

**CHARITY FOOD PROGRAMS
THAT CAN END HUNGER
IN AMERICA**

**An action agenda presented by
Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank
(formerly Second Harvest Gleaners
Food Bank of West Michigan, Inc.)**

CHARITY FOOD PROGRAMS THAT CAN END HUNGER IN AMERICA

by

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An abbreviated version of this manual can be found at:

www.endhungerinamerica.org

About the Author: Following a three year enlistment in the Marine Corps and earning a Bachelors Degree from William James College of the Grand Valley State Colleges (now University) in 1976, John went to work as a legislative paralegal on behalf of Illinois' Legal Aid clients. In 1982 he first heard about "food banking" and promptly founded the Central Illinois Foodbank. In 1984 he authored "Give Me Your Hungry", the first nationally circulated "how to run a food pantry" guidebook, and became the Executive Director of the St. Louis Area Food Bank. From 1987-89 he served as Second Harvest's (now Feeding America) first Director of Network Services. Since 1989 he has directed West Michigan's food bank. In 1994 John convened the Waste Not Want Not Project, and in 1998 he pioneered the use of former beer trucks as mobile food pantries. In 2009 John became the eighth person ever awarded the John van Hengel Award, the highest award given an individual, by Feeding America.

INTRODUCTION

We can end hunger in America.

The average community in the United States already possesses and likely is already expending on hunger relief 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. “Business as usual” cannot and will not end hunger, but some specific alternative approaches can achieve that outcome. This manual will teach you those alternative approaches.

Where did these new ways come from? Geographically, from the Greater Grand Rapids, Michigan area. Practically, from a major research study of hunger relief programs conducted in West Michigan in 1994-96.

In mid-1993 the Heart of West Michigan United Way concluded a comprehensive community needs assessment of Kent County with a finding 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.

At the news conference where those findings were announced, the United Way spokesperson explained that while their research had not revealed starvation, it “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 pre-mature, 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 surprisingly 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” are much more likely to have health problems, get into trouble, use drugs or alcohol, drop out of school, and attempt suicide than are teens who have reliable food access. All age levels, if hungry, are more likely to commit crimes such as purse snatching, shop-lifting, mugging, and breaking & entering in pursuit of food or the means to get food. Women are more likely to engage in prostitution. Both sexes are more likely to experience health and mental health problems. Both are 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, a resentful comment, etc. – would trigger violence with sometimes 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. And with that, the head of the United Way did something he had not discussed with me ahead of time, which was to point across the room at me and assure the community that, “That man is going to solve the problem!”

To say that I was stunned by his comment would be an understatement. I was in shock. I believe I managed a weak smile and nod for the television cameras, but by the time they all had left I had recovered enough to accost the United Way executive with a very indignant inquiry about what exactly more or different did he have in mind for me and my agency to do? He admitted he hadn’t a clue, but expressed confidence that we could figure it out, and promised that they (the United Way) would support those investigation efforts.

My agency (Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank) is West 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.

Fate came to our rescue in the form of a series of incidents involving agencies we serve. I won’t burden this book with what they were; suffice it to say we began to suspect that there were some very widespread practices in the charity food distribution system that could be improved upon. 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 opportunities for players in that system to do the good work they do even 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 research. MSU did a search and hired two registered dietitians, Dianne Novak and Nancy Ullrey, to staff what by then was being called “The Waste Not Want Not Project”. The Project was housed at the Kent County MSU Cooperative Extension offices, and ultimately included several additional staff. They began their work in December, 1994 and wrapped up in December, 1996. We obviously worked very closely with them, often doing parallel research in order to corroborate or test various findings, or pursuing our own lines of inquiry.

When the dust settled we found ourselves in possession of the very startling conclusion that began this discourse: That the average community in the U.S. already possesses and likely is already expending on hunger relief 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.

This manual details those findings – those that we learned then and some that we’ve learned since. In a very real way this is a tool box providing you with about a dozen very specific tools that you, your agency, and your community can employ toward reaching a goal of adequately addressing your area’s hunger problem. You will know absolutely how to end hunger, and not abstractly or via means that rely on forces, events, or resources beyond your control. Three caveats and several thank-you’s before we get to those tools:

As the tools are introduced, I will explain why the recommended new technique is superior to the traditional practice or practices it needs to replace. In some cases that might feel like criticism of your agency or of 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 run a food pantry” handbook, and much of what was in that book is what I

am now admonishing people to stop doing. Every time you might wince, trust that I am squirming with you!

And second, take heart in the fact that not all food assistance agencies have to do all of these steps 100% in order to bring ending hunger within reach. You recall I said that our assessment is that the average community already possesses and likely is already expending on hunger relief enough resources to end hunger five times over. In practical terms what that means is that there are steps you don't have to do at all, or don't have to do all the way. It is not a case of "all or nothing". At the back of the book is a scoresheet you can use to assess your practices with respect to the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations. You actually get scored. A "perfect" program would score 127.6. A less-fully-aligned agency will score less. A score of as low as 0.0009 is possible. All we need in order to bring ending hunger within reach is an average score of 70. So if your agency cannot do, or cannot fully do, some of the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations don't worry about it! Just be aware that not doing some of these things only means you need to do some of the others a little more fully. Get your score up to 70, and we end hunger.

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. What our research did was examine 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 7 to 10 days worth of help, but the average agency was providing them with only 3 days worth of help, our research flagged that as a section of the pipeline that needed to be enlarged/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. Then what began as a mighty river can shrink to being just a drop in the bucket. That is precisely what our research suggests has happened in community after community across the U.S., 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 ending hunger can be brought to well within your reach.

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 30+ years I have been doing this work. Any errors or problems that may exist in this document I humbly claim as my own.

- John Arnold
Comstock Park, Michigan
September, 2009

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING “HUNGER” AND “ENDING HUNGER”

To end hunger in the U.S. we need to understand the hunger problem and to understand what “ending” hunger is and what it is not. This is baseline information that helps explain why certain approaches in dealing with hunger make more sense than other approaches.

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 U.S. is how many people are hungry or are just a meal or two away from it. Most people guess that the number is between one and two million people nationwide. Would that it were so! The real number is likely about 40 million people. Not all of them are hungry right now, but most are able to avoid that only by shortchanging some other critical need: 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: Watering down the infant formula, feeding the children catsup sandwiches, eating food scrounged from garbage cans, etc.

