to feed the needy.

However, when as many as one in ten people in the community are hungry and the total need for food aid is many thousands of pounds, we cannot possibly meet that need unless we are mobilizing and employing the community's anti-hunger resources at an optimal level. Food drives are not optimal because the food purchased for food drives is way too expensive.

## Giving food is expensive

In a food drive, where does the food come from? Someone buys it at the store. How much does food cost at stores? Full retail prices. So, for example, \$10 brings into the charity food system \$10 worth of food. That inefficiency is compounded when the gift



**Canned good  
drives don't  
leverage enough  
resources.**

enters the charity system by being dropped into a food collection barrel or leaving it in a bag on your front porch for someone to pick up. Giving in this way is virtually impossible to document for tax deduction purposes. Household by household, that doesn't amount to much. But giving in ways that are easy to document for tax deduction purposes can drive down the community-wide bottom line cost of ending hunger by up to 25 percent!

## Giving money costs donors less

For example, if someone writes a check and gives it to your agency so that you can buy food, it costs the donor 25 percent less than if they give you the same dollar value's worth of food. Spread across an entire community or region, that difference is huge. Assume that the average pound of food costs a dollar. For every million pounds or million dollars worth of food it takes to end hunger in your community, this change is worth \$250,000. In my 40-county service area, moving from food drives to fund drives dropped the cost of ending hunger by \$12.5 million per year.

It is by taking advantage of these sorts of cost-saving opportunities that we can draw the cost of ending hunger down to levels our communities can afford, thereby making ending hunger more achievable, and thus more likely to occur.

## But people like to give cans

If you ask someone to write a check instead of giving cans, many of them will simply not give at all. However, you can afford to lose a great deal of your traditional support and come out significantly ahead.

However, no one is suggesting that all canned good drives are bad, or that any community should immediately end or even try to end all canned good drives. Many canned good drives have primary objectives other than ending hunger. They exist as an opportunity for Boy Scouts to do a community-wide good deed, or to give people an opportunity to clean out their cupboards or as part of some larger agenda in a church. But, if charity food programs across America will begin to gently coax food-drive promoters to transition to fund drives, we can reduce the cost of ending hunger in America by nearly \$2 billion per year.

## Waste Not Want Not!

Let's assume your church is in a community of 3,500 people that has a poverty rate of about 11 percent, which is approximately the national average. From those numbers the Waste Not Want Not research would project a likely annual food assistance need in the community of just over 90,000 pounds.

Suppose people in your church faithfully bring in cans of food for its own or another church's pantry to help meet that need. And let's assume they bring in an average of 300 16-ounce cans per week. That would meet 15,600 pounds, or about 17.3 percent of the need, at a total cost of \$10,764 per year— assuming a 69-cents per can cost— to those giving those cans. To meet 100 percent of the need that way, these faithful givers need to be coaxed into spending \$51,336 more per year than they are now.

Suppose that you try to get them to give money instead so that the pantry can get its food from your area's food bank, but that so many people are put off by the change that a third stop giving altogether, a third give only half as much as they used to, and only a third continue giving at the old rate. Total giving would decline to \$5,382.

But because you use that money to purchase food from a food bank, and the donated money is easily documented for tax deduction purposes, everyone comes out significantly ahead:

- Donors would likely be able to deduct at least \$1,076 of that on their taxes, so the real cost to donors would shrink to about \$4,306.
- With \$5,382 the pantry can acquire about 53,820 pounds of food from the food bank, meeting nearly 60 percent of the area's estimated need. This increases your effectiveness by more than three times over relying on food drives.

If, over time, more people can be coaxed into giving money instead of cans, the entire need could be met for approximately \$9,000 per year, with donors being able to get about \$1,800 of that back on their taxes, for a total bottom-line cost of meeting the area's total estimated food assistance need of just \$7,200, which is 30 percent less than what they used to spend on canned goods in meeting only a fifth of the need!



**\$1 at the store**

The key to moving successfully from food drives to fund drives is communicating to your supporters that if they will give money instead of cans, it will cost them about 25 cents on the dollar less. If they rise to that bait, fine. And if they don't, fine also. Take all the food drive food they are willing to give or collect for you! But let's do that based on full disclosure of their options and not as a result of their remaining oblivious to the benefits of this other option.

Experience has shown that as we gently make donors aware of their options, more and more donors will switch to giving cash, saving them a lot of money and moving our communities measurably closer to ending hunger.

## How to change donors' thinking

No one is suggesting that food banks or food pantries should just begin refusing or stopping food drives tomorrow. You can't realistically do that. However, you should begin the long process of weaning America from measures, which cannot end hunger over to measures, which can. Canned good drives cannot—they don't leverage enough resources. But fund drives can add up to enough.

So how to coax people who are accustomed to giving cans to start giving cash?



**\$1 at the food bank**

Here are some ideas:

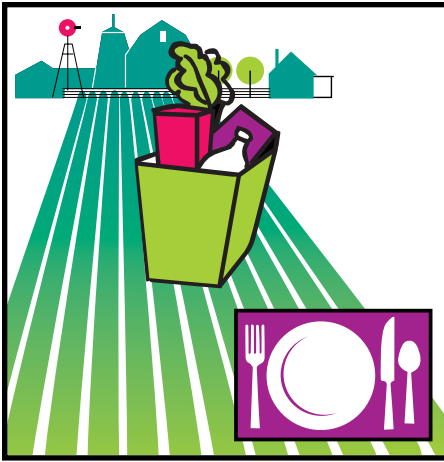
- Assemble a display of \$10 worth of store-purchased food and \$10 worth of food bank food next to each other to graphically illustrate the huge difference.
- Make a traveling exhibit to take to churches or civic groups. You might want to drop down to \$1, as \$10 in food bank food is generally too much to carry!
- Take pictures of the display and highlight them in your newsletter or other communications to convey to people just how much further their dollars will stretch if they have them used at the food bank instead of at the store.
- Assemble a display of \$1 in food-bank food and take a picture of it to circulate as a teaching aid. Try it with a 1-pound can of powdered Similac, a 16-ounce box of Total cereal, a loaf of bread, some Pop-Tarts, a small jar of salad dressing, some popcorn snacks and some fresh produce. When people see how much further their dollars will stretch, they are easy to coax into giving money instead of food.
- In churches where children traditionally carry food to the altar, ask people to wash out an empty can and put their check in it so that the image of food and feeding is preserved while the dollars help 20 times more.

**It is a myth that food banks or food pantries must have canned good drives in order to get enough food. One-to-one leveraging of resources will never add up to end hunger.**

- Invite a group, which might otherwise have done a canned good drive, to collect money and then go to the food bank with the pantry staff and pick out what their money will pay for.
- If a group gives money to a pantry, send them a picture of how much food bank food that covers.
- Develop some money collection envelopes printed to look like a can on one side.

We are creative enough to develop new traditions, which graciously replace canned good drives with more cost-effective measures.

It is a myth that food banks or food pantries must have canned good drives in order to get enough food. One-to-one leveraging of resources will never add up to end hunger. We have to do better than that, and by soliciting money instead of canned good drive goods we can.



## Chapter Five:

# Reduce The Cost Of Ending Hunger By Up To 90 Percent

**E**very community in America is served by a food bank or a food rescue organization that is a member of America's Second Harvest, The Nation's Food Bank Network. These are regional nonprofit organizations that exist to channel the food industry's inventory surpluses and edible errors to food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and similar agencies in order to increase communities' capacity to adequately address their hunger problem. Food banks are also one of America's best-kept secrets!

Food banks are veritable gold mines of millions of pounds of good food that your agency or community can tap at will, at no charge or for a per pound handling fee that is just pennies per dollar compared to the value of the food you will be accessing. If you are not sure who or where your area's America's Second Harvest member is, call (312) 263-2303 or visit [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org) to identify them. If they are located some distance from you, don't despair! Many have branch warehouses, delivery routes or other ways of serving outlying communities.

Using your local America's Second Harvest member's donated food instead of store-purchased food is the single most significant change you can make in order to draw down the cost of end-

ing hunger to levels that you can afford.

