

# CREATE A FOOD RESCUE PROGRAM IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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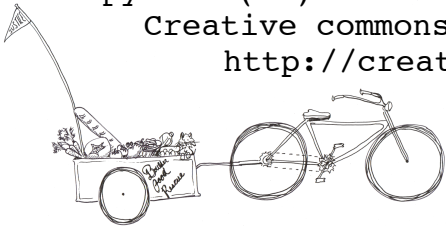
One in every six people in the United States is considered at-risk of hunger [1]. Meanwhile, over a quarter of food is wasted (and maybe as much as fifty percent) [2]. **The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act** [3] protects from liability individuals and businesses who donate to non-profits feeding the hungry. Sound like it is time to start doing food rescue in your community? **Here's how.**

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Chapter 1: Mapping out Hunger and Waste

Potential Donors  
Potential Recipients  
Natural Allies

## Chapter 2: Step by Step Guide

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## Chapter 3: Questions and Answers

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o you're ready to get started? Before anything else, it's important to spend a little time mapping out the waste and hunger in your own community so you can figure out how best to fit in. It may be the case that there's already a group doing fresh food rescue and you can join forces. Or, you may find out that there isn't anyone doing anything and there's a large demand that you can help fill. o help simplify the process of mapping out all the players in your community, we've created a few forms that walk you through the process. Once you fill out one or two, you'll probably get the hang of it. We suggest starting with the potential donor form. Take a peek in the dumpsters of your local grocery store...then talk to the employees and work on setting up a meeting with the manager. After you've established some potential donors, use the potential recipient form to figure out where the food might go. While you're talking to folks, you'll almost certainly come across some other organizations working in the same space. Use the potential allies form to guide you in establishing relationships with them.

	<u>NATURAL</u>	<u>ALLIES</u>
NAME: _____	CALLED? <input type="checkbox"/>	
LOCATION: _____ _____ _____	MEETING? <input type="checkbox"/> WHEN? _____ WHERE? _____	
CONTACTS: _____ + ROLES _____ _____ _____	THEY'LL GIVE US: _____ _____ _____ _____	
TYPE: <input type="checkbox"/> FOOD RESCUE <input type="checkbox"/> BIKE CO-OP <input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVIST GROUP <input type="checkbox"/> FOOD RELIEF ORG (BANK/ PANTRY/ SOUP KITCHEN) <input type="checkbox"/> CHURCH <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL <input type="checkbox"/> COLLECTIVE/ CO-OP <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY/ YOUTH CENTER <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	WE'LL GIVE THEM: _____ _____ _____ _____	

## POTENTIAL RECIPIENT

★ NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

★ LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

★ CONTACT(S): \_\_\_\_\_  
 ROLES (MANAGER, EXEC DIRECTOR, VOLUNTEER, ETC) \_\_\_\_\_

★ TYPE: (CHECK ONE) ☐ FOOD PANTRY / FOOD BANK  
☐ SHELTER (WOMENS', HOMELESS, YOUTH)  
☐ SOUP KITCHEN / MEAL PROGRAM  
☐ LOW INCOME / SECTION 8 HOUSING  
☐ SCHOOL (HIGH FREE + REDUCED LUNCH)  
☐ COOPERATIVE HOUSING  
☐ OTHER NONPROFIT (MENTAL HEALTH, WOMENS' HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL)

★ DESIRED FOOD: (CHECK ANY/ALL)  
☐ WHOLE FRUITS + VEGGIES  
☐ BREAD + PASTRIES  
☐ FROZEN PREPARED  
☐ DAIRY + MEAT  
☐ NONPERISHABLES / STAPLES  
☐ HOT PREPARED

CALLER? ☐ DATE(S) \_\_\_\_\_

MEETING? ☐ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVE FOOD ALREADY? ☐

HAVE KITCHEN? ☐

REFRIGERATED STORAGE? ☐

HAVE COMPOST? ☐

BOI(C)S STATUS? ☐

RECEIVE WHAT / WHEN / FROM WHOM? \_\_\_\_\_

★ APPROX DEMAND PER WEEK (LBS): \_\_\_\_\_

★ APPROX FOLKS "SERVED" PER WEEK \_\_\_\_\_

## POTENTIAL DONORS

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT(S): \_\_\_\_\_  
 + TITLES \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE: (CHECK ONE) ☐ LARGE GROCERY CHAIN  
☐ SMALL LOCAL / NATURAL GROCER  
☐ CAFETERIA / CATERER / RESTAURANT  
☐ BAKERY  
☐ FARMERS' MARKET  
☐ FARM / COMMUNITY GARDEN

