



# Agency Manual Pantries

Helping Create Happy, Healthy  
and More Stable Lives.





**Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (the Food Bank) is a proud member of Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger relief organization. Feeding America helps our Food Bank source donations from national sources, provides support, sources donations from national retailers and distributes food through its network of more than 200 Food Banks covering all 50 states.**

As a member of our network, you are part of a community of 365 agencies, partners and programs throughout 11 counties working to accomplish the same goal - to end hunger. This manual provides information about the policies and responsibilities of membership with Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to representatives, staff and/or volunteers of network agencies.

**Thank you for being part of our team!**

# Agency Manual Pantries

This manual communicates important policies, standards and procedures to our agency network. It is intended to be a guide and does not replace the more detailed policies that have been shared with our agencies. The information in this manual may be subject to change. The most current version of the manual is uploaded to our agency resources webpage.

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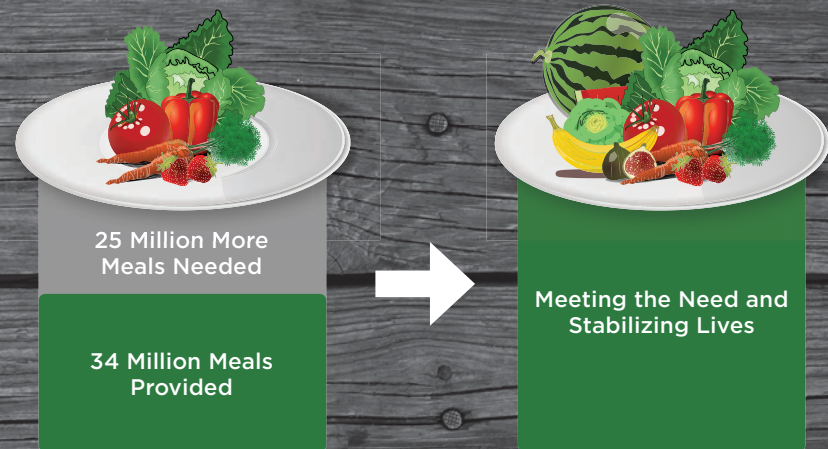
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Together,  
we can  
solve  
hunger.

Today

2025



## General Information

### Program Descriptions

**Food banks** are organizations that have the capacity to source, store and distribute large quantities of food. Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's warehouse is approximately 94,000 square feet and we distribute more than 34 million meals each year. Food Banks may or may not provide direct services to the community.

**Food pantries** are organizations that distribute grocery and personal care items to the community. This manual is intended for food pantry programs.

**Onsite feeding programs** are organizations that cook and serve meals. Onsite programs may serve a specific population, such as residents in a shelter, or may provide meals to the community through a soup kitchen program. Onsite feeding programs have their own manual, as their operations differ significantly from food pantries.

**Backpack programs** provide meals and snacks for children to eat on the weekends. A manual for backpack programs is in production as their operations differ from food pantries and onsite feeding programs.

### Membership

All agencies in our network are required to meet minimum requirements set forth by Feeding America, the Food Bank, the IRS and other oversight organizations such as the USDA and/or PA Department of Agriculture. New agencies are thoroughly vetted through an application and screening process. Once membership has been granted, agencies are expected to sign an agreement and adhere to all criteria in the agreement to retain membership.

The agreement is at-will, meaning it can be terminated by the agency or by the Food Bank for any reason by providing the other party with written notification. Agencies wishing to cancel their membership are expected

to complete a cancellation of membership form, which can be found on our agency resources webpage. Agencies with multiple programs, such as a food pantry and a soup kitchen, that wish to deactivate one program but retain their overall membership must submit a program deactivation form.

The Food Bank reviews the membership status of each agency once per year and requires all agencies to renew their commitment to providing food to the community. Agencies are asked to sign and return a new agency membership agreement, pay an annual membership fee and complete specific annual training requirements, which are subject to change.

### Use of Product

Agencies must use Food Bank product and/or product that comes from the Food Bank's sourcing programs, for one purpose: to distribute to eligible individuals and families as part of the approved Food Bank program. Product cannot be sold, exchanged, bartered, used for general operating purposes, fundraising events, political events or special activities, and under no circumstances should staff or volunteers be using or consuming product for personal reasons.

If an agency has multiple programs, such as a food pantry and a soup kitchen, and wants to use Food Bank product for another purpose, the agency must submit a written request to the Network Compliance and Training Manager for approval.