For example, in the canned good drives discussion in the previous chapter you saw how someone buying and giving you \$10 worth of food will cost them \$10 and will result in you having \$10 worth of food to give out. By contrast, if they give you the \$10 and you then use these funds to cover the cost of drawing food from your area's America's Second Harvest member, their cost, after taxes, will be only about \$7.50. But you could easily end up with as much as \$200 worth of food! That is 26 times more buying power—26 times more food per dollar given and spent for hunger relief.

Food banks and food rescue organizations are not grocery stores that can order food supplies from the food industry at will. Rather, they are food donation seekers who only get what they are lucky enough to get as food companies develop inventory surpluses, have overruns, have products left over after holidays or promotions pass by and by other means. So they won't always have everything. But "everything" is not necessary to end hunger. If they have as few as 40 different products in inventory, you almost certainly have enough variety available to you to bring ending hunger within reach.

**Using a food bank instead of store-purchased food is the single most significant change you can make to draw down the cost of ending hunger.**

You may recall in the introduction that I claimed you would learn how to end hunger? You just have. Or, more properly, you have just learned how to access enough food to adequately address your community's food assistance needs. In the remaining chapters you will learn how to optimally employ these food resources in order to achieve that outcome.

## Chapter Six:

# Permitting Needy People to Access Food Aid as Often as They Need

The average American family sends someone to the store for food approximately 2.2 times per week, or about 9 times per month. They don't necessarily want or plan on making all those extra trips. It is just a matter of something coming up that results in their needing some item or items they don't have. They might find, in planning a meal, that they are out of some key ingredient, or that something they thought was good has spoiled. Or they might develop some unanticipated need such as an illness, unexpected visitors or something needed for school. The possibilities are endless and it doesn't have to do with poor planning. Rather, it is how things seem to go in our society and culture.

But across the United States, churches and other charity agencies almost universally permit needy families to access food aid only once per month. Why only once per month? These days, it is mostly a case of newer pantries simply copying older pantries. But when the modern era of food pantries began in the early 1980s it all tracked back to one wellspring: The government! The government sends out welfare and Social Security checks once a month. The government issues food stamps once a month. The government even hands out USDA commodities once a month. So when churches and

other nonprofit groups started looking around for clues about how to do this the right way instead of looking to their religious faith's teachings for guidance, they simply mirrored what the government was doing!

### We don't have a "once a month" faith

This is a terrible mistake. There is no "once a month" rule in the Bible, the Tanakh, the Koran or any other significant religious text. They all advocate helping whenever help is needed.

If yours is a faith-based organization, there is simply no excuse for limiting how often needy people can access help. Copying the government is the last thing you should do.

And for all groups, please consider this: What other emergency service is parceled out according to the calendar instead of according to the need? None! Can you imagine calling the police or fire department or going to the emergency room and being denied assistance because you recently were aided? Nobody does that except thousands of food pantries across America who must begin permitting needy families to access food assistance whenever they need it if hunger is ever to be overcome.

If people need help every week or two but are permitted to access it only

once a month, or three times per year or any other totally arbitrary interval unrelated to meeting their need, then that part of your area's charity food pipeline is much smaller than it must be to end hunger.

Traditionally, agencies confronted with this reality try to beg off that they can't afford to let people draw food any more often. But what our research suggests this is true only when:

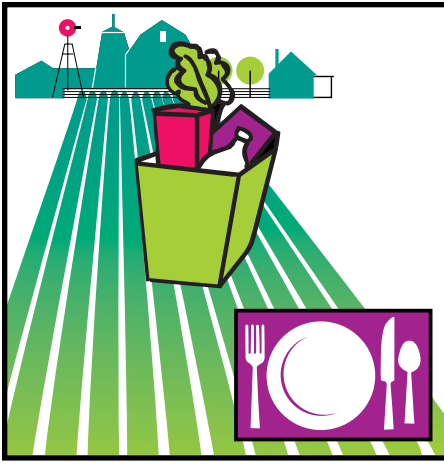
- The pantry relies on store-purchased or food drive-supplied food instead of on goods they could be drawing from their area's food bank or food rescue organization.
- Pantries give clients pre-assembled food boxes instead of letting them assemble their own food boxes. (More on this later.)
- Pantries grossly overestimate how often people will use the pantry if given the opportunity to use it as needed.

### Increased use can be offset

The increased use of your food pantry can easily be offset by the efficiencies the Waste Not Want Not methods achieve, to the point where there is a net cost-reduction for the pantry. That is, you can actually spend less in meeting the area's complete need than you had spent in meeting only a fraction of it.

If your family were in need, what would you want your area's food pantries to do? Acquire its food in the most cost-effective ways and let you access help as you need it? Or use less-cost-effective food acquisition methods and use that as an excuse for letting you access help less often than you need it? Clearly you would want to be able to get help whenever you need it.

This is what your pantry should offer its clients.



## Chapter Seven:

# Welcome, Reassure and Comfort Clients

**40 percent of those in need will go hungry rather than submit to a poorly structured screening process.**

**A**sking for food assistance in America ranks as one of the most humiliating experiences most people can imagine ever having to endure. By the time a needy person's hand reaches for the doorknob of your food pantry they are just about as frightened, frustrated and humiliated as they are ever going to be.

And when they open that door, what happens? How are they greeted? Are they greeted? How does the greeting compare to that extended to visitors at the Sunday church services? Are they made to feel welcome? Is the urgency of their quest respected with prompt attention, or at least a reasonable explanation? "Hi. As you can see, we have a number of people in line ahead of you, but we will get to you as quickly as we can. Would you like a cup of coffee while you wait?"

When they do get to the intake desk, how is it arranged? Are they seated opposite the intake worker—an adversarial arrangement—or at the side of the desk—a conversational arrangement? Is their chair comparable to the one the intake worker has or is it yet another reminder of their "beggar" status? Can they see what the intake worker writes down or enters into the computer? And is the tone of the intake interview one of reassurance? "I just need to get down some basic facts

and figures to keep the powers-that-be happy, and then we will get you into the pantry, okay?" Or is the interview done in such a way that the person could easily feel distrusted or disrespected? "We have to weed out liars and cheaters."

### **Gather reasonable information**

The difference is huge. Our research suggests that as many as 40 percent of those in need will go hungry rather than submit to a poorly-structured screening process. They are already completely stressed out about having to ask for food in the first place. At the first hint of distrust, disrespect or further humiliation they will bolt for the door and you will never see them again, not because they aren't in need, but because your pantry's practices were more than they could bear. If that happens, you will never end hunger. You can't. You can only end hunger if those who need food aid are encouraged to seek and access it.

Okay, but what information about clients or what proof of need or other information should a food pantry require? Our research recommends obtaining:

- Their name, address and phone number, needed in case there should ever be a food recall
- A count of how many people are in their household
- Their best guess of how many days' worth of food aid they need to get from this visit to the pantry so you can multiply that times four pounds per person in the household to suggest a minimum amount of pounds of food they should take
- And briefly, why they are in need. For example, someone lost their job, someone is sick, they got behind on bills, their purse was stolen or some other reason. This is not to judge them, but to help the pantry keep its finger on the pulse of what is driving need in the community.

Those are all just questions and answers. We do not recommend requiring that they prove anything—not their address, their income or anything else. All that requiring positive identification does is say, “We don’t trust you.” Imagine that you are the needy person, and for the first time ever you’ve asked a church to help you, and instead of just helping you they ask for proof of your income and two forms of identification? That could leave a scar that could take a lifetime to heal—that in your hour of need the church treated you no better than some government bureaucracy would have.

## Food pantry abuse is a myth

Most people—believe it or not—are basically honest and wouldn’t be caught dead within 100 yards of a food

pantry unless they really are in need of help. We shouldn’t be worried about people scamming the system. But somewhere in the process—for your own peace of mind and, perhaps, to reassure your supporters and suppliers—we recommend asking clients to sign a brief, simple declaration of need. Something such as: *“I understand that the (name of pantry) exists to provide food assistance to people and families who really need that help. By accessing help from the pantry I affirm that my household genuinely needs food assistance.”*

What about scammers? People scamming food pantries to get food to sell to buy drugs or whatever is one of those urban legends that just will not die despite overwhelming evidence that it simply doesn’t happen. There simply is no market out on the streets for a can of this and a box of that. And no drug dealer is going to take a bag of groceries for a fix. And most drugs cost too much anyway! In the Jewish and Christian traditions, aid provided to someone in need is an interest-bearing secured loan from the giver to God, and a gift from God to the needy person (Proverbs 19:17). So what the needy person does with the food isn’t your concern. It’s God’s. Leave it there.

