



## **Retail Outreach Strategy for Food Shelves**

### **Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support**

#### **Healthy Food Shelf Network**

*Requesting food donations is common practice for most food shelves. Incorporating a request for healthy food into solicitations is a simple, but important way to procure whole grain and fresh produce options. Asking for donations can be intimidating, but it gets easier with time and practice. Explicitly requesting healthy options from donors helps provide nutritious food to clients and reduces their risk of obesity, diabetes, and other food-related illness.*

1. Determine the exact food items needed. Write down all items and organize the list alphabetically for easy reference. Include shelf stable items like dry and canned beans, whole grain pasta, brown rice, canned fruits and vegetables, peanut butter, whole wheat flour, and fresh produce.
2. Establish dates for starting the donation campaign and for the receipt of all food donations. Coordinate potential dates and times with the staff at the organization to ensure that help will be available on the date and time selected. Walk through the receiving area so that you can better understand how and where shipments will be received. Take notes regarding the location and figure out whether there is an unloading dock, large enough parking lot for a tractor trailer and size of the staging and storage areas. Keep this information handy in case the donor asks about the logistics of the actual delivery.
3. Gather information about your food shelf, including brochures, handouts, copies of newspaper or magazine articles, information on the website, and business cards of key staff members. Also gather information about the Healthy Food Shelf Network like the brochure and website. Organize information into packets of information that can easily be sent along to potential donors.
4. Compile a list of food donors located in the neighborhood or nearby, as well as retail outlets your food shelf or partner organizations have an existing relationship with. Focus on mid-sized retail operations understanding that many larger scale grocers such as Cub, Rainbow, and Lunds/Byerlys have existing relationships with food banks and food shelves. Use the company names as a starting point and go directly to the web site or phone each donor to determine the exact name and title of the person responsible for charitable contributions as well as when they are usually working. The person may be a manager or someone else.
5. Write a letter to each food retail outlet asking for donation. Use proper and personalized salutations on each letter. Write the letter in a professional tone and do not use slang or

offensive wording. State in the letter that you are asking for food donations. Name the food shelf you are requesting the items for. Give a brief overview of the organization including number of years in existence, number of clients served, and address. State in the letter that supplemental and detailed information on the food shelf is being included with the letter. Close the letter by asking the individual to contact you directly and state that you will be following up with them regarding this matter.

6. Visit the retail outlets in person with the packet of information. If the person responsible for charitable contributions is not available, ask to meet with him or her at a different time. If that person is unavailable during your second visit, mail the packet of information.

7. Keep a list of each contact and when you visited their location or mailed their packet. Mark your calendar to follow up with each person in two to three weeks after the initial request.

8. Follow up with the donor by both written letter and phone. Explain the types of food being requested, the dates available for delivery of the items and the exact location and time the food should be delivered to. Work around the availability of the donor if they request alternate dates or times. Send the donor detailed directions regarding where donations are to be delivered.

9. Send thank you letters to all donors that made donations. Send letters to those that did not donate and thank them for their time and mention that you will be asking them again for donations in the future. Make notes on your list of contacts regarding all responses and feedback received for use in future communications.

### Tips

#### **Try, try again**

Don't be discouraged if your first request for solicitations is not successful. It may take several solicitations to obtain a successful donor relationship.

#### **Start small**

Some donors may be interested in donating baked items first, but willing to give more healthy items later. Consider the potential for a store to provide produce and whole grains after you've established a strong relationship. Determine whether starting small with something like pastries and breads might pay off later.

### **Creating a Healthier Minneapolis**

#### **healthy eating + physical activity + smoke-free living**

Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS)

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EVERYBODY NEEDS  
HEALTHY FOOD