### Liability

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act encourages donations of food and grocery products to non-profit organizations for distribution to individuals in need. This act protects donors from liability when they donate product to a non-profit organization and protects non-profits from civil and criminal liability if a product donated in good faith causes harm to a recipient. Agency representatives are responsible for double-checking product dates, have appropriate food safety training and inspect the condition of all products before distributing them. The full text of the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act can be found on our agency resources webpage.

### Service Areas

Agencies are given the flexibility to design their own service areas, but the Food Bank strongly encourages agencies to consider having an open, flexible service area that allows individuals and families to get help when and where they need it. We may request that an agency modify or expand its service area if a neighborhood, zip code or

community is unserved or underserved by other agencies in the network.

All agencies are expected to provide food to any eligible individual or family that walks through their doors. If an agency has a specific service area, the pantry coordinator is responsible for providing a referral to another organization. The Food Bank's Get Help webpage is a useful referral tool.

### Income Eligibility for Individuals and Families

Our goal is to provide food assistance to individuals and families who need it. We hope to create a safe environment in which people can ask for help, free from restrictive guidelines and excessive paperwork requirements. Agencies are not required or encouraged to collect proof of income unless it is required by a specific program, such as CSFP. We encourage agencies to use their judgement in emergency situations and/or extenuating circumstances.

### Confidentiality and Right to Privacy

All agencies are expected to keep personal information confidential. We work in communities where individuals know one another and it is our responsibility to help maintain the privacy of the people we serve. We strongly recommend developing a privacy policy at the agency level to maintain consistency among agency staff and volunteers and to ensure that participant information is kept safe.

We strongly recommend against copying personal documents and collecting social security or driver's license numbers. This information is not required or necessary to provide food to a family, and it presents opportunities for identity theft, which can be devastating for the individual involved. A sample privacy policy can be found on the agency resources webpage.

### Agency Portal

The Agency Portal is the website where members can view order histories, access the inventory, build orders, submit monthly statistics reports, view invoices and statements and review grant balances. This website is where we communicate important messages, closures and opportunities to our network. Each agency is given unique credentials that provide access to the portal. To get to the login screen, visit [pittsburghfoodbank.org/agencyresources](https://pittsburghfoodbank.org/agencyresources). Instructions for how to navigate the portal are available for review on the agency resources webpage.

## Civil Rights and Expectations for Service

The individuals and families served by our agencies deserve to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Agency representatives are not permitted to engage in any form of discrimination towards an individual due to race, color, citizenship, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation including gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran. Staff and volunteers who represent our agencies are expected to be compassionate, understanding, thoughtful and must conduct all interactions with individuals and families served in accordance with local, state and federal civil rights laws. Civil rights training is provided to agencies on an annual basis and all staff or volunteers who interact with the individuals and families served by the agency are required to participate.

## Harassment

Our agencies are expected to create an inclusive environment that is free from all forms of harassment, in which all individuals served, agency staff, agency volunteers, Food Bank staff, Food Bank volunteers and other community members are treated courteously and with respect at all times. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, the use of labels and/or slurs, jokes, pranks, innuendo, hostile or aggressive comments, acts of intimidation, unwelcome sexual advances, stereotyping, sharing unwanted graphic or inappropriate material and unwanted physical contact.

## Proselytizing

We recognize that many agencies are affiliated with religious institutions and we are proud of our relationships with those organizations and communities. However, as a non-denominational organization our agencies are strictly prohibited from engaging in proselytizing and/or any activity that acts as an attempt to convert someone from one religion, belief or opinion to another. We want all individuals, regardless of their religious affiliation, to feel comfortable accessing food assistance from any agency in our network. If agencies have questions or concerns about whether a particular practice qualifies as proselytizing, please contact one of our network compliance coordinators for clarification.

## Program Updates and Staffing Changes

It is important that we always have up-to-date

information about our agencies. When there are changes to personnel, hours of operation, organizational activities relating to the food program and/or events that may affect the operations of the program such as flooding, fire and/or building damage, agencies should notify Food Bank staff immediately.

## Monetary Donations

Agencies are prohibited from charging a fee for services and cannot request monetary donations from the individuals and families served. Placing donation cans on registration tables and/or posting signs asking families to donate is strictly prohibited. The people we serve should not be made to feel as though a donation is expected or required to receive food. If a donation is given that has not been solicited, the agency must put that donation back into the operating costs for the food program.

## Inclement Weather Policy

If the Food Bank must close due to severe inclement weather, we will change our outgoing message to indicate the closure and will alert local news organizations. All agencies scheduled for pickup or delivery will be notified by a member of our staff. It is important to keep agency contact information current and to check messages often in inclement weather situations.