## When suppliers demand more client information

A bigger problem is what do you do if a donor or supplier requires you to demand proof of income or some other information from those you serve. None of the world’s major religious faiths’ guiding scriptural texts make allowance for that. So what is a faith-based group to do? We are aware of three options:

- Coax the donor or supplier to modify their requirements so as to permit you to follow your faith’s teachings more faithfully.

- Keep their food separate from the food you have that doesn’t fall under their jurisdiction, and give clients the choice of whether to access one, the other, or both supplies. Only collect detailed information from clients who ask for the food that requires it.

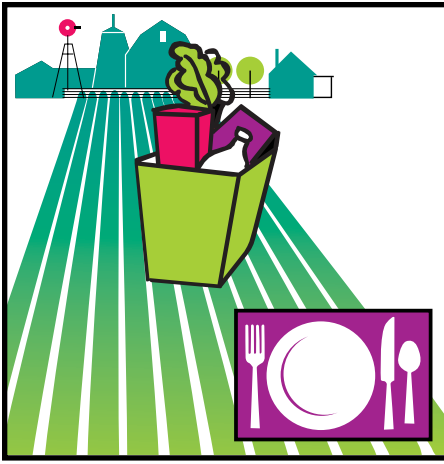
- Decline handling the food or money from that source.

If we are going to end hunger we must have a food distribution process that doesn’t scare off 20-40 percent of the needy. That means seriously paying attention to how people are greeted and treated when they walk through your pantry’s front door, and when they are interviewed at your intake desk.

## Most clients have short-term food needs

Most people who seek food aid from you likely will do so only one or two times. Our research recommends just serving them. If, however, someone starts coming back week after week after week or for multiple months, it is perfectly reasonable for you to discuss their situation with them to pin down more clearly exactly what is driving their need, and if there are other or additional forms of aid they perhaps should be pursuing—for example, food stamps.

The reality is that some people may need your help for the rest of their lives—for example, a widowed retiree with a lot of health problems but only a small Social Security check to live on. But most people should be moving on with their lives within six months or so of when they begin drawing food, or may need some gentle assistance or encouragement in that direction.



## Chapter Eight: Offering as Much Variety as Possible

**The more variety you offer your pantry's clients, the more you increase the chances of meeting their needs, and the more you and your pantry can become miracle workers.**

**W**hen the modern food pantry era began in the early 1980s, food pantries all across the country seemed to ask themselves the same question, “What food are we going to give out?” Within minutes the volunteers had gathered around a table with pen and paper and talked through what a family’s three-day food supply might be comprised of.

“Let’s see, for breakfast they can have cereal, so let’s give them a box of cereal. But then, oh dear, if they have cereal they’ll need milk. But we don’t want to buy milk, do we? Oh, I know! Let’s give them powdered milk! Okay, then for lunch, let’s give them a can of soup and some bread, peanut butter and jelly,” and on and on. I have talked with hundreds of pantries across America that went through that exact exercise ultimately coming up with a list of specific food items that their pantry seeks and gives out, many with a faithfulness comparable to what they would observe if they knew for a fact that the list had been carried down from the mountain by Moses with the other Ten Commandments!

Those lists must go away! No matter how well-intentioned they were, they have become one of the most vexing barriers to ending hunger in America, blocking billions of pounds of other food products from being made

available to the needy, and driving the cost of ending hunger hopelessly up out of reach.

### **Adding variety increases available food aid**

It was the assessment of our Waste Not Want Not Project researchers that as much as 80 percent of the food a food bank can access will never be able to reach a needy family so long as fixed lists of what to give out govern the distribution system. Four out of five pounds of available food won’t be used, and as a result communities will never have enough food to meet the need. What food are we talking about?

#### **Many agencies won’t give out:**

- baked goods except white bread
- fruit or fruit products except canned fruit cocktail
- beverages, even when the local health department asks them to because of outdoor heat levels
- snacks or treats
- yogurt or fresh vegetables
- infant formula or baby food

Many agencies won’t stray from their standardized lists to offer food to families that need that help even when their area’s food bank has truckloads of

# We will never end hunger if we only use a fraction of the quantities and varieties of food available to us for that purpose.

these goods available that will otherwise go to waste.

This is crazy! We will never end hunger if we use only a fraction of the quantities and varieties of food available to us for that purpose. An infinitely more reasonable, more cost-effective, more practical and more effective approach is to assume that if a product has found its way into your area's food bank or food rescue organization that it is there for a purpose that may well involve one or more of your food pantry's clients. Take some of it—not huge amounts—but enough to put out for your pantry's clients.

## Variety enables miracles

If you will do that, you will be amazed at what will occur:

- It will be much easier and much less costly than anything you've done before.
- It will thrill your clients in a way that standardized food boxes never will, and thrilling for you, too.
- You may well begin experiencing little miracles as products you thought no one would ever want turn out to be the surprise answer to someone's prayer.

You've heard the saying, "God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform"? So long as a pantry's staff

control and standardize the food that is offered to the pantry's clients, there are no real opportunities for any miracles to occur. The only food that is going to get through is what you decide to let get through. That doesn't leave much for God to work with in trying to answer peoples' prayers. But if you are willing to put aside all that power and all that need for you to control what happens and trust that God wants to use you and your food pantry for his own purposes, you will:

- Find that within minutes of your putting out some pomegranates an Ethiopian refugee family you didn't know was in your community will weep with incredulity and delight at your having made available to them a key part of a holiday celebration that you didn't even know existed.
- Find the grumpy old man who never talks with anyone dancing a little jig of joy at being able to get a gallon can of water chestnuts.
- Have an old widow be so excited about being able to get a bag of kitty litter that she almost forgets to take the food she came to the pantry to get.
- Find that client after client is overjoyed to get the five-gallon institutional bags of pizza sauce that you were absolutely certain no one would ever want.

That is just a partial list of what has happened at pantries that have switched to the Waste Not Want Not methods. The point is that the more variety you offer your pantry's clients, the more you increase the chances of meeting their needs, and the more you and your pantry can become miracle workers.

## Handling suppliers' objections

Won't some of your pantry's supporters react unfavorably to your replacing nice neat rows of "responsible" food—dried beans, powdered milk and white bread—with a messy collection of whatever happens to have made itself available? You can count on it. They will protest, and may even withdraw their support. But you need to stick to your guns and simply affirm to them that the alternative to making these products available is your pantry being more of a barrier than a benefit to ending hunger, and that only after you are certain that everyone who is hungry has enough to eat are you willing to begin refining that food supply to accommodate non-hungry people's notions of what is good food or bad food.

## "Must have" foods aren't necessary

An issue closely related and equally crippling to ending hunger is the flip side of only giving out certain food. That is the very widespread practice of pantries trying to make certain they always have certain food products or categories of food on their shelves, and going out and buying—or getting their supporters to go out and buy—those products if they aren't available from the area's food bank or food rescue organization.

This is a terrible mistake!

## Donated food helps families meet other needs

Except in extraordinary situations, when a food bank supplies a family with food, it is supplementing that family's pool of resources. The family has added up its needs and its ability to satisfactorily address those needs, and has concluded that they need help in order to get by. So when they come to you they are not so much in need of any specific thing or things as they are in need of a bunch of things that cover enough of their needs so that their other resources will stretch far enough to cover everything else.

For example, suppose it was you and your family that was in need. You've had a run of very bad luck and find that your food supply and pocketbook are getting too low for comfort. So you go to a food pantry for help. Would you want them to have spent so much money on making sure they have certain food products in stock—products that you may or may not even want—that as a result they have to severely restrict how much help you can get or how often you can get help? Or would you rather be able to pick and choose whatever you can use from a much wider variety of goods?

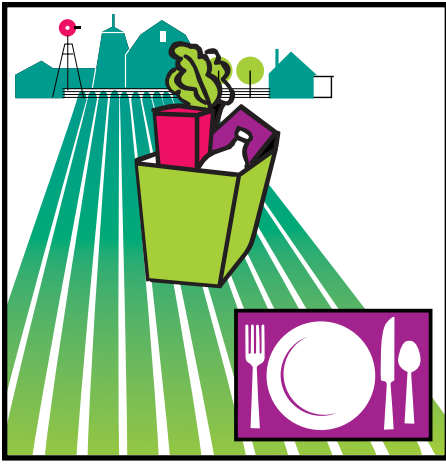
Almost all clients who have been asked that question immediately opt for the latter. The more things they can get from you that they actually can use, the closer you will have brought them to having enough to meet their needs.