CALLER? ☐ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MEETING? ☐ WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_  
 LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

DO THEY SAY THEY ALREADY DONATE? ☐

HAVE COMPACTOR? ☐

HAVE COMPOST? ☐

HAVE DUMPSTER? ☐

FOOD IN DUMPSTER? ☐

DONATE WHAT? WHEN? \_\_\_\_\_

NEAREST POTENTIAL RECIPIENT(S)? \_\_\_\_\_

This chapter provides a step-by-step guide for starting a grass-roots fresh food rescue program in your own community. Depending on the situation of food waste and hunger in your community, you might need to take a slightly different path than is outlined here. However, these steps are meant to be applicable to a wide range of environments and are drawn from our own experiences developing Boulder Food Rescue.

The first step is to decide what you're going to do...

*1. Decide what you want to do by writing down a "mission statement" (or equivalent)*

The redistribution of perishable food waste to the hungry is a common basis for food rescue programs. However, specific missions will vary depending on your community and the individuals involved. Prior to developing your own mission statement, research organizations in your community that already are working on similar goals, like community bike groups or food distribution programs. By doing this research you'll have the potential to create partnerships and support networks with nonprofits while ensuring that you are not mimicking a program already in place. One example mission:

"Kalamazoo Food Rescue is an all volunteer nonprofit organization located in Kalamazoo, Kentucky. We rescue and redistribute perishable food "waste" to charities that serve homeless and at-risk individuals. Our goal is to help solve the problems of hunger, malnutrition, and food waste in our community."

Largely, defining a mission statement is about determining scope: which problems will you work on? How will you know when you're done? What sorts of standards do you want to have about how you're going to do it. After you have gathered some information about the scope of the problem in your community, try filling out the following "madlib" as an exercise to determine how your organization will fit in:

Food waste in our area is being dealt with by these groups: \_\_\_\_\_, who get food from \_\_\_\_\_ and serve it to \_\_\_\_\_. We think insufficient food rescue is being done for these sources: \_\_\_\_\_ and we might run into the following conflicts with existing nonprofits: \_\_\_\_\_.

In Boulder, our organization grew out of Food Not Bombs, because we wanted to do more than serve food---we wanted to rescue more food than we could possibly serve and get it to other organizations. In large part we chose to do this because there seemed no shortage of

organizations providing meals to at-risk populations. Yet, there were serious limitations in the nutritional quality of those meals due to their inability to access fresh and healthy ingredients (a frustrating fact, since we knew those same foods were being thrown out, sometimes only blocks away). As you grow an understanding of the problem you hope to solve, and how you want to solve it, writing down a clear mission statement, or concise plan of action, is very important. Don't worry---you can always change it later!

## ***2. Write some bylaws to govern how your organization works***

Don't stress about this process. The bylaws should outline the operations of your organization. They mainly need to say (a) who the board is, (b) how the board works, (c) what the conflict of interest policy is, and (d) what the mission is. Our board is different from traditional boards in that each member is very involved in day to day operations. Most nonprofits have influential older people make the big decisions in their board meetings, but while these people are really good at raising money and making connections, they don't know much about the inner workings of the organization. Your bylaws don't need to be long or complicated, keep them clear and simple. Take a look at Boulder Food Rescue's Bylaws if you want an example:

<http://www.boulderfoodrescue.org/index.php/bylaws/>

A version of these bylaws, possibly excluding sections 6, 7, and 14 could be an excellent starting point for your organization. As you get started, look them over and think about how you want things to work. After you've amassed a crew of regular volunteers, you can vote "in" the initial version of the bylaws at a meeting (or, just unilaterally adopt some and plan to change them later as necessary).