When you think “hunger”, think “poverty”. The two are not synonymous, but for many of the poor, they might as well be. Where there is poverty, there will almost always be hunger. And across America few problems are more intractable than poverty. The government has only been tracking poverty since 1959, but since then every year they have tallied how many people in the U.S. have incomes at or below the poverty level. It has never been less than 11.1% 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%, which is one in seven of us. That seems to be the range of how many people in America likely need food aid: In “good” times only one in nine people may need help, rising to as many as one in seven people when there is an economic down-turn 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 it is, involving nearly as many millions of people at this writing 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% of those who are needy at any given moment will cycle out of it within 4½ months. How can that be? Easy: 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 and/or some unexpected large expenses. Up to 70% of all Americans are at risk. They are getting along okay, and then they lose their job or their work hours get 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 dollars enough to cover all the household’s needs. That is when and why most of those who seek food aid end up seeking it. Not because they are multi-generational welfare recipients, or are people who don’t know how to budget, how to work, or how to cook. They are just you or me on the other side of a run of bad luck! They’ve been thrown for a loop by some circumstances, and for a couple of months they are going to need some help. But as soon as they possibly can they will get back on their feet, and you will never see them again.

Last but by no means least, always keep in mind how terribly important providing hunger relief is. Hunger is only rarely ennobling or uplifting. Hunger hurts. Hunger can tear people and families apart emotionally, physically, and sometimes even 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 very self-righteously claim that they would never steal anything, only to have someone counter with "...but what if your family was hungry?", causing the original speaker to then sheepishly admit that in that instance they might indeed "do something desperate." As many as one in ten people in your community are facing 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. We (you and I) don't provide any of those. What we provide is food to people who are hungry.

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 achieving long-term solutions to problems like 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 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 2

ESTIMATING THE NEED

If our objective is to end hunger in our community, we have to be able to measure that goal, or we will never be able to tell what kind of impact our efforts are having. Are we meeting 10% of the need? 85%? 30%? The only way to know is to determine what 100% 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 as crude a tool as you will ever employ, but it is based on the only two studies of need that we are aware of that dared toss a number on the table. They were very different studies, using different methodology and even looking at different parts of the U.S. But in the end their estimates came out just pocket change different from one another. So for lack of having anything better to use, we commend this formula to you. It should predict within a few percentage points one way or the other approximately how many pounds of food aid need to be reaching your area's needy families per year in order to make the area hunger-free.

The formula is simple: Just multiply the number of people in the area who have incomes at or below the poverty level times 234 lbs. The total that results is as good an estimate of your community's annual charity food assistance need as is available today.

Where can you get the "number of persons in poverty" figure? Probably the two simplest ways are to either call the reference desk at your local public library, or to visit the U.S. Census web-site on line (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 lbs. of food aid. Rather, it simply recognizes that poverty and hunger keep close company and at approximately this ratio of people to need.

CHAPTER 3

DETERMINING HOW MANY CHARITY FOOD ASSISTANCE OUTLETS ARE NEEDED TO MEET THE NEED

Parts of ending hunger have more to do with physics than with 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's basement and have only their volunteers' own personal vehicles available for food transportation purposes. Those 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 just once per week. How much food their vehicle will hold times 52 weeks is what that food program's carrying capacity is. Or suppose the program has only very limited food storage space, or is able to be open just a few days per month; those too will define how much food is handled.

When you combine all of those sorts of fairly typical constraints, what we have found is that the average charity food assistance program in America probably has a carrying capacity of approximately 40,000 lbs. per year. Recognizing that fact and being aware of this issue is of huge importance to United Ways, food banks, community foundations, and others who seek to end hunger in entire communities or states. When my food bank first determined our 40-county service area's annual food aid need (per the previous chapter) and then made this 40,000 lbs. per agency per year determination we were horrified to find when we divided the estimated need by the average agency's annual carrying capacity, that in order to end hunger we needed to have at least 1,100 agencies drawing and distributing food. The shock and dismay came from the fact that at the time we were only serving about 275 agencies. But what that told us was that our 40-county service area simply lacked sufficient charity food distribution carrying capacity to do the volume of work that needs to be done. It was like we were trying to fight a big house fire with a tea cup! That could never and would never do the job. We simply needed to get more churches and charity agencies drawing and dispensing food. And now, a decade later, we have 1,300 groups we are working with. In the interests of keeping this text flowing, I am putting a summary of how we achieved that increase in Appendix 1. For now, suffice it to say that those who seek to end hunger across whole communities, counties, states, etc., must give serious attention to this issue.

We have done Chapter 2's food needs assessment, and this Chapter's agency needs assessment many times in many communities across the U.S. and generally have found that communities have only about one-fifth the charity food distribution carrying capacity they need to have. In some cases communities have responded by developing ways to enhance existing agencies' carrying capacity. That works. But in many/most areas, there is simply a need for more groups to get involved in distributing food aid to the needy. The chapters that follow will show how that can be made possible by showing how to make it cheaper and easier for groups to provide food aid.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING SURE THAT FOOD DISTRIBUTION AGENCIES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO THE NEEDY

The entire effort to reduce or eliminate hunger fails if the needy lack reasonable access to food aid. “Reasonable access” means:

- o That there are enough agencies distributing food to handle the volume of food needed per Chapter 3’s total need divided by 40,000 lbs. analysis.
- o 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. (More on this issue below and in Appendix 2)
- o That those agencies can be readily found by people who may be in trouble and seeking food aid for the first time.
- o That agencies are open sufficient and flexible-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.

In the early 1990’s when these 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 30-40-50 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! So we dug in and per Appendices 1 and 2 have largely overcome those constraints.

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

1. Make certain that everyone in your parent organization (the church’s members and staff, etc.) 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/mosque in the area you serve.
5. Per Chapter 13, 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 the local media.

People should do their charitable acts in secret, but food pantries need to be known about. So if some excuse arises – your distribution passes some milestone (years open, number of families helped, pounds of food handled, etc.) or sets some new record (“families

seeking help increase 25%!”, etc.) or has some noteworthy experience (“former client returns to head pantry”, “Boy Scout builds shelving to help area’s needy”, etc.), don’t be shy about letting your local media know about that. It isn’t bragging; it is increasing the likelihood that people who need to find you will be able to. Events or updates can also be publicized during Hunger Awareness Month or on World Food Day (October 16).

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 what you need to try to do (just do the best you can!) is have your pantry be open at least once a week in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, and on the weekend. What that does is give your clients some real options in being able to access the help they need.