No specific food items are necessary to achieve this. I have heard countless pantry staff affirm with absolute heartfelt conviction that, "We have to give them meat," or "We always have to have some of every food group on our shelves." But it is just not true! Ending hunger requires variety, quantity and the right for the client to pick and choose, but does not require any specific food or food item, particularly if and when "making certain the pantry always has some specific item or items" diminishes the total variety or quantity of goods the pantry makes available to its clients.

The only exception to the above rule is if and when a client or clients have a specific need that cannot and will not be met other than by your pantry supplying them with some specific urgently-needed product, such as Ensure for a cancer or AIDS victim, infant formula for a high-risk baby, or rice for a primarily rice-eating immigrant population. Our research suggests that most other clients' needs can and will be best met by your making available to them the best collection of things the food bank or food rescue stream makes available to you. Period!

**The more things they can get from you that they actually can use, the closer you will have brought them to having enough to meet their needs.**





## Chapter Nine:

# Reduce Waste and Humiliation—Let Clients Assemble Their Own Food Boxes

**The average community in America today can essentially double its capacity to address its hunger problem by switching from giving out standardized food boxes to letting clients pick out their own food.**

**T**he most revolutionary and most necessary of needed reforms is to let clients assemble their own food boxes. No other single reform makes more difference, is simpler or is more difficult to get pantries to actually do!

But if we want to end hunger, you must do it for at least a half-dozen good reasons.

But first, what are we talking about? Ideally, food pantries set themselves up like little grocery stores with food shelves stocked with the biggest and best variety of goods, including food and non-food items—toothpaste, toilet paper and dish soap—that they have obtained from their local food bank or food rescue system. Clients browse among the goods just as they would at a store. If some very popular items are available only in limited supply, it is perfectly okay for the pantry to put limits on how much or many of that item any one family can take. Otherwise, food pantries should permit clients to pick out what they want and need without further direction or interference from the food pantry's staff.

### Trusting clients helps end hunger

Are you reeling in incredulity at the idea of letting people take what they want? Remember, research shows that the key to ending hunger is treating pantry clients with the same levels of trust and respect you would want to be shown if you were in their shoes.

Imagine that you have fallen on hard times and need to turn to a pantry for help.

### Which style of service would you prefer?

- Receive a standardized food box assembled completely without regard to your family's situation or needs.
- Assemble your own food box but only within certain pre-set guidelines, such as two items from each food group.
- Assemble your own food box but only under the guidance and supervision of a pantry staff person walking along side you to ensure you make approved choices.
- Pick out your own food just as you would at a store.

When given these choices most people pick number 4, with a slight

reservation: They would appreciate being given some idea of how much is fair, reasonable or okay for them to take, because when given the opportunity to take as much as they want to, a vast majority of people will most fear taking more than they should have, thereby depriving some other, possibly worse-off family, of the help they need.

## Clients usually don't select enough food

It is truly heartwarming to observe this phenomenon. Pantries that always have given out standardized food boxes, in part out of a fear that the poor are too greedy, irresponsible, dishonest or unscrupulous to be trusted, suddenly finding that when they switch to letting those clients pick out their own food, that those very same clients are actually very nice people who care very much about the well-being of others in need and about "doing what is right."

In fact, if left entirely to their own discretion, most food pantry clients will take significantly less help than they really need. This phenomenon is so widespread and such a problem that many client-shopping food pantries have eventually found themselves needing to employ some means of coaxing clients to take more than they otherwise might. The most common of those systems is for the pantry's staff to do a quick assessment of how much help the family needs resulting in them being given a goal of a certain number of pounds of goods to take. For example, a family of four that needs a week's worth of help could be directed to multiply four people by four pounds

per day, which equals 16 pounds per day, multiplied by seven days, results in a total of 112 pounds. So they would be given a slip that says they should take 112 pounds of goods.

If you then have some scales here and there in the pantry, clients can pace and prioritize their selections toward that goal figure. If you have a bigger scale at the end of the process to get a total weight on what they have taken for the pantry's records, you may be surprised at how much less most people will take than you calculated that they should have. It isn't at all unusual to have people take 30-50 percent less than they were told to. So instead of having to put limits to keep people from taking too much, you may find your greater need is finding ways to get people to take enough.

## Benefits of client-assembled boxes

Letting clients assemble their own food boxes respects clients, their well-being and their dignity, as well as your dignity. There is no such thing as an average family or need. Every family your food pantry serves is unique. The notion that it is somehow better or fairer to give every family the same quantity and variety of food is just wrong. What is fair about giving a family that needs a single day's worth of help and a family that needs 10 days' worth of help both five days' worth of help? What is fair about giving an Anglo-American family that doesn't eat rice and a Vietnamese-American family that eats mostly rice a one pound bag of rice each? What is fair about giving dried beans to a family whose utilities

have been cut off and so have no way to cook them? What is fair about giving bacon to a family whose religion abhors pigs? What families will and will not eat, can or cannot use, is so unique to each family that ignoring or disregarding those differences genuinely is profoundly disrespectful of those families even if and when it arises from the purest of motives.

## Standardized boxes increase waste

Letting people pick out their own food achieves the third huge leap of cost-effectiveness that is necessary to draw the cost of ending hunger down to levels communities can afford. What our Waste Not Want Not research found was that if people are given arbitrary selections of food without regard to their needs, tastes, habits, traditions, abilities and circumstances that up to half the food given will not ultimately be consumed by those intended beneficiaries. You can rail all day about how "if they are hungry, they should eat it," or how "beggars can't be choosers," or anything else along those lines that you'd like to. But at the end of the day the fact will remain that up to 50 percent of what you will have given out that day will have been wasted.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccccc} 4 & \times & 4 & = & 16 & \times & 7 & = & 112 \\ \text{people} & & \text{pounds} & & \text{pounds} & & \text{days} & & \text{pounds} \\ & & \text{per day} & & & & \text{of food} & & \text{per week} \end{array}$$

## Evidence of God's Love

What one eats, and what one feeds one's family are simply too intimate and too personal to be successfully generalized or averaged. Psychologists would describe your picking out someone else's food for them as a "parent-child transaction," meaning that you will have translated your having control of the food and of their access to it into the kind of authority over them that a parent might have over a child. When such a situation develops between parties who ought to have been on a more equal footing, the transaction is doomed. Even if you both smile and talk nice, your hearts will instinctively recoil from how wrong it all is—how humiliating it is for both of you for you to have so much power over them and for them to be so profoundly powerless before you.

If your goal—or at least one of your goals—is to bless those whom your pantry serves with evidence of God's love for them, you cannot succeed if the process you use sets up parent-child transactions. The only way to communicate love and respect is by employing practices that let you relate as adult to adult. And what that literally has to mean, in a food pantry setting, is that they get to pick out their own food.

## What are the implications of this for your community?

If you continue giving out standardized food boxes, you will need to double both the estimated food need from Chapter Two and the estimated number of food pantries from Chapter Three, in order to end hunger.

Why? Because if you employ practices that result in 50 percent of your food being wasted, you need twice as much food to end hunger.

The Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations show that the average community in America today can essentially double its capacity to address its hunger problem by switching from giving out standardized food boxes to letting clients pick out their own food.

## Let's summarize the impact that the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations can have if employed by your food pantry:

- You learned how to drop the cost of ending hunger by getting people to give you money instead of food purchased at retail prices.
- You learned how to get 20 times more food per dollar spent by drawing food from your area's food bank or food rescue organization.

These two changes increase your community's capacity to end hunger by approximately 26.6 times that of the more traditional food drive.

Add in a 50 percent reduction in waste achieved by your letting clients pick out their own food, and guess what? You will have increased your community's capacity to address its hunger problem by 53 times what the other system did or ever could do! That is, without drawing a single additional new dollar into the hunger-relief effort, you will have increased the impact of the dollars already being devoted to hunger relief by up to 53 times what those same dollars could or would have achieved if you had continued using them in the old ways.