If the Food Bank is open for business but an agency cannot pick up an order or receive a delivery due to inclement weather, an agency representative must notify the transportation supervisor, operations manager or a member of the network development team immediately. Agencies are expected to notify the Food Bank if they are closing due to inclement weather. We provide referrals to individuals and families in need and should be aware of temporary closures across our service area.

### Closures

The Food Bank is closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day and the day before or after

*Agencies are alerted to the Food Bank's closures in the Agency Update newsletter, via email and on the Agency Portal.*



# Sources of Food, Inventories and Ordering

## Sources of Food

The product on our inventory comes from a variety of sources. In the 2016-17 fiscal year, 54 percent of our product was donated, 19 percent was from government commodity programs, 17 percent was purchased from wholesale providers and 10 percent was purchased with funding from the State Food Purchase Program.

The Food Bank's goal is to source enough produce to make it 50 percent of our product mix. In the 2016-17 fiscal year, 83 percent of produce on inventory was donated from local farmers, 15 percent was purchased with funds provided by the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) and 2 percent was gleaned from leftover harvests. We strongly encourage agencies to take advantage of all our inventories and build nutritionally balanced orders.

## Fee Structure

The Food Bank has a fee structure that enables our agency network to access food at discounted rates. Our organization pays for the transportation costs associated with bringing in loads of food, and we ask our members to help us recoup some of those costs by charging a shared maintenance fee for donated product. Current shared maintenance fee rates are available on our agency resources webpage.

## Our Inventories

Our inventory consists of food and non-food items that come from a variety of sources and agencies have access to the inventory based on the type of program they operate. For example, a soup kitchen program may have access to some commercial-sized food products that are not appropriate for a food pantry program. Agency accounts are set up on an individual basis, meaning agencies are permitted to order any of the products on their personalized shopping list.

All agencies, regardless of program type or location, have access to two sections of our inventory: purchased and donated. Our purchased inventory (PUR) consists of products that are purchased by the Food Bank and are made available for our agencies to order at wholesale costs. Our donated inventory (DON) consists of products that were donated to our organization from individuals, manufacturers, retail stores or through food drives. The Food Bank charges a shared maintenance fee for all donated product.

Food pantries in specific counties may also have access to free commodities through the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) or The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The Food Bank administers these programs on behalf of Allegheny County and Lawrence County. Partner distribution organizations (PDOs) or other community partners administer those funds in Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Greene, Fayette, Indiana, Somerset and Washington Counties.

We strive to provide an inventory that has a variety of options at different price points. The availability and quantities of inventory items are subject to change.



## Accessing the Inventory

Agencies are encouraged to pick up product from our warehouse but we do offer a delivery service for those that do not have the capacity to pick up. Regardless of the transportation method, all agencies access our inventory and place orders by logging into the Agency Portal. Once logged in, agencies can download a PDF version of the shopping list to print a paper copy of the inventory, or they can click the green Order Entry button to start placing an order.

## Placing an Order for Pickup

Pickup times are scheduled through the Agency Portal when the order is placed. All pickup orders must be placed two business days prior to the pickup date. Instructions for placing a pickup order are available on the agency resources webpage. The Food Bank's agency dock area, the space in our warehouse where agencies come to pick up food, is closed on Mondays.

Agencies are expected to bring their own staff and/or volunteers to pick up food. The Food Bank's staff will stage orders on the dock but will not help agencies lift food into vehicles. Agencies picking up refrigerated and/or frozen products must have a refrigerated vehicle or a passive refrigeration device such as a freezer blanket to help keep food cold during transport. Food may not be transported in open-bed vehicles without a cover or tarp for food safety reasons.

The agency dock area is part of our warehouse and there are rules that must be followed while agencies are on the dock. Agency representatives must load their food order before going into shop-thru, and must be mindful of the amount of time spent on their dock. Agencies may not eat, drink, use cell phones, wear open-toed shoes, walk into the warehouse or have more than two people in shop-thru at one time. A full list of the agency dock rules, which are subject to change, is available on the agency resources webpage.

## Placing an Order for Delivery

Delivery dates must be scheduled in advance with the Food Bank's transportation supervisor (ext. 544). Any orders that are placed without prior scheduling will be deleted. We charge a fee for each delivery to help cover transportation costs. Instructions for placing an order for delivery can be found on the agency resources webpage.

Agencies place two separate orders for delivery. The first order, for dry product, non-food items and CSFP boxes and cheese can be started ten days before the delivery date. The agency will have two full days to build that order, and must

check out by 7 a.m. seven days before the delivery date. The second order, for produce, frozen items and refrigerated product, can be started two days before the delivery date. This order must be checked out by 7 a.m. on the day before the delivery date. A timetable with order timeframes is available for review on the agency resources webpage.