As an aside, covered more thoroughly in Appendix 2, one of the most successful things our food bank has done to address all of this and the previous chapter’s issues is to put wheels under our food! Seriously! We’ve converted some former beer delivery trucks from their wayward ways into serving as mobile food pantries! Now we can provide pantry services wherever and whenever there is a need – whether there is a building there or not – and can enable many more churches and charity agencies to help many more needy families with much more food aid than they ever would have been able to have transported or stored on their own. We launched that program in October 1998, and it has grown to the point that in 2009 we are providing food to over 100 mobile pantry distributions per month. So if flexibility and big increases in the amount of food are of interest to you, please check out Appendix 2’s description of our mobile food pantry program.

CHAPTER 5

REDUCING THE COST OF ENDING HUNGER UP TO 25% BY REPLACING AS MANY FOOD DRIVES AS POSSIBLE WITH FUND DRIVES

Perhaps nothing is more traditional, wholesome, or all-American than gathering up or giving food for the needy. Whether via a community-wide canned goods drive or food collection barrels in churches or at people's workplaces, it is a near-universally accepted practice of long-standing for people who wish to help the less fortunate to go to the store or to their kitchen cupboard and get and give 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 is 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. And food drives are not that. They are way too expensive.

In a food drive, where does the food come from? Someone buys it at the store, right? How much does food cost at stores? Full retail prices. So, for example, \$10 brings into the charity food system \$10 worth of food. Zero leveraging. Compounding that inefficiency is how the gift then enters the charity system. Dropping food in a collection barrel or leaving it in a bag out on your front porch for someone to pick up is a way of donating to charity that is virtually impossible to document for tax deduction purposes. Household by household that doesn't amount to much, but in fact giving in ways that are easy to document for tax deduction purposes versus giving in ways that are not easy to document can drive down the community-wide bottom line cost of ending hunger by up to 25%!

If people write out a check and give it to your agency so that you can get food, it costs them (the donor) 25% 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. If you assume for these purposes that the average pound of food costs a dollar, for every million pounds/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 making a transition from food drives to fund drives drops the cost of ending hunger by \$12.5 million per year. It is only 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, by making it more affordable.

But people like to give cans! And if you ask them to write a check instead, many of them will simply not give at all. Those are both true statements. However, per the example in Appendix 3, if you marry this recommended change with the one recommended in the next chapter, you can afford to lose a great deal of your historic support/supporters and come out significantly better off – significantly better able to address much more of your area's hunger problem. Don't believe it? Please read the next chapter and then Appendix 3. You will then understand just how huge a difference making these changes will have in making ending hunger more affordable and more achievable.

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! I stress that

because I have been accused of saying or advocating those things, and I am not and do not. 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, etc. What I am saying is that if charity food programs across America will begin gently coaxing those canned good drives that are open to the idea of changing themselves into fund drives into actually making that simple transition, we can reduce the cost of ending hunger in America by nearly \$2 billion per year.

What that takes is simply communicating to your supporters what I have just told you: That if they will give you 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.

As we have gently made groups aware of their options (see Appendix 4), more and more groups have switched, saving them a lot of money and moving our communities measurably closer to ending hunger.

CHAPTER 6

REDUCING THE COST OF ENDING HUNGER BY UP TO 90% BY USING YOUR AREA'S FOOD BANK'S OR FOOD RESCUE ORGANIZATION'S DONATED FOOD INSTEAD OF STORE-PURCHASED FOOD

Every community in America is served by a food bank and/or food rescue organization member of the Feeding America national food bank network. Those are regional nonprofit organizations which exist to channel the food industry's inventory surpluses and edible errors to and through food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and similar agencies in order to increase communities' capacity to adequately address their hunger problem. They are also one of America's last best kept secrets!

They are veritable gold mines of millions of pounds of good food your agency or community can tap at will, at no charge at all or for per pound handling fees that equal 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 Feeding America member is, call 312-263-2303 or visit www.FeedingAmerica.org online to identify them. If they are located some distance from you, don't despair! Many of us (my food bank is a Feeding America member) have branch warehouses, delivery routes, or other ways of serving our outlying communities. Using your local Feeding America 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 ending hunger to levels that you can afford.

An example: In the canned good drives discussion back in Chapter 5, 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 those funds to cover the cost of drawing food from your area's Feeding America 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 better performance of those resources. 26 times more food per dollar given and spent for hunger relief.

You recall that back in the introduction, 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 chapters that follow you will learn how to employ those food resources optimally in order to achieve that outcome.

But first, a few more comments about food banks/food rescue organizations and their services: 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, etc. So they won't always have everything, but by happy coincidence "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. Chapters 9 and 10 will speak to how and why that is the case. For now, just know that if you do indeed make optimal use of your Feeding America member's food, you can end hunger.

CHAPTER 7

PERMITTING NEEDY PEOPLE TO ACCESS FOOD AID AS OFTEN AS THEY NEED TO

The average American family finds itself needing to send 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 still good has spoiled, etc. Or they might develop some unanticipated need: To accommodate some illness, unexpected visitors, something needed for school, etc. The possibilities are endless, and it doesn't have to do with poor planning; rather it is just how things seem to go in our society and culture.

But near universally across the U.S., churches and other charity agencies 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 1980's 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 U.S.D.A. commodities once a month. So when churches and other non profit 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!

Terrible mistake. There is no "once a month" rule in the Bible, the Tanakh, the Koran or any other significant religious text. They all admonish 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: What other emergency service is parcelled 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 of how recently you'd previously been 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.

In the introduction to this guidebook I noted that it is helpful to visualize the different issues as sections of a pipeline. This issue – how often people are permitted to access help – is a perfect example of that. 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 just that much smaller than it must become in order for hunger to be overcome.

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 is:

- That such might be the case only if 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/food rescue organization.

- That their fear doesn't take into account the huge efficiency they will achieve by letting clients assemble their own food boxes instead of giving them pre-assembled collections (see Chapter 10).
- That it grossly over-estimates how often people will use the pantry if given the opportunity to use it "as needed". The increased use 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, they can actually end up spending less in meeting the area's complete need than they had been spending in meeting only a fraction of it.

Consider: If you are mobilizing your community's anti-hunger resources (per Chapters 5 and 6) in ways that leverage 26 times more food than your previous practices did, can you possibly imagine needing more than 26 times more food than you are currently distributing? No way! Conversely, why would you ever want to try to end hunger with 26 times less food than you could have had at your disposal?

If your family was 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. That is what your pantry should offer its clients.

CHAPTER 8

EMPLOYING CLIENT IN-TAKE AND ELIGIBILITY-SCREENING PRACTICES THAT WELCOME, REASSURE AND COMFORT

Asking for food assistance in America ranks as one of the most humiliating experiences most people can imagine ever having to endure. So 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 then they open that door.....