How big is that? Can you imagine having 50 times more food or money than your pantry currently has? What would that do to your ability to let people get as much help as they need whenever they need it?

## Various "Client Choice" Charity Food Distribution Models

If the space available for your food pantry won't gracefully accommodate a client shopping system, or if your organization can't or won't go to full client-shopping all at once, there are some options available to you.

### Fixed Menu Plus "Grab Bag" Options

Your pantry distributes its traditional fixed, standardized food box, but then also displays varieties of additional items from the pantry, permitting clients to take limited amounts—for example, one bag, one item per household member, six items—or unlimited amounts of those goods. Fresh produce, bread and baked goods or any "odds and ends" which find their way into the pantry are excellent candidates for such distribution.

### **Fixed Menu Bags for Emergencies (House Burned Down Last Night) Client- Selected Assortments for Others**

Your pantry maintains a supply of fixed menu bags for those few clients who have no food in the house and so must be supplied with everything needed for balanced meals until the crisis passes. All other clients—those who need supplemental assistance—are permitted to select assortments of goods drawn from the pantry without any pretext of those goods meeting all their nutritional needs.

### **Food Pyramid Food Bank Assortment**

Your pantry attempts to draw and stock some items from each part of the food pyramid and displays those goods, permitting clients to take as much of those goods, figuring a little over a pound per person per meal, it will take to meet their needs. The Community Action House in Holland, Mich., has color-coded shelving that aids clients in their selecting what food to take.

### **Clients Browse From a List of Available Goods**

Your pantry acquires the best variety of food it can from your local food bank and itemizes what is available on a list provided clients as they arrive to pick up food. Clients use the list to indicate the items they want, and the pantry staff assembles their box from that list.

## **Real-Life Examples**

### **“Manna Project” Open Distribution**

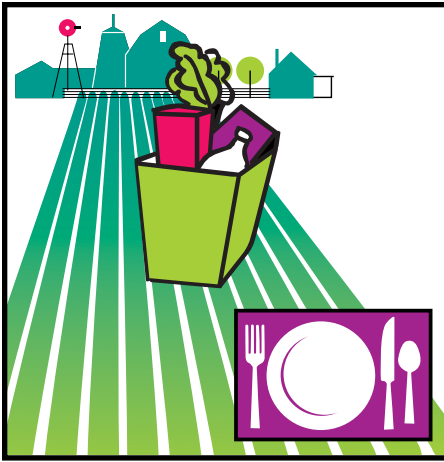
The Manna Project, in Petoskey, Mich., has been successfully distributing food for two decades by simply getting from the food bank all that they can, displaying it and permitting clients to take what they need as much and as often as the client needs to. In Grand Rapids, Mich., the Degage Ministries Pantry Partners Food Pantry won every award for nonprofit agency excellence available to nonprofit groups there by being the first pantry in the area to do pretty much the same thing.

### **“Shopping Within A Budget” Client Choice Distribution**

At the beautiful, very store-like pantries of Christian Community Action in Lewisville and The Colony, near Dallas, Texas, volunteers check the prices of goods in the store and mark those prices on goods in the pantry. Each client is given a budget (how many dollars’ worth of food they can take) and then “shops” through the pantry within that budget.

The possibilities are endless. The key is to bring clients into the decision-making process so that their preferences and needs can be addressed better than could have been possible any other way.

If you can’t get a pantry to offer choices, at least see if you can coax them into setting up a swap table where clients can exchange things from their standardized food box. Even that very limited amount of being able to make choices is better than having no opportunities for making choices at all.



## Chapter Ten: Offering Food When Other Help Is Not Available

**Senior citizens in the Grand Rapids, Mich., area had to choose between getting the medicine they needed and getting food to eat.**

**A** number of years ago I stopped by a Goodwill Store to see if they happened to have any cheap, used computers I could snap up for a few dollars for my son to take apart and reassemble—that was a hobby of his. They had a couple, but to get at them I had to move about a dozen baby cribs out of the way, which were all for sale for between about \$10 and about \$35.

The next day I chanced to be walking through our city's big information and referral service just as one of their staff was taking a call from a woman who needed a crib for her new baby. It stopped me dead in my tracks when I heard the woman being told that "the waiting list for cribs was nine months." I immediately found myself wondering if there might not be a way that food pantries could help out in such situations.

### **Offering food frees up other resources**

Suppose a family needs something like a crib, but no donated cribs are in the system. Suppose that in such cases such people were referred to a pantry to draw enough food to free up enough of the family's food money so they could go buy a crib.

How might that work? Suppose the pantry decided to err on the side of generosity, and let the family draw \$100 worth of food just to make sure they really did end up with enough freed-up money to get a crib and maybe some sheets and blankets to go with it. If the food has been drawn from the area's food bank or food rescue organization, the cost to the pantry to provide \$100 worth of it would be only about \$5, and if someone has donated those funds to the pantry, the after-tax cost of providing that family with the wherewithal to get their baby all set up in a very nice crib that they picked out themselves would be about \$3.75.

Which makes more sense, \$3.75 or nine months on a waiting list? Since then I have witnessed dozens of situations where someone needed something that wasn't available where food possibly could have met or could have helped meet the need if the charity service delivery system had had the presence of mind to offer it as a substitute. Probably our greatest success in that regard arose from a series of articles in *The Grand Rapids Press* about senior citizens in the Grand Rapids, Mich., area who had to choose between getting the medicine they need and getting food to eat. I just hit the roof. That we could and would have such

situations going on in as wealthy and wonderful a community as this one is was just absolutely, totally unacceptable.

I started making the rounds demanding a solution, and within a few months the area's Senior Meals On Wheels Program opened a food pantry specifically for seniors in the area who needed the extra help. We couldn't give those seniors their medicine, but we certainly could do better than letting them go hungry. In 2003, the Senior Meals On Wheels Program's Senior Food Pantry helped thousands of area seniors with \$284,000 worth of food drawn from the food bank for just \$20,776.

## What unmet needs are there in your community?

How often are needy families being told that "no help is available" when a much more accurate characterization of the situation would be that the specific thing they have asked for isn't available, but that significant amounts of food aid are available and could that possibly help meet the need?

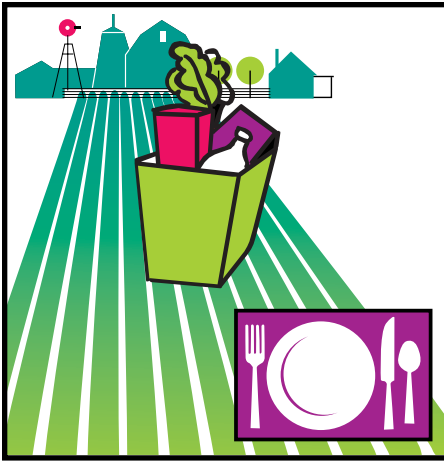
Suppose for example, someone's hours have been cut back at work, and with that reduction in wages they know they won't be able to pay the rent. So they call and ask for help with

the rent. But suppose there isn't any rent assistance money available right then. Which makes more sense, telling them that no help is available or referring them to a pantry that is willing to begin supplying them with as much of their food as possible in hopes of freeing up enough of their food money to permit their paying the rent?

Like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I have a dream. That dream is that one day we will have enough food pantries in America converted over to The Waste Not Want Not methods to not only end hunger, but continue on, offering food into the breach whenever some family's need will otherwise remain unmet. I believe that if and when the charity food distribution system reaches its full potential we can not only end hunger, but we can possibly turn the corner on homelessness, utility shut-offs, seniors having to choose between food and medicine, and a host of other problems that people have always thought were too large and expensive for us to deal with.

If we go after them with approaches that are too expensive, then of course we will forever fall short. But if we've multiplied our impact and ability by 50 times what it was, then no problem is too big.





## Chapter Eleven: Reduce Pressure On Local Resources and Boost the Local Economy

**Every year billions of dollars worth of readily available government aid goes untapped.**

If you thought that by now we've covered all the opportunities for hunger-fighting groups to pick up massive efficiencies, we have a surprise for you. In a vast majority of states just doing what is recommended in this chapter by itself could end hunger.

