



Our Community, Our Food Bank

## Guidance for Prospective Partners

Connecticut Foodshare partners with a network of 500 pantries and meal programs that serve food insecure neighbors across the state. If your organization offers food assistance to an underserved community, we encourage you to apply for partnership!

### **What does it mean to be a Partner Program?**

Partner programs enter into a formal agreement with Connecticut Foodshare and gain access to food, guidance, and other support to advance our shared mission of alleviating hunger.

### **How do I become a Partner Program?**

Organizations interested in partnership are asked to first share basic information about your food assistance program in a brief pre-application form [here](#). Once you submit the form, our team will contact you to discuss potential for partnership and any next steps.

### **Does Connecticut Foodshare provide food for events or fairs?**

Connecticut Foodshare focuses our resources on food assistance programs that offer regular and reliable year-round service. Connecticut Foodshare does not provide food to organizations that limit their food distributions to one-time events, special occasions, or holidays.

### **Who is eligible to be a Partner Program?**

Connecticut Foodshare prioritizes new partnerships that are open to the public, reaching an underserved community, and in a location where other food assistance options are limited. Whenever possible, we encourage collaboration with established programs to enhance services already available in the community and reduce duplication of efforts. Additionally, eligible partners need to meet Connecticut Foodshare's partnership requirements.

### **What are Connecticut Foodshare's partnership requirements?**

Connecticut Foodshare's partnership guidelines uphold standards set by Feeding America, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Connecticut Department of Social Services, and our organization to support safe, reliable, dignified, and accessible food assistance. Minimally, eligible partners are required to:

- Be recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, charitable organization or be affiliated with a 501(c)(3) umbrella organization\*
- Be incorporated for the purpose of serving people in need
- Distribute food free of charge directly to people in need and without requiring the recipient to pay, pray, or perform work to eat or enter the food distribution setting
- Be committed to serving our community with respect, and not discriminate for any reason
- Follow food safety standards for the transport, storage, and distribution of food
- Provide food to the community on a regular schedule, at least two times per month
- Commit to ordering from Connecticut Foodshare at least 5,000 pounds of product per year (excluding food ordered for Thanksgiving) and placing at least one order per month

- Maintain an up-to-date program listing with Connecticut 2-1-1
- Participate in a formal site inspection at least once every two years
- Maintain appropriate records and report number of people served each month
- Sustain stable program operations and pay any fees assessed by Connecticut Foodshare
- Appoint a primary contact person to regularly communicate with Connecticut Foodshare
- Agree to and sign the Connecticut Foodshare Partnership Agreement

**\* For municipalities:** Connecticut Foodshare can provide food to some municipal entities that do not have a 501(c)(3) designation, such as town social services departments and housing authorities, on a limited basis. These programs are only able to receive government commodities from the food bank through the Federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and must be open to the general public per the guidelines established for TEFAP.

### **How do partners receive food from Connecticut Foodshare?**

Connecticut Foodshare offers partners a variety of food, including shelf-stable, produce, refrigerated, and frozen items. Most of the food distributed by Connecticut Foodshare is surplus food donated by the food industry. Partners place orders using an online system and orders are picked up by appointment Monday through Friday at one of our distribution centers, located in Bloomfield, Bridgeport, and Wallingford. Partners may be eligible to receive regular delivery from Connecticut Foodshare, as our truck schedules allow. To be eligible to receive delivery, orders need to be a minimum of 500 pounds and placed on a regular basis.

### **Can a program get all its food from Connecticut Foodshare?**

Partners typically source most, but not all, of their food supply from Connecticut Foodshare. The quantity and variety of product available from Connecticut Foodshare largely relies on donations from the food industry and can vary throughout the year. To supplement their food supply, many programs organize local food drives, work with local farms, and raise funds to purchase food from retailers.

### **What are the costs involved in partnering with Connecticut Foodshare?**

There are fees involved in partnership with Connecticut Foodshare, including an annual fee of \$50, a “shared maintenance fee” of up to \$0.19 per pound on most donated food, and a per delivery charge of \$50 for partners participating in the delivery program. Additionally, Connecticut Foodshare accesses wholesale pricing to purchase select items in bulk and makes those products available to partners at 100% of our cost through the Grocery Purchasing Program. Thanks to generous support from the community during the pandemic, many of the fees have been temporarily waived. See below for the current fee structure.