..... and what happens?

What do they see? How are they greeted? Are they greeted? How does the greeting compare to that extended to visitors at the weekly 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?", etc.).

And then when they do get to the in-take desk, how is it arranged? Are they seated opposite the in-take worker (an adversarial arrangement), or at the side of the desk (a conversational arrangement)? Is their chair comparable to the one the in-take worker has or is it yet another reminder of their "beggar" status? Can they see what the in-take worker writes down or enters into the computer? And is the tone of the in-take 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 scam artists...")

The difference is huge. Our research suggests that as many as 40% of those in need will go hungry rather than submit to a screening process that feels to them like adding insult to injury. 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 weren't in need, but rather 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 access it.

Okay, but what information from or about clients should a food pantry require?

Our research commends obtaining:

1. Their name, address & phone number (needed in case there should ever be a food recall, which has happened).
2. A count of how many people are in their household.
3. 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 4 lbs. per person in the household to suggest a minimum amount of pounds of food they should take (more on this later).
4. Why they are in need (someone lost their job, someone is sick, got behind on bills, purse was stolen, etc.) not to judge them somehow, but rather to help the pantry keep its finger on the pulse of what is driving need in the community.
5. And then we commend asking them to sign a brief, simple declaration of need 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.”

Why such a declaration? And what does having clients sign it accomplish? 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. So we're not so worried about anyone scamming the system so much as we are in need, somewhere in the process, for there to be an affirmation of need made on the record, for your own peace of mind and likely to reassure your supporters and suppliers.

But 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 (Proverbs 19:17) 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. So what the needy person does with the food isn't your concern. It's God's. Leave it there.

A bigger problem is: What do you do if some funder or supplier requires you to demand proof of income, etc. of 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:

1. Coax the funder/supplier to modify their requirements so as to permit you to more faithfully follow your faith's teachings.
2. 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.
3. Decline handling the food or money from that source.

If you (we!) are going to end hunger we have got to have a food distribution process that doesn't scare off 20-30-40% 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 in-take desk.

Most people who ever seek food aid from you likely will do so only one or two times. Our research commends 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 (Food Stamps, for example). In some cases – a widowed retiree with a lot of health problems but only a small Social Security check to live on – the reality is that some people may need your help for the rest of their lives. 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 9

OFFERING THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE EVERY KIND OF GROCERY PRODUCT AVAILABLE TO YOU FOR THAT PURPOSE

When the modern food pantry era began in the early 1980's, a remarkably similar event took place in food pantries all across the country: Someone asked, "What food are we going to give out?", and within minutes the volunteers had gathered around a table, with pen and paper out, 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... etc., etc." 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.

It was the assessment of our Waste Not Want Not Project researchers that as much as 80% of the food a food bank like mine 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. 4 out of 5 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? I have dealt with agencies that won't give out any baked goods except white bread. Agencies that won't give out any fruit or fruit products except canned fruit cocktail. Agencies that won't give out any beverages, even when the Public Health Department asks them to because of outdoor heat levels. Agencies that won't give out any snacks or treats. Agencies who "know" their clients wouldn't want any yogurt or fresh vegetables. Agencies that won't stray from their standardized food list enough to offer out infant formula or baby food to families that need that help even when their area's food bank has truckloads of those goods available that will otherwise go to waste.

That is crazy! We can NEVER end hunger if we will 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, more effective approach is to assume that if a product has found its way into your area's food bank/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 some. Enough to put out for your pantry's clients to consider as they assemble their own food box (Chapter 10).

If you will do that – take some of every product your area's food bank/food rescue organization has available, and make that full array of goods available to your pantry's clients – you will be amazed at what will occur:

(1) It will be much easier and much less costly than anything you've done before.

(2) It will thrill your clients as standardized food boxes never could. And most thrilling for you,

(3) 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:

- o Find that within minutes of your putting out some pomegranates an Ethiopian refugee family you didn't even know was in your community will weep with incredulity and delight at your having made available to them that key part of their celebrating a holiday you didn't even know existed.

- o 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.

- o 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.

- o 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.

Won't some of your pantry's supporters react unfavorably to your replacing nice neat rows of "responsible" food (dried beans, powdered milk, white bread, etc.) with a much more "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 your making these products available is your pantry's becoming 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.

CHAPTER 9.5

...WITHOUT YOUR PANTRY OR ITS SUPPORTERS BUYING ANYTHING*!

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/food rescue organization.

THAT IS A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

Except in extraordinary situations what a food pantry is doing when it supplies a family with food 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.

Does that make sense? Let me illustrate the issue with an 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, how often you can get help, etc., 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 that.* 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 letting clients 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 donation / food bank / food rescue stream makes available to you. Period!

What you can reasonably do is offer your clients some of everything you could draw from the food bank, and then chat with them (your clients) about if there were indeed any specific products they'd hoped to get or really needed that you don't have, and if a pattern develops (every fifth client cites the same product as needed, etc.), then you can buy or get your supporters to buy your pantry some of that specific product.

CHAPTER 10

REDUCING WASTE BY 50% AND HUMILIATION BY EVEN MORE BY PERMITTING CLIENTS TO ASSEMBLE THEIR OWN FOOD BOXES

All of the previous chapters of this handbook lead up to this, the most revolutionary and most necessary of needed reforms: Letting clients assemble their own food boxes. No other single reform makes more difference, is more simple, or is more difficult to get pantries to actually do! But if we want to end hunger, do it they must, for at least a half dozen good reasons. But first, what are we talking about? Ideally, food pantries setting themselves up like little grocery stores with their food shelves stocked with the biggest and best variety of goods (both food, and non-food products such as tooth paste, toilet paper, dish soap, etc.) they have been able to obtain from the donation / food bank / food rescue system, and then permitting clients to “shop” among those goods just as they would at any other store, except that at this store there is no cash register. 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. But otherwise ideally clients should be permitted to simply pick out what they want and need without further direction or interference from the food pantry’s staff.

At this point I trust that a significant number of those reading these words are reeling in incredulity at the idea of simply letting people take what they want to. But you heard correctly: 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 that is the case, that YOU have fallen on hard times and have had to turn to a pantry for help. Which style of service would you prefer?

a) Being given a collection of goods (standardized food box) assembled completely without regard to your family’s situation or needs.

b) Being permitted to assemble your own food box but only within certain pre-set guidelines (“take two items from each food group,” for example).

c) Being permitted to assemble your own food box but only under the guidance and supervision of a pantry staff person walking along side you to make sure the choices you make are ones they approve of. Or

d) Being permitted to pick out your own food just as you would at a store.