When placing an order for delivery, the system will prompt agencies to select a time. This is NOT the time when you should expect your delivery. Please call the transportation supervisor between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. the day before delivery to receive an appropriate delivery window. When the truck arrives, agency staff and/or volunteers are expected to unload all items. The driver will provide the pantry coordinator with an invoice that should be signed once all product has been reviewed and accounted for. If adjustments need to be made or product is missing, the pantry coordinator is expected to tell the driver prior to the driver's departure.

All agencies should take temperatures of an assortment of frozen and refrigerated items using an infrared thermometer. This practice ensures that temperatures have remained in the appropriate range (below 41°F for refrigerated products and below 0°F for frozen foods. Record these temperatures on the provided temperature logs and keep on file at your agency.

## Shop-Thru

Shop-Thru is a refrigerated room located directly behind the Agency Dock. When the Food Bank gets donations of assorted products in quantities too small to put on inventory, that product is sent to Shop-Thru. Agencies may access shop-thru in three ways: when picking up an order, by scheduling a Shop-Thru only appointment or by requesting Shop-Thru on a delivery. Agencies receiving a delivery may be limited to items/quantities of products that will fit on the truck, which means we cannot guarantee that delivery shop-thru requests will be filled. Shop-Thru product is free to all agencies. The items change frequently and may be near the end of their shelf-life.

## Product Feedback

Quality is important to us, and we want to know if an agency receives product that cannot be distributed. We inspect as much of the food that comes through our warehouse as possible, but we cannot open every case of product. We rely on agencies to provide feedback and to document situations where food has spoiled. The Food Bank may offer reimbursement for damaged, spoiled and/

or otherwise undistributable/unusable items. We encourage all agencies to use the product feedback form located on the right side of the Agency Portal.

## Distressed Produce

Our goal is to rescue and re-distribute produce that is close to expiration but still safe for consumption, rather than allowing good food to go to waste. We strive to provide the freshest produce possible but recognize that occasionally some items may not meet our standards. Spoilage is a natural process for produce, and some items grow mold or break down more quickly than others. If an agency receives a load of produce where more than 20 percent needs to be thrown away please alert our staff immediately, take pictures of the product and complete the product feedback form on the Agency Portal.

## Choose Healthy Options Program (CHOP)

Agencies are encouraged to select items based on the nutritional value they bring to the individuals and families served. Food orders should be well balanced, consisting of fresh produce and protein in addition to shelf stable items. Our Choose Healthy Options Program (CHOP) helps agencies identify the nutritional value of items on our inventory. Each product is ranked into the following categories:

**1 - choose frequently**

**2 - choose occasionally**

**3 - choose sparingly**

**NR - not rated** (*products in assorted boxes and in shop-thru*)

**MC - minimal nutritional content**

**NF - non-food**

As agencies build orders, we recommend considering the CHOP ranking before selecting a particular product. There may be another option on inventory that has greater nutritional value.

## Value Added Processing (VAP)

When the Food Bank receives a large load of donated product that needs to be packaged in quantities more appropriate for our food pantries, we pay a farmer or processor to sort and package the product for us. We make every effort to cover the cost of those fees, but reserve the right to charge our agencies an additional shared maintenance fee to help cover the costs. There is a VAP column on the inventory in the Agency Portal.



## Fees, Billing, Payments

### Invoices

An invoice is generated for each order and provided to the agency representative at the time of pickup or delivery. Invoices show the name of the product, the quantity and cost, as well as any grants that may have been applied. The agency representative should check the product received to make sure the invoice is correct. Copies of all invoices can be found on the Agency Portal under the My Docs tab.

### Statements

Agencies can monitor balances by checking the portal for monthly statements. Statements are only generated if a balance is due. To view statements, visit the Agency Portal and click on the My Docs tab. Then click the Statements tab.

### Payments

Agencies receive an invoice when the product is picked up or delivered and are expected to pay the full balance within 30 days. Agencies that do not pay their balance before 30 days may be restricted from ordering product that will add to the current balance. Agencies with balances exceeding 90 days past due may not be allowed to order any type of product until the balance is paid in full or payment arrangements have been made and are honored. The Food Bank accepts cash, check and money orders. We are not able to accept credit or debit cards at this time.