## ***3. Get your nonprofit-fu on, apply for 501(c)3 status***

This will allow you to give grocery stores and businesses your tax-deductible number to encourage donations. There are two options here:

- 1. Become a Chapter of BFR!** Its pretty simple, and you have a lot of autonomy as well as all the support you want on systems, contacts and organizational issues. We have a Chapter

Charter that outlines our relationship, and who is responsible for filing taxes, working out liability, and writing grants.

**2. Get your non profit status through another organization:** Check out the Earth Island Institute, and several others that host a variety of non profits under their umbrella. This usually involves paying some sort of yearly fee, or a portion of your fundraising revenue.

**3. File for your own nonprofit.** There are two steps involved. The first is to register a nonprofit corporation in your state. This process is easy; it's typically a thirty minute, \$50.00 online application form. Begin by searching for the secretary of state for your state. The second is to obtain federal tax-exempt status for that corporation. This process is a bit harder, and it costs another \$400.00 and about a six week wait time.

Here are a few instructive websites for the IRS nonprofit paperwork:

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1023.pdf>

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1023.pdf>

<http://www.form1023help.com/>

Your area might also have a nonprofit support organization, which can help connect you with other organizations working on similar problems, help you find funding, and help with the process of filing for 501(c)3 status.

#### ***4. Get the food! Contact your local grocery store managers***

First, give them the mission of your food rescue program by email and phone call. Next, set up an in-person meeting with them to identify the benefits of donating to your food rescue. A personal meeting is worth pressing for to explain the benefits for both the market and the larger community effectively. Boulder Food Rescue has managed to get donations from 100% of the stores that we set up an in-person meeting with. If you have trouble convincing the store managers to make time to meet with you, you might try one of these arguments that we've compiled for why they should participate:

**All the cool kids are doing it!** Your competitors are already donating, and reaping the rewards



from the positive PR, reduced trash/compost tipping fees, and employee satisfaction (it turns out employees are bummed to throw away food!).

**\*~We'll save you money!**Between avoiding trash taxes and tipping fees, and the benefits from tax-deductible donations (we're a 501(c)3 after all, and according to the IRS code section 170(e)3(C), contributions of "apparently wholesome" food can be deducted at their "fair market value" [1,2]).[1] [http://www.irs.gov/publications/p526/ar02.html#en\\_US\\_2011\\_publink1000254820](http://www.irs.gov/publications/p526/ar02.html#en_US_2011_publink1000254820)[2] <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/26/170>

**We'll help you reach your zero waste goals!**You can make your store a beacon of light for waste reduction, and work towards your city's zero waste goals. Be a leader, not a follower---by reducing your waste stream, you'll be directly preventing extremely harmful methane emissions, reduce carbon footprint, and with our quarterly reports you can *prove* that you're committed to solving climate change issues!

**It will bring you happiness, profits, and love!** People will choose to come to your store when they realize your involvement in the local community. We generally park a bike trailer outside of our donors and give them a window sticker to advertise their involvement. Our organization has strong community support and people in Boulder choose their grocery store based on the community values of that store.

**Throwing away food is just...plain...wrong** Store employees are well aware of how much food gets thrown away, but sometimes managers are not. Let them know you're passionate about fighting food waste and hunger in your community and that what may seem like an "insignificant amount" of food waste to them, can be extremely valuable to the needy in your community. Be clear that what you're proposing requires almost no work from their employees, and over time can help save a substantial amount of food.

**We pick up food that others don't**It is common for grocery store managers to say that they don't throw away any food, or that "all food that is safe to consume is already being picked up". Although this is seldom true, it's a bit more difficult to respond to, and in our experience, point out that they may be being untruthful will hurt the relationship, perhaps irreparably. If they say this, we recommend you press for a meeting anyway. Be clear that you're interested in picking up food that other groups don't/won't and you'd like "just a few minutes of their time" to chat in person about the possibility of partnership. Be clear that you know which other



groups are already picking up food in the area and that your organization is different. For instance, if they say the "food bank" already picks up food, you can point out that you intend to pick up "soon to expire" produce, damaged produce, and prepared foods. Feeding America organizations for instance (which includes most large food banks), do not pick up any of these categories of food.