All levels of government are ultimately concerned with the well being of the people they were elected, appointed or hired to serve. So every level of government to some degree offers some level of assistance to people who are experiencing difficulties. The most well known of those forms of aid in this country are the Food Stamp Program, unemployment insurance, the Women, Infants and Children's program (WIC), workers compensation and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). But those are only the tip of the iceberg. Less well known are a host of additional federal, state and local assistance programs, usually administered by units of government, but sometimes also available through nonprofit groups deputized to provide specific services.

### **Available help is going unused**

The bottom line is that there is a lot of government help out there available to people who need it, but most of

the people who need it never access it because they don't know about it. And in lieu of getting that government help they will suffer much more than they need to or they will tap local charity resources much more than could or should be the case.

This is huge! Every year in the United States billions of dollars worth of readily available government aid goes untapped because people who need it and qualify for it don't apply for it.

### **This results in at least three very negative outcomes:**

**1** It subjects those households to forms and degrees of suffering beyond what could or should have been the case. They need help. Help is available. They qualify for it. But they don't get it because they don't know about it or don't know how or where to apply, or don't realize that they could qualify for it, or can't get to where one needs to go to apply for it, or need help filling out the application or some other reason. They might find and tap into some local charity resources, which might somewhat compensate for not getting the government help, but only rarely will that local charity aid equal or surpass the amount of aid the government

would have provided. To the extent that that difference in aid levels results in their having unmet needs, the suffering they experience is totally unnecessary.

**2** It places a lot of extra stress on local charity programs that are pressed to compensate for aid that people don't get from government sources. For example, in a community of 30,000 people with a poverty rate of about 12 percent, it is likely that at least 5000 people would qualify for about \$70 per month in food stamp assistance. But it is even more likely that only about half of them will receive that help. That works out to \$2.1 million per year ( $\$70 \times 2500 \times 12$ ) in needed aid that the government can provide but charity agencies struggle to provide instead. This is crazy! Charity agencies should only be trying to cover what the government won't cover and not be beating ourselves to death trying to replace the government, particularly since our doing so can hurt the local economy.

**3** It hurts the local economy by not drawing into local commerce the federal and state resources that could have been drawn in. As in the above example, an additional \$2.1 million in the local economy has about the same impact as does having 70 area families get \$30,000 per year jobs! That is a lot of extra buying power that will show up in local stores and restaurants, likely creating enough additional economic activity to create a number of new jobs. It is like a vitamin or booster shot. It puts extra resources in circulation in the local economy just as tourism or a festival that draws in lots of outsiders might. And if you add up all the resources that can be drawn in by getting to everyone who is eligible for help, the dollar amounts are astounding. It could well revive a failing community or neighborhood. Appendix 1 plots out for all 50 states and the

District of Columbia an estimate of how much food aid needed, per our formula in Chapter Two, what percentage of eligible people are getting food stamps, how many eligible people aren't getting food stamps and how many dollars worth of aid that could be coming into the state that isn't being drawn in. As you will see, for a majority of states that dollar amount is larger than the number of pounds of food that are needed to end hunger!

## Match resources with people

To help more eligible people get the government help they qualify for, schedule a meeting with your county's welfare department to talk about the issue. Ideally they should be supportive of the idea of getting more eligible people signed up for and actually getting the help they need, and can provide you with an array of helpful materials including fact sheets, posters, application forms and other materials. They may even have an online application process you can access.

If that doesn't work, check with a legal aid office, community action agency, cooperative extension office, or reference librarian at the nearest public library.

And if that doesn't work out, go online to [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov) or [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) or do a word search of your state's name and "food stamps."

Your goal is to become familiar with the Food Stamp Program and with how a person goes about applying for the program so that you can begin sharing that information with your pantry's clients. If you do that you will have begun a process that could ultimately reduce the number of people who might have needed to draw food aid from your food pantry by 20-60 percent.

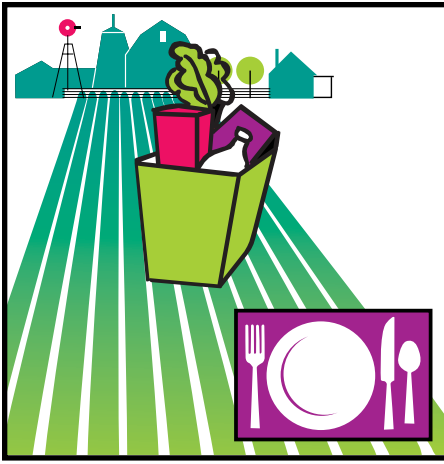
## Help more eligible people get the government help they qualify for.

If you go a step further and start actually helping clients fill out their applications, get to the welfare department office or provide other needed help, you can move that process further and faster. Some food pantries now have welfare department caseworkers visit the pantry from time to time to take applications. Any variation on that activity will help increase the number of people who will get the help they need.

However, let me quickly hasten to add two extremely important "Thou Shalt Nots:"

- Please do not insist that clients who may be eligible for government aid must apply for it. Sometimes people have real or imagined reasons for not wanting to do that. Please respect those concerns.
- And similarly, please don't refuse further help to people who apply for and begin receiving government assistance. It might not be enough to meet their needs.

To fulfill the potential of this step we don't need all-or-nothing absolutes. We just need more—more people getting more help.



## Chapter Twelve: Get The Government To Do Its Part

**A simple way exists for your food pantry to communicate information about community needs to the officials who need to know about these needs.**

**N**ot everyone may agree, but some of us believe the government has a role to play in feeding the hungry, housing the homeless and addressing other pressing health and human service problems. In order to fulfill that role, government decision-makers need to know what those needs are.

An amazingly effective but simple way exists for your food pantry to communicate information about community needs to the officials who need to know about these needs. It doesn't involve lobbying or anything else that anyone should find objectionable. All it requires is a little extra copying, addressing a few envelopes and applying some postage stamps.

What you want to duplicate are seven extra copies of your pantry's monthly activity report. Most food pantries I am familiar with compile a report on how many families they have served, how many people were in those households, why they were in need and how much help was provided. Don't include clients' names. Just provide a tally of need and of help provided.

Make seven extra copies of that report each month and mail a copy to each of the following people:

- The President of the United States
- Your two U.S. senators
- Your area's member of the U.S. House of Representatives
- Your state's governor
- Your state senator
- Your state representative.

### **You can raise awareness**

What good will this do? More than you would ever believe! Before I got involved in running food programs I was a lobbyist. I worked with the Illinois General Assembly for six years on poverty law issues for Illinois' Legal Aid Programs. During those years we experimented with a variety of approaches to try to influence the legislative process. From these efforts I learned three very valuable lessons:

- In general, elected officials are abysmally ignorant about the poverty situation in the geographic area they represent and grossly underestimate the magnitude, seriousness, and consequences of the situation.
- In general, elected officials want to do a good job for the people they were elected to serve.

■ As a general rule, elected officials' brains are hardwired to interpret any communication from any source on any topic as a plea, demand, or request for action on that issue. It doesn't matter if the communication asked for or demanded anything or not. The fact that it references an issue that the official could logically be expected to care about, know about and do something about is sufficient to flip all the right switches in their brain to call them to action.

## Letters work

Everyone has probably seen movies or heard stories about legislators or other officials getting giant bags of mail, such as the judge in "The Miracle on 34th Street." It does happen, but not as often as you might think. And when it does happen, it is usually so obvious that it's a campaign orchestrated by some special interest group that the effort has no impact. More often, officials get relatively modest amounts of mail, and a lot of that is so scattered all over the landscape topically that there is no rhyme or reason to it: A fifth grader wants a law naming some obscure beetle the state bug, somebody is worried because they heard on talk radio that Russia faked the fall of communism to throw us off guard, somebody else wants to replace interstate highways with bike paths.

But suppose one day out of the clear blue an official starts regularly hearing from dozens of churches and other respected community organizations about thousands of people in his or her district who don't have enough to eat. Suppose he or she hears from the Methodists, the Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, the Baptists, the Seventh Day Adventists, big churches, little churches, churches of all races, city churches, suburban

churches and rural churches, "Hunger! Hunger! Hunger!" What do you suppose he or she is going to do? Ignore it? Not likely!

They are going to take a very big interest in the subject of hunger and will begin exploring and supporting opportunities to help address the problem. For example, every year most of America's major anti-hunger advocacy organizations unify around a single omnibus package of legislation they want to get the Congress to approve and the President to sign. Those groups often send out legislative alerts noting which legislators will co-sponsor their package and urge people to get their area's legislators to join that list.