### Funds on Account

Agencies wishing to avoid overdue balances may write a check payable to Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to put funds on account. Orders are applied against the funds on account, until funds are gone and no balance is accumulated. Agencies are able to view available funds on the Agency Portal by visiting the Grants tab. To ensure that funds go onto the appropriate account, please include the program's reference number (ex: PCOM2221-1) on the memo line of the check.

### Grant Funding

Agencies are expected to have their own financial resources to support their program. However, we do provide grants to agencies when we receive funding from donors, foundations and/or other sources. Agencies do not need to apply for these grants – they will be automatically awarded to programs that meet the criteria for the grant. The amount of funding is always based on service numbers and the stipulations of the donor. There is no guarantee that we will continue to receive the same funding, the same amount of funding that agencies will continue to get the same grants year after year.

When agencies are given a grant, the agency's primary contact will receive an email notification including the amount of the grant, the source (unless the donor wishes to remain anonymous), the expiration date, what products can be purchased with the grant and reporting requirements. Agencies may decline grant funding if that is in the best interest of their program. All grant funds are put onto agency accounts as lines of credit and must be spent prior to the expiration date.

## Food Safety

### Commitment to Food Safety

We strive to provide safe and healthy sources of food to individuals and families across southwestern Pennsylvania. The Food Bank has implemented several initiatives to ensure that safe food handling is practiced in our warehouse, and at each of our agencies.

### Food Safety Requirement

All agencies receiving food from the Food Bank are expected to follow safe food handling practices. We require food safety training for at least two key staff or volunteers who are directly involved with food preparation and/or serving, and at least one of the trained individuals must be present during all food service activities.

Food Pantries must have at least two individuals complete the food safety training for food pantries. The training can be found on the agency resources webpage and can be completed anywhere with internet access. The training consists of a series of short videos and a 20 question multiple choice quiz. A certificate will be emailed to the person who took the training within one month. If an individual fails the quiz, it can be retaken immediately.

Food safety certificates are valid for three years for food pantries. The Food Bank's compliance team reviews food safety certifications on a monthly basis and will send reminders three months prior to a certificate's expiration, but it is the agency's responsibility to be aware of their own expiration dates and make efforts to ensure that staff and/or volunteers recertify at the appropriate time.

Any agency that does not meet the food safety requirement will have their ordering privileges suspended until the requirement is met. Food safety is critically important to the safe distribution of food, and programs that do not make attempts to renew food safety training may be subject to termination of membership.

### Food Storage

All products must be stored at least six inches off the ground and six inches away from the wall to avoid water damage from flooding or leaking walls. Product must be stored in a secured area.

Food storage areas must be clean, with no evidence of insects or rodents and no exposed pipes above food and/or non-food products. Floors must be in good condition and free of spills, tripping hazards and cracks that are large enough to house insects. Pallets and/or shelving units should be intact, clean

and free of spills. Metal shelving is ideal for food storage because it is easy to clean and does not absorb liquids.

Cleaning supplies must always be stored away from food. If cleaning supplies must stay in the same space, they must be stored below food items but never above. Personal food items must be well labeled and stored separately from food items that will be distributed.

Food in refrigerators and freezers must also be stored properly. Raw food (refrigerated or frozen) must be stored according to cooking temperatures. Poultry must always be stored below beef, pork or fish. A poster reflecting safe food storage will be provided during your orientation. All refrigerators and freezers must have calibrated thermometers, which must be checked regularly. A best practice is to print a temperature log to post on the refrigerator or freezer and have staff or volunteers mark the temperature when they check the unit.

### Temperature Guidelines

When food reaches an agency, refrigerated products should be no more than 40°F (recommended temperature is 35°F). Food that has a temperature between 40°F and 135°F is in the 'danger zone,' meaning bacteria can replicate quickly. Frozen products should be kept below 0°F. Agencies with multiple refrigerator and freezer units should isolate poultry and other raw meats from ready-to-eat foods to reduce the chance for cross contamination.

### Food Safety During Distribution

Food must be kept off the ground during food distribution and refrigerated and frozen items must be kept in refrigerators and freezers until distribution time. Do not reuse boxes during your distribution that contained raw frozen meat. Agencies that need to pull out larger amounts of refrigerated and/or frozen food must have freezer blankets kept over that product to keep it at safe temperatures. Food pantries must not distribute any frozen product that is thawing or has thawed. All surfaces, including tables and carts, must be wiped down after each distribution.

A best practice is to use the infrared thermometer to take temperatures of refrigerated and frozen products during food distribution activities to ensure that temperatures are remaining within the appropriate temperature zone.

