

HER Nutrition Guidelines: Working with Donors to Increase Healthy Donations



[The Healthy Eating Research \(HER\) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System](#) provide clear, specific, measurable guidelines for charitable food. When food banks and food pantries rank their food nutritionally with the HER Guidelines, they are working to increase access to healthy, nutritious foods for their neighbors. A strength of the HER Guidelines is having clear, easy to communicate standards for food banks and food pantries to discuss with donors.

Starting Points for Increasing Healthy Food Donations:

- Build your team at the food bank
 - Does everyone understand the goals? How can different teams collaborate towards the mission of increasing healthy food?
 - Tools include: the HER Guidelines Overview and Talking Points and HER Overview video on the [Learning Hub](#)
- Focus on relationships – *there is no one-size-fits all approach!*
- Practice your pitch of what the food bank is working towards (e.g. increasing access to healthy foods for neighbors, reducing diabetes risk)
 - How can your donors contribute to this vision?
- Create visuals of progress using reports and inventory or donation data
- Start with foods in your control – work with vendors to source foods that meet the nutrition guidelines for choose often and choose sometimes food.

Framing the Conversation with Food Donors

1. *Start with the why* – what is the desired impact or outcome of focusing on nutrition (e.g. supporting neighbor’s health and better meet neighbor food needs and preferences)
2. *Focus on engagement* – Paint a picture of how the donor can contribute to this vision. It can help to focus on the positive, increasing green and yellow foods
3. *Provide “leave behind” information for the donor to learn more.* This could be via email, newsletters, a pamphlet about the HER Guidelines or other information to keep the conversation ongoing.
4. *Connect to your nutrition policy (if applicable).* A nutrition policy can be a great tool to frame the organization’s commitment to health and nutrition.

For a more in-depth guidance, read [How to Work with Food Donors to Increase Access to Nutritious Food](#) on the Learning Hub.

Excerpt from [How to Work with Food Donors to Increase Access to Nutritious Food](#)

SUMMARY IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS:

<p>Define a strategic food donor partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understand donor’s needs and goals Identify internal champion at donor company <input type="checkbox"/> Share food bank challenges, opportunities and vision Foster relationship with company leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Be patient, yet strategic, as these changes take time 	<p>Identify opportunities for collaboration that deliver meaningful results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Present sourcing vision and goals to donor, with a focus on nutrition and culturally inclusive foods that meet the expressed needs and preferences of neighbors <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize HER Guidelines to increase credibility with donor <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce food bank nutrition guidelines and policies to donor 	<p>Sustain a strong partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with donors as you build and develop nutrition guidelines Integrate donor feedback into policy implementation <input type="checkbox"/> Recognize donors who support and implement nutrition guidelines in donations
<p>Invest in your sourcing program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize data to understand and communicate the nutritional value of your inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Implement pilot programs with highly supportive donors to focus on “green” or “choose often” foods (your food bank may even include culturally inclusive “yellow” or “choose sometimes” foods based on understandings of neighbor food needs and preferences) <input type="checkbox"/> Designate a staff member to serve as liaison between donor and food bank operations 	<p>Lean into actions that promote immediate results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on inventory areas that are more easily impacted (e.g., purchased product, TEFAP, etc.) or begin by including the food categories that are always “green” or “choose often” <input type="checkbox"/> Increase pickup frequency for food donations Empower partner agencies to pick up directly from food donors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educate and empower food bank drivers to be ambassadors of nutrition guidelines and values <input type="checkbox"/> Have food bank staff and donor staff shadow each other’s jobs for a period of time 	<p>Monitor and maintain for sustained commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor donation reports and communicate changes and improvements <input type="checkbox"/> Build a donor dashboard that easily illustrates opportunities and successes <input type="checkbox"/> Recognize donors that make improvements in supporting food bank nutrition and sourcing goals <input type="checkbox"/> Once you have data on your top (i.e., largest food pounds) donors, begin to set benchmarks for increasing the amount of “green” or “choose often” foods