When given these choices most people obviously pick d), interestingly enough with a slight reservation: They would appreciate being given some idea of how much food / non-food it is fair or reasonable or okay for them to take, because again surprisingly enough, when given the right to take as much as they want to, most people – 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 needed. It is truly heartwarming to observe that phenomenon: Pantries that always have given out standardized food boxes, in part out of a fear that the poor are too greedy, irresponsible, dishonest, unscrupulous, etc. 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. It is true! That phenomenon is so widespread and such a problem (how can you end hunger if people don't take as much help as they need?) 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 (figuring 4 pounds per person per day, etc.), eventually 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 take $4 \text{ people} \times 4 \text{ pounds per day} = 16 \text{ pounds per day} \times 7 \text{ days} = 112 \text{ lbs.}$ So they would be given a slip that says they should take 112 lbs. of goods.

If you then have some scales here and there in the pantry, they can pace and prioritize their selections toward that goal figure. If you have a bigger scale there at the end of the process to get a total weight on what they have taken for the pantry's records, you likely will be surprised at how much less most people have taken than you calculated that they should have. It isn't at all unusual to have people take 30-40-50% 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.

Letting clients assemble their own food boxes does a number of very significant things, without which ending hunger is not possible:

1) It respects clients and their well-being and their and your dignity. As convenient as it would be, 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 ("more fair") 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 5 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, etc. is so unique to each family that ignoring or disregarding those differences is profoundly disrespectful of those families even if and when it arises from the purest of motives.

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 who your pantry serves with evidence of your / your church's / your faith's / your 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.

2) By the happiest of coincidences, letting clients pick out their own food also tests out as absolutely key to your being able to make the most optimal use of the most inexpensively available food – that drawn from your area’s food bank / food rescue program – which is absolutely key to your community’s ever being able to afford to end hunger.

It would never make sense for you to give clients arbitrary collections of those goods any more than it would ever make sense for you to give them arbitrary selections of food drawn from any other source. It is the arbitrariness of the selection and not where the food came from or even what it consists of that is the problem. And the solution is as easy as just letting each family pick out their own food.

3) Last, but not least, letting people pick out their own food as opposed to your giving every family the same thing 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, circumstances, etc. 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% of what you will have given out that day will have been for naught.

What are the implications of that for your community? If you followed Chapter 2’s instructions for estimating your area’s need and Chapter 3’s instructions for calculating how many pantries need to be operating in order for the community to have pantries enough to make ending hunger possible, if you are going to continue giving out standardized food boxes you can go back and double both of those numbers. Why? Because if you are going to employ practices that result in your reducing hunger by only half a pound for each full pound of food distributed, you have effectively doubled the amount of food that needs to be distributed for hunger to be overcome!

But again, by the most providential of coincidences what the Waste Not Want Not Project recommendations do is tug communities in exactly the opposite direction, with exactly the opposite impact on how much needs to be done. 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.

In Chapter 5 you learned how to drop the cost of your community’s support of your efforts by getting people to give you money instead of food they purchased, and in Chapter 6 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. Those two changes increase your community’s capacity to end hunger by approximately 26.6 times that of the more traditional food drive and fixed food box model. Add in a 50% 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 in your community 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 53 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? You may recall that back in the Introduction I made the outrageous claim that “The average community in the United States already possesses and likely already is expending on hunger relief enough resources to end hunger five times over, but is likely meeting only about one-fifth of the need because of how those resources are being mobilized and employed”? Now you know exactly what I meant by that. Welcome to my nightmare!

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. We Americans are a stubborn lot! But challenging that stubbornness is a desire to succeed, and 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.

What can you do 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? Please refer to Appendix 5 for information on a variety of client-shopping methods and approaches.

CHAPTER 11

...OFFERING FOOD WHEN OTHER HELP IS NEEDED BUT IS NOT AVAILABLE

A number of years ago I stopped by a Goodwill Store to see if they happened to have any cheap, used, old computers I could snap up for a few dollars for my son to cannibalize and reassemble; that was a hobby of his. They did have a couple of them, but to get at them I had to move about a dozen baby cribs out of the way. They 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?

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 so let the family draw \$100's 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's worth of it would be only about \$5, and if someone has donated those funds to the pantry per Chapter 5, the after-tax cost of providing that family with the wherewithal to get their baby all set up in a very nice crib they will have picked out themselves would be about \$3.75.

\$3.75, or nine months on a waiting list. Which one makes more sense? In the years since, 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 (then largely the World War II Generation) in the Grand Rapids area who were having to choose between getting the medicine they needed 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 that extra help. We couldn't give those seniors their medicine, but we certainly could do better than letting them go hungry! In its first year of operation the Senior Meals On Wheels Program's Senior Food Pantry helped thousands of area seniors with \$284,000's worth of food drawn from the food bank for just \$20,776 (\$15,582 after taxes).

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 to not stop with just that, 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 fifty-three times what it was, then no problem is too big for us to overcome.

CHAPTER 12

REDUCING PRESSURE ON LOCAL RESOURCES, AND BOOSTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY BY INFORMING CLIENTS OF AVAILABLE STATE AND FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

If you thought that by now we've covered all the opportunities for hunger-fighting groups to use in picking up massive efficiencies over what is currently being done, we have a surprise for you!: In most communities across America, just doing what is commended 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 what are now known as food stamps/SNAP, Unemployment Insurance, WIC, Workers Compensation, TANF (temporary assistance for needy families) and SSI. 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.

The bottom line is that there is a lot of government help out there available to people who need it, but many people who need it and qualify for it never access it because they don't know about it, and/or they don't realize they might be eligible for it, and/or they don't know how or where to apply for it. And in lieu of getting that government help they will suffer much more than they need to and/or they will tap local charity resources much more than could or should be the case.

This is huge! Every year in the U.S. untold billions of dollars' worth of readily available government aid goes untapped because many people who needed it and qualified for it didn't apply for it.