<b>Fee structure from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Fee for Partner Programs</b>
Annual Membership	\$0
Delivery (if participating)	\$0
Donated Food	\$0
Produce	\$0
Government Food (if participating)	\$0
Grocery Purchasing Program	100% of cost with no mark-up

## **My organization doesn't currently run a food assistance program and we are looking to launch one. Where do we get started?**

When designing a new program, we encourage you to talk with local community members to understand the strengths and gaps in existing services, and to understand the needs and preferences of the people you seek to serve. We also encourage you to take time to visit other food assistance programs for insight and inspiration. Below are a few tips to help you plan:

- **Space:** The amount of space needed can vary depending on your goals. Pantries come in all sizes, ranging from a well-stocked storage closet to a larger room with expansive shelving and coolers to mimic a grocery store experience.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Programs will need either paid staff time or regular lead volunteers to oversee program operations, including ordering food, recruiting volunteers, serving clients, maintaining inventory, and recordkeeping. The amount of time required will vary depending on how often your program is open and level of services offered. Volunteers from the community (including from local schools, companies, faith groups, and civic organizations), interns from local colleges, and AmeriCorps VISTAs are also excellent sources of support.
- **Distribution Process:** Whenever possible, Connecticut Foodshare recommends a choice model where guests can visually and physically choose the food items they prefer. This approach creates a more welcoming and dignified experience for guests, and it reduces food waste.
- **Food Storage & Shelving:** Food should be stored in a safe and secure location at the program site. Dry goods must be kept at least six inches from the ground, six inches from the ceiling, and four inches away from the wall. Perishable goods must be kept in proper cold storage with thermometers in each unit. Food storage spaces should maintain an ambient temperature of 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Connecticut Foodshare offers food safety training to partners that distribute groceries. Programs that cook meals or provide onsite snacks must have additional food safety certification through ServSafe or a similar certification organization.
- **Pest Control:** Monitoring for pests is essential to maintaining a safe food environment. Connecticut Foodshare partners must maintain a pest control system, either with regular self-checks by program staff or through a paid pest control service. Programs should be prepared to pay for pest control services if/when a pest issue arises.
- **Hours of Operation:** It is important to offer reliable and accessible hours. Connecticut Foodshare requires that all partner programs offer consistent hours, distributing food at least twice per month, every month, on a set schedule. Hours of operation must be posted in a visible location at your program and on Connecticut 2-1-1 to help community members know where and when to get assistance. When selecting your hours of operation, be sure to prioritize hours that are most convenient for the people you serve and avoid duplicating hours of programs nearby. We encourage partnerships with organizations that already distribute food in your community. You can review food assistance programs in your area on [Connecticut 2-1-1](#).
- **Guest Intake Information:** Connecticut Foodshare encourages programs to minimize the information collected from program guests, as it can have a significant impact on a person's willingness to seek assistance. Connecticut Foodshare considers self-declaration – a person stating they are in need – as sufficient proof of need. Additional income requirements will apply for programs participating in federal commodity

programs available through Connecticut Foodshare.

- **Connection to Other Resources:** In addition to providing food, we recommend that program staff and volunteers take steps to connect guests with other community services. There are many ways to do this depending on your goals and resources, such as providing resource flyers from other nonprofits, making referrals, and more.

### **What does it cost to run a new food assistance program?**

The costs of running a food assistance program will vary depending on your space and goals. Many new programs decide to start out small, and then expand in time once they have more experience with the basics processes of running the program. Basic expenses include:

#### **One-Time Costs:**

- Shelving to store and display food
- Tables to display food
- Refrigeration (glass-front is recommended; some spaces may need electrical upgrades to accommodate commercial units)
- Infrared thermometer and in-unit thermometers for cold storage
- Computer with printer for guest intake, reporting, and referrals
- Chairs for waiting area
- Carts and U-boats to move food
- Shopping carts for guests to mimic a grocery store experience
- Signage to post program name and hours of operation
- Vehicle to pick-up food (if applicable)
- Thermal blankets for transporting perishable items (if applicable)
- Guest intake and/or inventory software (optional, many partners use Microsoft Excel to start)

#### **Ongoing Costs:**

- Staffing
- Rent and Utilities
- Supplies (such as grocery bags, office supplies, cleaning supplies, etc.)
- Pest Control Service (as needed)
- Vehicle operating costs (if applicable)
- Food purchases from Connecticut Foodshare and other sources (as needed)

**Thank you for your interest in partnership  
and helping your community!**