## Temperature Regulators

Insulated freezer blankets can help keep refrigerated and frozen food cold for several hours. Use blankets to cover any refrigerated and/or frozen items that are being distributed. Coolers can also be used, but cannot store as much product as a freezer blanket. Reach out to your network compliance coordinator for more information on how to obtain freezer blankets.

## Food Recalls

All agencies are required to designate a contact person to receive regular email alerts regarding recalled product in our service area. These products do not always come through the Food Bank's warehouse, but agencies may have gotten them through independent donations or food drives.

In the event of a recall where we know the product came through the Food Bank's warehouse, all affected agencies will receive an email notification with specific information about the recall and action steps. These emails will be labeled differently to ensure that they stand out. It is imperative that all agencies receiving critical recall notices follow the instructions and action items listed in the email.

## Pest Control

Agencies are expected to have a pest control prevention plan in the event that an insect or rodent infestation should occur. The Food Bank does not have a defined requirement for how agencies plan for and deal with pest control situations, but we recommend monthly inspections of the property and designation of resources to pay for an exterminator as needed. If a pest situation occurs the Food Bank may temporarily suspend ordering privileges until the situation has been remedied. A sample pest control log is available for review on the agency resources webpage.

## Shelf-Life Guides

Our food safety and nutrition teams have developed a comprehensive shelf-life guide that explains how long product can stay on shelves or in refrigerators/freezers and remain safe to consume. A copy of the shelf-life guide can be found on the agency resources webpage, and it is recommended to have a copy available during distribution in case any questions arise.



# Data Collection, Compliance and Resources for Agencies

## Registration

Food pantries are required to collect specific information from every family that is served. This data illustrates our network's impact and assists in serving and retaining funding for programs. Food pantries can register families in one of two ways:

**Paper Registration** - Families are required to fill in information on a monthly-sign in sheet each time they receive service. The Food Bank has developed a sign-in sheet that allows agencies to collect a signature, along with all required statistical data, making it easy for pantries to calculate their monthly statistics. Food pantries are permitted to create their own sign-in sheets, as long as the following clause is included on the agency's version: "I, the undersigned recipient, acknowledge that I am eligible to receive USDA and State Food Purchase Program Foods due to the fact that my income is within the limits that have been explained to me based on 150 percent of the federal poverty line." A copy of the monthly sign-in sheet is available for download on the agency resources webpage.

**Electronic Registration** - Pantries use an electronic database to track service visits and signatures. The Food Bank offers software that eliminates paperwork and makes registration much faster. Using the online system, food pantries can store family-level data from month to month and use an e-signature function to eliminate the need for paper sign-in sheets. The Food Bank provides access to a client record management system, Link2Feed, to food pantries for free.

## TEFAP Registration

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal food assistance program that provides government commodities to food pantries for free. Agencies must sign a one-time TEFAP agreement to participate in this program. If a food pantry is receiving TEFAP product, families are required to sign a monthly-sign in sheet (or do an electronic signature) each time they receive food, and a TEFAP self-declaration of need form at least once per program year. This form changes annually in July and reflects the income guidelines that qualify a family for the program. If a family's gross income is over the limit for TEFAP they should not sign the TEFAP form or be given TEFAP product. Keep in mind that TEFAP is a self-declaration program meaning agencies cannot require families to present proof of income. Current TEFAP forms can be found on the agency resources webpage.

## Statistics Reports

Agencies are required to submit monthly statistics reports online through the Agency Portal. All agencies must submit statistics by the 10th day of the month that follows the month for which the agency is reporting. For example, January statistics are due by February 10.

Food pantries are required to collect and report specific statistics categories, all of which can be collected through Link2Feed or the monthly-sign in sheets that are provided by the Food Bank. Agencies may collect this data however they choose, as long as the numbers are accurate and reported on time. A guide with instructions for how to submit statistics reports can be found on the agency resources webpage.

The Food Bank's compliance team sends reminder emails to agencies five days prior to the monthly reporting deadline to encourage compliance with this requirement. In the event that an agency cannot submit a report on time, the agency should contact their network compliance coordinator to make arrangements. Agencies that do not submit statistics without prior communication may be suspended from ordering until the statistics are submitted.

Some agencies may be required to submit additional statistics due to grant funding. These reports, along with instructions and deadlines, will be communicated to the affected agencies.

## Volunteer Management

Agencies are encouraged to develop and maintain their own volunteer networks. The Food Bank does not dictate how agencies vet or manage volunteers, but we may be able to provide support to recruit, train and retain them. While not required, we recommend that all agencies develop a code of conduct to set clear expectations for volunteers. A sample code of conduct can be found on the agency resources webpage.