What that does is at least three very negative things:

1. It subjects those households to forms and degrees of suffering beyond what could or should have been the case. They needed help. Help was available. They qualified for it. But they didn't get it because they never knew about it, or didn't know how or where to apply, or didn't realize that they could qualify for it, or couldn't get to where one needs to go to apply for it, or needed help filling out the application, etc. 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 from that was and is totally unnecessary.
2. It places huge extra stress on local charity programs who are pressed to compensate for the aid people could have gotten but didn't get from government sources. Let me illustrate the point with a quick example: In a community of 30,000 people with a poverty rate of about 12%, likely at least 5,000 people would qualify for about \$70.00 per month in food stamp

assistance, but even more likely only about half of them will be receiving that help. $\$70.00 \times 2,500 \times 12 = \2.1 million per year in needed aid that the government could have provided but charity agencies will struggle to provide instead. That is crazy! We 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 \$2,100,000 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 everyone who is eligible for some form of aid actually getting it, the dollar amounts are astounding. It could well revive a failing community or neighborhood.

Appendix 6 plots out for every state how much food aid is estimated to be needed (per our formula for estimating that in Chapter 2) in pounds, what percentage of eligible people are getting food stamps, how many eligible people that means 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 every state except Maine, Missouri, Oregon, Tennessee and West Virginia, that dollar amount is larger than the amount of food needed to end hunger!

So what can or should a food pantry do about that? You can try to help more eligible people get the government help they qualify for. And how can you do that? I would commend your beginning the process by scheduling 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 they can provide you with an array of helpful materials including fact sheets, posters, application forms, etc. They may even have an on-line application process you can access.

If that doesn't work out for some reason, 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 for some reason, go on-line and go to either www.firstgov.gov or to www.usda.gov, or do a word search of your state's name and "food stamps" or "SNAP".

Your goal is to become familiar with the Food Stamp/SNAP 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 just that you will have begun a process that could ultimately reduce the number of people who might need to draw food aid from your food pantry by 20-40-60 percent.

If you go a step further and start actually helping clients fill out their applications, get to the Welfare Department Office, etc., you can move that process even 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 theme 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 your pantry’s clients who might 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 any “all or nothing” absolutes. We just need “more”. More people getting more help.

Although many of your pantry’s clients might be eligible for a variety of types of government help, you will notice I have only commended your familiarizing yourself with, and providing clients with information about the Food Stamp/SNAP Program. The method to my madness is to make this step easy enough that you will actually do it. If I commended that you try to learn about all of the various government programs you almost certainly would not do so. But if you will just do this one, and get clients to contact your county’s welfare office to see about getting enrolled in it, the caseworkers there will almost certainly pick up the ball and run with it if the client does indeed qualify for other forms of help. So you don’t need to do it all; that is what your tax dollars pay welfare office caseworkers to do! All you have to do is this one thing.....and at the end of the proverbial day, it might be enough to end hunger!

CHAPTER 13

PROMPTING THE GOVERNMENT TO DO ITS PROPER PART IN ADDRESSING THE AREA'S HUNGER PROBLEM BY BETTER INFORMING ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE PROBLEM

Not 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 even more amazingly simple way exists for your food pantry to communicate information about the needs it sees to the officials who need to know about those needs, and it doesn't involve your having to do any 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 end of month activity report. – Most food pantries I am familiar with do 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. That is the report I am talking about. Nothing with clients' names; just a tally of need and of help provided. Please 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

What good will that do? Ha! 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, and from those efforts I learned three very valuable lessons that have bearing here:

One, that in general elected officials are abysmally ignorant about the poverty situation in the geographic area they represent, and generally grossly underestimate the magnitude, seriousness, and consequences of that situation.

Two, that in general elected officials want to do a good job for the people they were elected to serve.

And three, that as a general rule elected officials' brains are hardwired to interpret any communication from any source on any topic as a plea/demand/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. Everyone has probably seen movies or heard stories about legislators or other officials (the Judge in “The Miracle on 34th St.”, etc.) getting giant bags of mail. It does happen, but not as often as you might think, and when it does it is generally so obviously a campaign orchestrated by some special interest group that it 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: Some 5th 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, etc.

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 and the Catholics, the Presbyterians, and the Lutherans, the Baptists and the 7th Day Adventists, big churches and 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 (lobbying) 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 they have gotten to co-sponsor the package, urging people to try to get their area’s legislator to join that list. The last time one of those came around, the package had 21 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. 3 of the 21 were the three relatively conservative gentlemen who represent the part of West Michigan my food bank serves. And why are they so interested in reducing hunger? Because every month they are hearing from the Catholics and the Baptists and the Lutherans, etc., etc., 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 those extra copies of those monthly reports and mailing them off to the officials I’ve 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 we did it, by simply doing a lot of good things even better.

CONCLUSION

As we became aware of all of the many issues discussed in this guidebook we found ourselves wishing for a way to measure all of it. Some way to tell “how we were doing?” with respect to the various issues collectively and individually. And so through trial and error I assembled a food pantry best practices evaluation scoresheet which is attached as Appendix 7. It is a tool that a pantry can use to evaluate itself, or which someone or some group (a food bank, a United Way, a Foundation, etc.) 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 commended.

A “perfect” pantry – one doing everything 100% as we have recommended – would score 127.6 points. A “less perfect” pantry would score less. But anything above 70 points is well within range of making ending hunger possible. So 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 who 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 a bad thing to give a hungry person some food, but if the way it is done humiliates that person without meeting their needs, and costs so much more than it needed to that it leaves other people or needs un-served at all... - We can do better than that! Any pantry scoring below 40 points needs to change!

When we began using the scoresheet in early 1997 we were, quite frankly, horrified by what we discovered. I don’t know what I expected would be the case, but I am sure that it never dawned on me that scores would come out as low as they frequently did. 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, and in fact, widespread use of the scoresheet around the country suggests that the average food pantry in the U.S. that has not been specifically challenged to employ the Waste Not Want Not methods likely scores in the range of 0.12 points. Our West Michigan 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, the stranger” show proof of income and a picture I.D.? None of those practices come from scripture! And if it doesn’t come from scripture, it darn well ought to not be “a tradition” of a supposedly faith-based organization!

So in time we developed a second scoresheet, 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 your faith’s teachings? That list of questions is attached in Appendix 8. What it does is ask 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.

I am no theologian, but by my reading of the world’s major religious faiths’ main scriptural texts (the Bible, the Tanakh, the Koran, etc.), what the great teachings mandate are 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 scoresheet people use. They both tug toward 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?

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Appendix 1

FINDING / DEVELOPING / RECRUITING AS MANY FOOD DISTRIBUTION GROUPS AS IT TAKES TO END HUNGER

Unless you have already done a thorough search, chances are excellent that there are already many more food assistance provider agencies in the community(ies) you are concerned about 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 you area's food bank and/or food rescue organization.
2. Check with the area's Information & Referral Service.
3. Check with the area's United Way.
4. Check with the area's public welfare office(s) about who they know of.
5. Check with the area's Cooperative Extension and/or Public Health offices.
6. Check with all the groups your doing nos. 1-5 identified about who else they know about.