Recently, this package had 21 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. Three of the 21 were the three relatively conservative gentlemen who represent the part of western Michigan my food bank serves. And why are they so interested in reducing hunger? Because every month they are hearing from the people like you and me that hunger is a very significant problem.

We want to feed the needy but we want social justice as well. We want schools to equip children with the skills it takes to succeed in the workplace. We want there to be jobs for people who want to work. We want people to have equal opportunities without regard to race or other irrelevant characteristics. We want jobs to pay wages that families can live on. We want a viable safety net out there to catch those of us who might ever stumble and fall.

So while we feed those who come to us for that, let us also speak out for justice and for a day when perhaps no one will be in such need.

You can add your voice to that most necessary chorus by simply making extra copies of your monthly reports and mailing them to the offi-

**So while we feed those who come to us for that, let us also speak out for justice and for a day when perhaps no one will be in such need.**

cial noted above. It isn't lobbying. It cannot possibly get you or your organization into any sort of trouble with the government. All you are doing is shining a light on an issue that otherwise lives in the shadows and is easily ignored. By shining that light you will once again—as with every chapter in this guidebook—have multiplied the impact of your anti-hunger efforts to many times the power and impact they have ever had before. And it is precisely that gentle multiplication of impact that will make ending hunger in America something we will be able to proudly tell our grandchildren about. How will we do it? By simply doing a lot of good things even better.

## Conclusion

Ending hunger in America is within reach. But knowing how to end it and getting communities and anti-hunger organizations to switch from their old traditional practices to these new methods has proven far more difficult than I ever could or would have imagined possible. Ultimately I believe that that is how and why the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations will ultimately prevail. Americans like to succeed in what they do.

# Chapter Thirteen: Evaluate Your Food Pantry

## Evaluate how cost-effectively the pantry mobilizes support, how effectively it employs its food money...

This is a tool that pantries can use to evaluate themselves, or which a person or group can use to assess the work of one or many pantries. It evaluates how cost-effectively the pantry mobilizes support, how effectively it employs its food money, how it renders its services, and whether or not it does any of the extra things the last few chapters of this guidebook have recommended.

A perfect pantry—one doing everything 100 percent as we have recommended—will score 127.6 points. A less perfect pantry will score less. But anything above 70 points is well within range of making ending hunger possible. That is my food bank's current belief and goal: To get the average of pantry scores across our 40-county service area up to at least 70 points.

Pantries that score below 40 points simply must make changes in how they operate if they want to have the amount of resources they employ justified by the amount of hunger they reduce. It is never wrong or bad to give a hungry person food, but if the way it is done humiliates that person without meeting their needs and costs so much that it leaves other people un-served, we can do better than that!

When we began using the score sheet in early 1997 we were quite

frankly horrified by what we discovered. I have scored pantries who got as few as 0.006 points! Yikes! You wouldn't think it was possible for anyone to score that low without their whipping and cursing clients and making them eat slop from a livestock trough, but indeed scores that low are very possible. In fact, widespread use of the score sheet around the country suggests that the average food pantry in the United States that has not been specifically challenged to employ the Waste Not Want Not methods likely scores around 0.12 points. Our pantries averaged 0.4 points in 1997.

Needless to say, our scoring was not always well received. I joke about having been thrown out of more churches than bars! But it's true. Not many people readily take to the idea that some aspect of their church's operations is badly in need of improvement. And so some people and pantries rebuffed this whole idea as some kind of evil attack on their cherished traditions.

But the traditions they indignantly defended seemed pretty darned curious to me, particularly in the context of a faith-based organization supposedly fulfilling scriptural mandates. Does the Bible, the Tanakh, the Koran or any other major religious text mandate

once a month aid to the poor, or a three-day food box, or making the widow, the orphan, the poor and the stranger show proof of income and a picture identification? None of that junk comes from Scripture! And if it doesn't come from Scripture, it shouldn't be a tradition of a supposedly faith-based organization!

### Alternate score sheet

So in time we developed a second score sheet, one that goes at these critical food pantry issues from the perspective of "How would you do this or that part of the pantry's operations if you wanted to draw your inspiration and guidance solely from God?" It asks you to hold up your pantry's practices to the light of your faith's teachings to assess how closely they align with those teachings.

By my reading of the world's major religious faiths' main scriptural texts I have found that their great teachings mandate practices remarkably similar to those our Waste Not Want Not research identified as able to end hunger. That is, if faith-based food pantries in America will realign their policies and procedures as their faith's teachings demand, we appear to have the wherewithal to work a miracle: We can end hunger.

Conversely, if pantry services in America continue to be largely rendered without regard to what the Bible and the other great teachings mandate we likely will flounder around until kingdom come without making much of an additional dent in hunger.

So it really doesn't matter which score sheet people use. They both encourage practices that very cost-effectively mobilize food resources and render aid in ways most likely to bless recipients and meet their needs.

And isn't that what we ought to do?

# Food Pantry Best Practices Evaluation Score Sheet

Agency's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Scored \_\_\_\_\_ Current Score \_\_\_\_\_ Goal Score \_\_\_\_\_

*In each of nine criteria under "Current," a pantry is scored according to its current practices. These nine numbers are then multiplied together to determine the pantry's overall score. If you are not happy with that total, please go back through the score sheet indicating, under "Goal," what practices could, should or will be changed, and then multiply these nine scores together to see just how easy it is to improve the pantry's effectiveness by making very achievable changes in its operations.*

## 1 Tax Savings For Supporters

**Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?**

- Most of the support it receives from individuals is in the form of money (checks or money orders) and not as food (canned good drives or collections) .....Score 1.25
- Two-thirds of the pantry's support from individuals is in the form of money and one third is in the form of food .....Score 1.17
- Half of the pantry's support from individuals is in the form of money and half is in the form of food .....Score 1.13
- One-third of the pantry's support from individuals is in the form of money and two-thirds is in the form of food Score 1.08
- Most of the pantry's support from individuals is in the form of food and not as money .....Score 1

Current score for #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #1: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Translation of Pantry Funds Into Food

**What percentage of this pantry's food acquisition funds are spent on acquiring donated goods (0¢-18¢ per lb.) from a food bank?**

- 90-100 percent .....Score 10
- 75-89 percent .....Score 8
- 50-74 percent .....Score 6
- 25-49 percent .....Score 3
- Below 25 percent .....Score 1

Current score for #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #2: \_\_\_\_\_

## 3 Client Screening

**Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?**

- We ask pretty much only who they are, where they live and if they are in need (and maybe why) .....Score 1.25
- We require that they prove who they are and where they live .....Score 0.75
- We require that they prove who they are, where they live and why they are in need (their income, etc.) .....Score 0.50
- We require that they prove who they are, where they live, why they are in need, and we check that out (on a computer, with phone calls, etc.) .....Score 0.25

Current score for #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #3: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4 How Food Is Offered to Clients

**Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?**

- Clients are permitted to freely assemble their own food box from whatever goods are available .....Score 2
- Clients are permitted to assemble their own food box by some formula .....Score 1.75
- Clients may pick out some (a small portion ) of what they are given .....Score 1.25
- Only a standardized box is given .....Score 0.50

Current score for #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #4: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5 Quantity of Food Given

**Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?**

- Clients are able to take as much as they feel they need . .Score 1.5
- Clients are given or permitted to take whatever the pantry determines it thinks they need on a case-by-case basis .Score 1
- Clients are given a standardized amount unrelated to their need, but then are referred elsewhere or are invited to return for more help when needed .....Score 0.75
- Clients are given a standardized amount unrelated to their need and are denied or discouraged from seeking more . .Score 0.25

Current score for #5: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #5: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6 Frequency of Help Provided

Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?

- Clients are provided food as often as they need help .Score 1.5
- Clients are permitted to come back only by some schedule, but more than once a month .Score 1
- Clients are served as often as once per month or every 30 days .Score 0.75
- Clients are not permitted to draw food even as often as monthly .Score 0.25

Current score for #6: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #6: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7 Variety of Goods Offered to Clients

Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?