## Monitoring

The Food Bank monitors all agencies a minimum of one time per year. Our compliance team will inspect your storage space, observe distribution practices and review required paperwork. Monitoring visits are typically scheduled in advance, but we may conduct follow up visits or unannounced visits on an as-needed basis.

Agencies participating in federal food assistance programs such as TEFAP or CSFP may be visited by a field representative from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Guidelines for what to expect during those visits can be found on the agency resources webpage.

## Site Visits

Agencies may encounter planned or unplanned visits from other staff who work at the Food Bank. These visits may be prompted by conversations that occur during monitoring or may be based on new program opportunities or strategic initiatives.

## Document Retention

Food pantries are expected to keep registration paperwork on file for certain periods of time, which vary based on the program (ex: the TEFAP document retention policy is different from the CSFP document retention policy). Please contact your compliance coordinator for current guidelines.

## Orientations

All new agencies, and key staff and/or volunteers who are new to existing agencies, are required to participate in the Food Bank's orientation process. We cover important policies and explain how to order product and stay in compliance. Contact your network compliance coordinator for more information about orientations.

## Suspensions

The Food Bank reserves the right to suspend an agency's ordering privileges at any time and for any reason that is deemed appropriate based on the conditions of the Agency Membership Agreement.

## Agency Compliance

If at any point an agency does not meet the requirements set forth in the agency membership agreement, or in accordance with general Food Bank policy and/or applicable local, state or federal laws, our staff will take appropriate action to bring the agency back into compliance. Actions depend on the severity of the compliance issue and may result in a written communication, a follow up visit, an in-person meeting with senior leadership, suspension of membership privileges and/or termination of membership.

## Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a federal nutrition program that provides free monthly groceries to individuals who are over 60 years of age and who meet specific income criteria. The Food Bank provides direct CSFP services to six counties, including Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Greene, Fayette and Somerset. CSFP is administered in the other five

counties in our service area by Partner Distribution Organizations (PDOs) or by other non-profit organizations.

Eligible families receive one box of assorted shelf-stable goods, including canned fruits and vegetables, peanut butter, beans, cereal, pasta, bottled juice, shelf-stable milk, canned meat (tuna, chicken) and a one pound block of american cheese. These boxes are distributed through our pantry and partner network. Agencies interested in participating in the program can call our CSFP coordinators at 412-460-3663, ext. 720.

## Retail Store Donation Program

Donations from retail stores are the single largest opportunity for agencies to acquire food donations. The retail store donation program enables agencies to pick up food on their own, for free. This program keeps food in the community of origin and lengthens the shelf life of the food. All food pantries in good standing with the capacity to pick up and safely transport, store and distribute food may be considered for this program. Opportunities are based on available donations.





## Produce

In order to provide access to fresh, nutritious foods, the Food Bank is committed to making fresh produce 50 percent of our product mix. Agencies are encouraged to order fresh produce from inventory.

Distributing produce can be challenging for food pantries that lack proper refrigeration space or distribute infrequently. Advance Choice is our system for sourcing and distributing fresh produce efficiently across our entire network. Instead of having agencies order produce from inventory, our staff will know ahead of time each agency's preferences and will source produce directly for the agency. Product is delivered just in time for the agency's distribution.

Agencies participating in Advance Choice will receive better quality produce with a longer shelf life, will no longer need to place produce orders and will be able to distribute fresh produce with limited refrigeration. Agencies interested in Advance Choice should contact their network connections coordinator, and refer to the toolkit located on the agency resources webpage.

## Gleaning

Gleaning is a form of food rescue where volunteers go to local farms and gather fresh produce from the fields after the farmers harvest their crops. Depending on the quantities gathered on a glean, this produce will be available for agencies to order from inventory and/or will be available in Shop-Thru.

The majority of our gleaning activity happens with volunteers and the product comes back to the Food Bank, but members are also encouraged to participate in the gleaning process. Our produce and agricultural programs coordinator will connect interested members with farms that are ready to be gleaned, and the member can take all gleaned product back to their facility for distribution, free of charge.

## Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System

The Food Bank is a recipient of Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) funding. The program provides approximately \$1 million to food banks across the state to purchase and distribute Pennsylvania grown or produced items. These items, while funding lasts, are on inventory with a reference number beginning with 'A' (ex: AR22221) and are free to all agencies.

## Agency Needs Grants

We offer support on an as-needed basis to agencies seeking assistance with funds on account, equipment and/or capacity building projects. Applications must be completed online and grants are awarded based on agency need, projected impact and funding availability. Visit the agency resources webpage and scroll to the grant opportunities section to learn more.