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. In some areas, phone directory information may be available on-line. What you want to be able to do is search through those directories' yellow pages section under at least the following headings: food, human services, and social services, for any additional charity food aid agencies your other searches may have missed.

Then what we did was start contacting every church, temple, synagogue and mosque either by mail or by phone to see if we could possibly recruit them into becoming a player in the charity food assistance system. We told them about the size of the hunger problem, about the consequences of hunger, about how many more food pantries were needed in the area in order to meet the need, and about how inexpensive it is for groups to acquire their food from the area's food bank. If they weren't willing or able to open/operate their own food pantry, we tried to get them to commit to at least helping support the pantries other groups were running.

When none of the above identified food pantry services in a community, we switched to the phone books' "white pages" and simply cold-called individuals who had nice-sounding names! I'm not kidding! They would answer, and I would quickly explain who I was and why I was calling, which was to try to find out who people turn to in that town when they need help? For example, if there is a fire, or someone falls on hard times, who reaches out and helps people? In a surprisingly large number of cases they knew of someone or of some group our other search hadn't uncovered.

Simultaneously we sent out press releases to try to get media coverage of the pantry search/development effort, and sought out opportunities to present on the subject to local civic clubs, United Way boards, Ministerial Alliances and other possibly interested groups.

In most communities the above configuration of efforts got us 70-80% of the way to finding, developing or recruiting as many outlets for donated food bank / food rescue organization food as ending hunger in our area might require. How we covered that last 20-30% is addressed in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2

WHAT PUTTING WHEELS UNDER FOOD CAN DO

Historically, the only kinds of organizations that have been able to participate in charity food distribution efforts have been those small number of groups which:

- o Have a building, AND
- o Have that building located where the need is, AND
- o Have that building physically laid out so as to make handling food a reasonable activity, AND
- o Have extra space enough in that building to accommodate food handling.

What those limitations do is effectively exclude from direct participation in charity food distribution efforts as many as 70 to 80% of all otherwise eligible churches and other nonprofit organizations. 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 spare to house a pantry. Or they might have a building (a physical space they rent or own), but it might be up on the 7th floor of an office building, or otherwise just not be a reasonable space for housing a food pantry. Add on to those sorts of limitations the myriad of nonprofit groups who don't generally have buildings, (civic clubs, Boy or Girl Scout troops, 4-H clubs, student organizations, etc.) and what you find is that we have been trying to fight hunger with nearly 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.

So what to do to get around that? In 1998 it dawned on our food bank that if we had some of the kind of trucks that beverage companies (beer, soda pop, and bottled water) use to deliver their products 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 ten such trucks and dispense over 800,000 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 generally, and then schedules with our mobile food pantry manager the dates, times and places where they would like to host distributions. Once they have gotten those 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 distribution(s) 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. It 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, with most people taking between 25 and 50 pounds of goods (which is all that the average person can carry). When they are done, the agency loads any left-overs back on the truck, and it goes away.

Appendix 3

...but people like to give cans!

Let's assume your church is in a community of 3,500 people that has a poverty rate of about 11% (which is approximately what the national average is). 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 lbs.

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 just for illustration purposes let's assume the total they bring in is an average of 300 16 oz. cans per week. That would meet 15,600 lbs. or about 17.3% of the need, at a total cost to those giving those cans, assuming a 69-cents per can cost, of \$10,764 per year. To meet 100% of the need that way (sidestepping for the moment the client choice vs. standardized bags issue) those faithful givers need to be coaxed into spending/giving \$51,336 more per year than they now are.

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. That would total \$5,382. The givers would likely be able to deduct at least \$1,076 of that on their taxes, so the total they would be out would be only about \$4,306.

But with \$5,382 the pantry could acquire about 53,820 lbs. of food from the food bank, meeting nearly 60% of the area's estimated need! That is, with only half the support it once had, the church could slightly more than triple the amount of help it gives!

And if over time more people could be coaxed into giving in this new way 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% less than what they used to spend on canned goods in meeting only a fifth of the need!

Waste Not Want Not!

Appendix 4

REPLACING CANNED GOOD DRIVES WITH MORE COST-EFFECTIVE MEASURES

No one is suggesting that food banks or food pantries can or should just begin refusing or stopping all canned good drives tomorrow. They can't do that. However, they 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 resources well enough. But fund drives for funds for pantries to use at the food bank can add up to enough. So how to coax people who are used to doing the one into doing the other?

How about assembling a display of \$10's worth of store-purchased food and \$10's worth of food bank food next to one another to graphically illustrate the huge difference? You can make a traveling exhibit you can take to churches or civic groups (you might want to drop down to \$1 for those as \$10 in food bank food is generally too much to carry!), and/or you can 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.

In churches where they've traditionally had the children carry the food up to the altar, how about asking people to wash out empty cans and put their check in one so that the image of food and feeding is preserved while the dollars help 20 times more?

Or how about inviting a group which might otherwise have done a canned good drive to instead collect money and then come over with the pantry and pick out what their money will pay for at the food bank?

Or if a group has given a pantry money, how about sending them a picture of how much food bank food that covers?

Why not develop some money collection envelopes printed to look like a can on one side?

Surely we are creative enough to develop new traditions which graciously replace canned good drives with more cost-effective measures. In Grand Rapids we stopped creating new canned good drives in 1994 and now are down to mostly just the big National Letter Carrier's Drive in the course of more than doubling our local food supply. It is a myth that food banks or food pantries **MUST** have canned good drives in order to get enough food. 1 to 1 leveraging of resources will never add up to enough to end hunger. We have to do better than that, and by soliciting money instead of cans, we can!

Appendix 5

VARIOUS “CLIENT CHOICE” CHARITY FOOD DISTRIBUTION MODELS

1-FIXED MENU PLUS “GRAB BAG” OPTIONS – Pantry distributes its traditional fixed, standardized food box, but then also displays varieties of additional items from the Food Bank, permitting clients to take limited (one bag, one item per household member, six items, etc.) 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.

2-FIXED MENU BAGS FOR EMERGENCY (HOUSE BURNED DOWN LAST NIGHT) CLIENTS / CLIENT- SELECTED ASSORTMENTS OF FOOD BANK GOODS FOR ALL OTHERS – 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 Food Bank without any pretext of those goods meeting all their nutritional needs.