- Variety of goods offered or given to clients includes most goods available from the food bank .Score 1.5
- Variety of goods offered or given to clients includes more than half of the variety of goods available from the food bank .Score 1.25
- Variety of goods offered or given to clients includes about half of the variety of goods available from the food bank .Score 1
- Variety of good offered or given to clients includes less than half but more than one quarter of the goods available from the food bank .Score 0.75
- Variety of goods offered or given to clients includes less than one-quarter of the variety of goods available from the food bank .Score 0.25

Current score for #7: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #7: \_\_\_\_\_

## 8 Ensuring That Clients Are Aware Of Other Help They Might Qualify For

Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?

- Pantry provides clients with information on food stamps, etc. .Score 1.10
- Pantry is prepared to and does answer clients questions about other aid .Score 1.05
- Pantry provides no referral advice .Score 1
- Pantry requires application for food stamps, etc. as a condition of further service from the pantry .Score 0.75
- Pantry denies service to clients who are receiving food stamps, WIC or other similar aid .Score 0.5

Current score for #8: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #8: \_\_\_\_\_

## 9 Informing Elected Officials of Hunger's Realities

Which of the below best describes this food pantry's normal practices?

- Pantry sends key government officials updates at least quarterly .Score 1.10
- Pantry sends key government officials updates at least annually .Score 1.05
- Pantry does not send information on its work or workload to key government officials .Score 1

Current score for #9: \_\_\_\_\_

Your goal for #9: \_\_\_\_\_

**Scoring:** You should have a total of nine numbers. In order to calculate the pantry's total score, you need to multiply down the column. For example, if the nine scores were: 1.25, 6, 0.75, 1.75, 1, 0.75, 1, 1.05 and 1. You would multiply 1.25 x 6 x 0.75 x 1.75 x 1 x 0.75 x 1 x 1.05 x 1, for a total of 7.75. That (7.75) is the pantry's total score.

### Current

Please enter this pantry's total score here: \_\_\_\_\_

The highest score possible is 127.6. Such a pantry is truly making optimal use of available resources and is truly blessing its clients. Conversely, the lowest score available is 0.0009. Pantries on the low end are costing their communities more or are blessing clients far less than high-end pantries are. In general,

Pantries with a score above 100 are model programs

Scores of 80 to 99 indicate excellent programs

Scores of 60 to 79 indicate very good programs

Scores of 40 to 59 indicate good programs

Scores of under 39 indicate programs needing improvement

### Raising Your Score

If this pantry wishes to raise its score, please go back over the score sheet and rescore the pantry under "Goal." Simple changes like referring clients on to other pantries for more help or letting them pick out a few odds and ends will greatly increase the score. Each change that increases the score represents increased likelihood of the pantry's making optimal use of resources and of its services really blessing its clients.

### Goal

Please enter this pantry's goal score here: \_\_\_\_\_

And there is no need to stop here! The more you raise your score now or later, the more help you will be able to give people and the more that help will really truly bless them as you always wished it would.

# What Does Your Faith's Scripture Say?

As all levels of government turn more and more responsibility for providing human services over to the religious and charity sector, it is becoming increasingly important that this shift signifies more than just a different address and different pictures on the wall. This improvement should represent a shift from efforts that are not Scripture-based to services that are Scripture-based.

To achieve that, it is vital that faith-based service providers determine what their God demands of them when they serve the needy. To aid groups in making that determination, we have assembled collections of what all the world's major faiths' guiding Scripture says on the subjects, and have posted those collections on our Web site at [www.wmgleaners.org](http://www.wmgleaners.org).

## We urge you to look into what your faith's Scripture admonishes on the following subjects:

**1** How often should you provide help to someone who asks for it?

- Once a month
- Three times a year
- As often as they ask for it

**2** What attitude are you called to have in your dealings with the needy?

- Are you to be their master? (That is, do you enforce rules on them that they have no choice but to submit to in order to get help.)
- Are you to be their servant? (That is, do you invite them to help themselves to help on their terms.)

**3** What criteria and procedures does Scripture permit you to use in either approving or disapproving their request for help?

- Make them prove their need and worthiness
- Check with other agencies to make sure they aren't abusers
- Help them just because they asked

**4** How much food should you give them?

- A set amount
- As much as *you* think they need
- As much as *they* think they need

**5** What types of food should you offer them?

- What you think people like them should eat
- A free choice of whatever is available

**6** What expectations or conditions should you place on their obtaining subsequent or ongoing help?

- They must be actively looking for a job
- They should be required to attend specific religious services
- They should attend cooking or budgeting classes

Please review what your faith's Scripture says about helping the needy and revise your pantry's policies and procedures as needed. When you are doing God's work you really need to do it God's way!

## Appendix 1: Gap between food resources and unmet need

<i>State</i>	<i>State's likely total annual food assistance shortfall (in lbs.)</i>	<i>Estimated percentage of eligible persons participating in Food Stamps program</i>	<i>Number of eligible persons NOT receiving Food Stamps</i>	<i>Annual amount of Food Stamps non-participating people could receive</i>
Alabama	149,760,000	60%	314,711	\$309,675,296
Alaska	13,104,000	68%	23,853	\$30,913,107
Arizona	171,990,000	51%	447,872	\$478,327,820
Arkansas	124,488,000	62%	190,220	\$187,176,512
California	1,077,570,000	54%	1,455,265	\$1,536,759,332
Colorado	102,024,000	52%	192,049	\$186,671,553
Connecticut	65,286,000	66%	92,991	\$84,807,820
Delaware	17,082,000	55%	37,658	\$39,315,427
District of Columbia	22,698,000	77%	24,427	\$26,967,293
Florida	481,572,000	48%	1,128,091	\$1,069,430,505
Georgia	219,726,000	54%	639,066	\$667,184,981
Hawaii	32,292,000	85%	17,714	\$27,634,574
Idaho	34,398,000	49%	84,852	\$79,421,014
Illinois	372,996,000	73%	352,823	\$389,516,652
Indiana	129,168,000	71%	192,046	\$198,191,646
Iowa	62,478,000	61%	98,341	\$95,587,818
Kansas	62,946,000	54%	136,897	\$119,921,642
Kentucky	133,614,000	78%	141,781	\$137,810,833
Louisiana	181,818,000	73%	242,371	\$253,035,567
Maine	39,780,000	82%	29,103	\$27,240,750
Maryland	93,600,000	55%	206,362	\$210,489,055
Massachusetts	151,632,000	45%	357,133	\$308,563,200
Michigan	269,568,000	76%	264,514	\$247,585,498
Minnesota	76,050,000	63%	137,799	\$133,940,782
Mississippi	120,042,000	57%	268,398	\$251,220,249
Missouri	128,934,000	79%	157,243	\$150,952,976
Montana	28,548,000	62%	43,712	\$42,488,315
Nebraska	42,354,000	61%	63,450	\$57,105,398
Nevada	43,992,000	46%	133,378	\$134,444,692
New Hampshire	17,082,000	55%	36,641	\$32,536,885
New Jersey	159,354,000	50%	339,047	\$337,690,812
New Mexico	76,752,000	62%	119,390	\$113,182,179
New York	629,460,000	58%	1,039,092	\$1,209,502,606
North Carolina	272,610,000	51%	623,958	\$621,462,480
North Dakota	17,082,000	63%	23,294	\$21,523,788
Ohio	257,166,000	63%	502,378	\$518,454,473
Oklahoma	114,426,000	61%	242,787	\$233,075,048
Oregon	88,920,000	84%	75,881	\$72,846,080
Pennsylvania	269,568,000	69%	369,617	\$354,832,362
Rhode Island	27,144,000	66%	38,156	\$35,256,368
South Carolina	132,912,000	61%	288,060	\$283,451,427
South Dakota	19,890,000	65%	27,556	\$27,115,407
Tennessee	196,326,000	69%	327,209	\$325,900,655
Texas	786,708,000	49%	1,952,043	\$1,967,659,035
Utah	53,352,000	54%	89,981	\$87,461,640
Vermont	14,274,000	73%	15,288	\$13,942,244
Virginia	164,268,000	58%	285,246	\$263,567,208
Washington	153,738,000	64%	232,216	\$225,713,830
West Virginia	68,562,000	89%	30,514	\$26,730,697
Wisconsin	109,278,000	64%	166,904	\$132,188,315
Wyoming	10,296,000	58%	18,325	\$17,372,133
United States	8,089,380,000	60%	14,149,842	\$14,263,040,736