## Fundraising

Organizations providing services to the community have a duty to ensure that their programs are sustainable. Agencies that rely heavily on grant support from the Food Bank are strongly encouraged to conduct fundraisers throughout the year to become more financially stable. While agencies are expected to plan and conduct fundraisers on their own, there are opportunities for agencies to participate in planned fundraising events like the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community and The Day of Giving. These events and opportunities will be communicated to the network via email.

## Network Meetings

We believe our network is strongest when agencies work together to solve problems. We hold regular network meetings to facilitate conversations among agencies in similar geographic areas. At these meetings we share policy updates and discuss opportunities for collaboration in the communities we serve. Attendance at network meetings is strongly encouraged, and agencies should come prepared to share ideas.

## Network Development Conference

The Network Development department holds a conference for our member network. This full day event, which usually takes place in the spring, is open to all agencies in good standing and is a good opportunity for learning, networking and problem solving. The conference is also our way of saying thanks to our members for their hard work and dedication to our mission.

## Network Communications

There are several ways the Food Bank keeps in contact with its network of member agencies, the people we serve and the community that supports us.

Member agencies can expect regular email communication from the network development department. These emails communicate important policy changes, opportunities and reminders. We ask all members to read these emails to stay informed.

The CAN (Cooking and Nutrition) newsletter is automatically sent out to food pantries each month. We provide enough for food pantries to distribute one newsletter per family served. This newsletter offers recipes, nutrition facts and fun cooking activities for individuals and families alike.

The Food Bank also has a general newsletter, which can be subscribed to on our website, that keeps recipients informed of events and news that affects our organization and our members.

## Surveys

We occasionally survey our network for various reasons. We value the voices, experiences and ideas of our agencies, and surveys enable us to gather feedback efficiently so we can convert them into practical plans for the future. All surveys are distributed by email and agencies are asked to participate in all surveying efforts. We also survey the individuals and families served by our agencies to get feedback about the service they receive, opportunities for improvement and general needs that could be met by our network.



# Additional Resources for the Families you Serve

## Agency Locator Tool

The Food Bank is committed to providing easy access to all the food assistance programs in our service area. We have an interactive database of agencies on our website that can be used to refer individuals and families to programs. To use the tool, go to [pittsburghfoodbank.org](http://pittsburghfoodbank.org) and click on the Get Help icon and then click on Agency Locator. A box appears where users type in the zip code or neighborhood of the person who needs help. It is important to verify the type of program (food pantry, soup kitchen) before making a referral.

## Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

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## Produce to People

Produce to People provides individuals and families with 30 to 50 pounds of food, mostly consisting of fresh produce. There are 17 distributions monthly throughout the Food Bank service area, and the individuals and families we serve are encouraged to come to as many distributions per month as needed.



## Green Grocer

Green Grocer is a mobile farmers market that sells fresh produce, frozen meats and other items in low income/low access communities in Allegheny County. Green Grocer currently has eleven stops, is open to the public and accepts cash, credit, debit, FMNP vouchers and SNAP benefits.

## Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a federally funded child nutrition program that provides a fixed reimbursement to organizations that offer free summer meals to kids in need. Organizations may choose to participate in the program as a sponsor, site or both. Contact a member of the Food Bank's child nutrition team for more information about SFSP.

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as "food stamps," is a federal nutrition program that helps more than one in seven people in Pennsylvania afford basic food staples. Many of the individuals and families served by members are also eligible for SNAP. Enrolling people into this important program can help to ensure that families become more food secure.

The Food Bank offers one-on-one SNAP application assistance. Agencies can participate in SNAP by distributing flyers and providing information and referrals to the individuals and families they serve. Flyers and other marketing materials can be found on the agency resources webpage.

## Help Outside of the Network

2-1-1 is a national call center hotline that connects individuals to health and human services providers. Individuals in southwestern Pennsylvania that are seeking non-food related help (such as utility assistance, clothing or housing) can call 2-1-1 and be connected with a representative in our service area. 2-1-1 also has a vast online database of providers. Visit [pa211sw.org](http://pa211sw.org) for resources in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence and Washington counties.



## A note of thanks

You are at the heart of our network. Without agencies like yours, we couldn't distribute more than 33 million pounds of food per year to neighbors in need across our service area. Thank you for the countless hours spent serving our community. You are making a difference in the lives of your neighbors, and we look forward to many more years of partnership as we work together to end hunger in our region.





# Agency Manual Pantries

Helping Create Happy, Healthy and More Stable Lives.

412.460.3663  
[pittsburghfoodbank.org](http://pittsburghfoodbank.org)