3-CLIENT “SHOPS” FROM LIST OF AVAILABLE GOODS – Pantry acquires the best variety of food it can from the Food Bank and itemizes what is available on a list provided clients as they arrive to pick up food. Clients indicate on list what of the available items they want, and pantry staff assembles their box from that list.

4-“MANNA PROJECT” OPEN DISTRIBUTION – The Manna Project up in Petoskey, MI has been very successfully distributing food for two decades via 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.

5-“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), TX, 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 that they don’t want for things they do want which other clients have discarded. Even that very limited amount of being able to make choices is better than having no opportunities for making choices at all.

Appendix 6

STATE	State's likely total annual food assistance shortfall (lbs.)	Est. % of eligible persons participating in FS program	Number of eligible persons NOT recv. Food Stamps	Annual amt. of FS non-partic. people could receive
Alabama	177,801,390	65%	293,976	\$323,843,707
Alaska	13,952,250	67%	27,671	\$42,400,086
Arizona	206,214,138	66%	280,597	\$333,180,698
Arkansas	115,140,168	76%	119,927	\$130,240,436
California	1,037,325,276	50%	2,048,185	\$2,569,898,683
Colorado	133,236,324	54%	213,563	\$264,578,516
Connecticut	62,917,920	62%	130,280	\$155,100,869
Delaware	20,581,704	65%	36,177	\$40,238,440
D.C.	21,512,556	71%	35,339	\$42,457,384
Florida	505,166,688	59%	856,694	\$973,032,602
Georgia	309,775,752	74%	333,797	\$395,589,661
Hawaii	23,411,934	70%	38,412	\$67,091,148
Idaho	41,606,604	62%	53,364	\$58,837,296
Illinois	350,122,032	75%	415,467	\$521,743,040
Indiana	177,328,242	71%	239,824	\$276,565,362
Iowa	74,399,364	66%	122,786	\$136,749,055
Kansas	70,249,140	61%	116,621	\$123,291,583
Kentucky	167,094,720	76%	190,112	\$212,918,071
Louisiana	181,449,450	76%	205,376	\$235,607,226
Maine	36,088,416	85%	28,694	\$30,101,647
Maryland	106,165,566	55%	260,039	\$292,293,829
Massachusetts	145,380,924	54%	388,608	\$401,976,115
Michigan	322,137,972	75%	401,470	\$455,892,895
Minnesota	112,775,598	62%	169,415	\$181,667,127
Mississippi	136,078,956	60%	284,077	\$295,860,861
Missouri	173,741,724	95%	43,364	\$39,225,292
Montana	30,838,860	61%	51,128	\$57,346,897
Nebraska	45,120,348	65%	64,957	\$68,095,480
Nevada	63,169,002	49%	127,213	\$139,191,086
New Hampshire	21,107,736	55%	48,355	\$51,121,290
New Jersey	170,635,374	58%	300,157	\$350,067,508
New Mexico	81,703,206	69%	105,094	\$111,798,566
New York	601,383,276	61%	1,152,088	\$1,486,055,439
North Carolina	294,603,192	58%	595,926	\$656,258,004
North Dakota	17,324,190	57%	34,039	\$39,143,952
Ohio	342,607,122	68%	506,712	\$608,298,187
Oklahoma	130,345,020	77%	125,845	\$137,075,026
Oregon	110,960,226	86%	71,383	\$77,719,386
Pennsylvania	325,968,084	68%	534,186	\$592,305,828
Rhode Island	28,577,952	56%	59,962	\$70,205,657
South Carolina	150,171,372	71%	222,725	\$252,490,320
South Dakota	23,563,566	57%	45,449	\$53,267,738
Tennessee	223,204,410	88%	117,937	\$136,853,884
Texas	887,136,822	60%	1,614,799	\$1,812,191,656
Utah	58,753,656	61%	78,943	\$85,163,744
Vermont	14,177,826	68%	23,466	\$26,193,557
Virginia	173,787,120	62%	315,665	\$338,001,214
Washington	169,690,248	68%	252,392	\$282,668,944
West Virginia	69,772,248	80%	67,336	\$68,722,866
Wisconsin	137,659,158	59%	265,993	\$252,544,120
Wyoming	10,310,976	49%	23,531	\$26,316,819
United States	8,904,225,798	65%	14,250,824	\$16,355,385,688

Appendix 7

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 foodScore 1.17
- Half of the pantry's support from individuals is in the form of money and half is in the form of foodScore 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 foodScore 1.08
- Most of the pantry's support from individuals is in the form of food and not as moneyScore 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 percentScore 10
- 75-89 percentScore 8
- 50-74 percentScore 6
- 25-49 percentScore 3
- Below 25 percentScore 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 liveScore 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 availableScore 2
- Clients are permitted to assemble their own food box by some formulaScore 1.75
- Clients may pick out some (a small portion) of what they are givenScore 1.25
- Only a standardized box is givenScore 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 needScore 1.5
- Clients are given or permitted to take whatever the pantry determines it thinks they need on a case-by-case basisScore 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 neededScore 0.75
- Clients are given a standardized amount unrelated to their need and are denied or discouraged from seeking moreScore 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 $1.25 \times 6 \times 0.75 \times 1.75 \times 1 \times 0.75 \times 1 \times 1.05 \times 1$, 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.

Appendix 8

WHAT DOES YOUR FAITH'S SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT....?

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. To represent an improvement it really needs to represent a shift from efforts which were not Scripture-based to services which 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 subject, and have posted those collections on our web site: www.FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org we urge you to look into what your faith's Scripture admonishes on the subjects of:

(1) How often should you provide help to someone who asks for it?: Just 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 or their servant? (That is, do you enforce rules on them that they have no choice but to submit to in order to get help, or 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?: Are you to make them "prove" their need and worthiness? Are you to check with other agencies to make sure they aren't "abusers"? Or are you to help them just because they asked?

(4) How much food should you give them?: Some set amount? As much as you think they need? Or as much as they think they need?

(5) What types of food should you offer them?: What you think people like them should eat (as with #2 above, are you to be the master or the servant?) Or a free choice of whatever is available?

(6) What expectations or conditions should you place on their obtaining subsequent or ongoing help?: Does Scripture mandate that they must be pursuing getting a job? Or should be required to attend specific religious services? Or have to 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!

“If a community addresses the key issues our research has identified, it likely can adequately address its hunger problem.”

“If a community does not address the key issues our research has identified, no conceivable configuration of compensatory measures will bring adequately addressing its hunger problem to within reach.”

-International award-winning
Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank
(now Feeding America West Michigan
Food Bank) / Michigan State University
Waste Not Want Not Project