**The Capitalism... it Sucks!** Just kidding, we've never had a grocery store manager go for that one.

### ***5. Set up the logistics at grocery stores***

Grocery stores are depending on you to make this process as simple and easy as possible. We came up with a bin system, where the grocery stores can simply put food into a large bin, instead of putting it in the dumpster. This will ensure that most of the food is diverted and there will be plenty of donations. We developed the "How It Works" document to include on our brochures and website. Showing the process in a simple fashion is key to getting donors on board. This document is included below and available at <http://www.boulderfoodrescue.org/index.php/how-it-works/>. This document may also be useful for explaining how the process works to donors who are on the fence.

# Boulder Food Rescue

Sustainable Just-In-Time Food Rescue in Boulder, Colorado

## Schedule

New Item For

Show  entries

Search:

Frequency ▲	Day ↕	Donor ↕	Recipient ↕	Volunteer ↕	Start Time ↕	End Time ↕	Notes ↕	Admin Notes ↕	Prior Volunteer ↕	Transport ↕	Food Types ↕	Link ↕
	Monday	Sprouts Market: Arapaho ( <a href="#">click for details</a> )	<a href="#">BHP @ Canyon Pointe</a>	<a href="#">Jason Brown</a>	7PM	9PM	Please Contact: VJ Deutsch – 720-448-9496 and let her know if there is food coming and when you will be			Bike	Produce, Baked Goods	<a href="#">info</a> <a href="#">edit</a> <a href="#">delete</a>

### Technology for logistics!

We started keeping track of the weekly schedule using a spreadsheet. We also used a web-based form to have volunteers submit data on their pick-ups. This is extremely important, both for keeping track of progress, as well as maintaining accountability among volunteers and creating an easy way for problems to be reported. After nearly a year of using the spreadsheet and web form, three of our more tech-savvy volunteers conspired to build a custom web-application for tracking the schedule and automating things like sending reminders to volunteers when they need to enter their data. We call the application the “Robot” and it lives at <http://alpha.boulderfoodrescue.org>. We developed the website so that other food rescue

organizations around the country could use it as well and if you would like to give it a try, we'd love to help you use it---shoot us an email: [info@boulderfoodrescue.org](mailto:info@boulderfoodrescue.org)!

First, you'll need to do a hefty amount of volunteer outreach. Start small. Organize your friends to do the initial pickups, and once you get going extend the opportunity to networks like Food Not Bombs, bike groups, and cool university clubs. From there, each volunteer needs to be trained in order to perform the pickup weekly, easily, on time, and consistently. It is nice for the volunteer to have a consistent day, time, donor and recipient every week. A few things that may help:

- **safety vests/t-shirts (\$5-15):** as a way of identifying your volunteers, as a bit of advertising while people are doing pickups, and for fun. Brightly colored t-shirts or safety vests are nice.
- **stickers (\$25):** simply the best "handout" promotional materials you can have. 123stickers.com has the cheapest prices.

## ***7. Give away the food: Find recipients***

First, do research to determine if the agency works under a mission your gang can support. Next, contact them. Most places will appreciate the offer! Check when they are able to receive food and change the logistics for food pickups to correlate with the times acceptable to drop the food. It is nice to set up a meeting with them to determine how much food they can take, what types of food they are looking for in particular, and the best days for them to receive. Finally, once a recipient agrees to receive food, we ask them to take a look at our recipient expectations and give them to anyone in their organization who is going to work with us or our volunteers:

1. Be available to receive food at the scheduled time. Please be kind to our hardworking volunteers who biked across town and took time out of their day (without compensation) to deliver the food.

2. Please use the food as best you can. Rather than discarding excess food, feel free to share it with the greater community, your employees, and use it creatively. If you're consistently getting too much or too little, please let us know. Please do not ask the volunteer for more or less food---they don't control the schedule and that request may not get passed on.
3. If you would like to change the day/time of your scheduled food drop, or need to cancel a particular drop, please let us know with at least a week of notice.

For the most part these expectations are common sense, but we've found that being clear about expectations from the beginning can avoid problems later on.

As you gain more recipients, it may be necessary to define priorities so that the recipients with the highest need are served before those with a lower need, and to mitigate any conflicts of interest (i.e., a food rescue volunteer who also works with a recipient organization). To help make these decisions, we defined a set of recipient categories:

- Category A recipients serve hungry, homeless, and at-risk populations
- Category B are low-income
- Category C recipients offer education and outreach opportunities
- Category D are recipients that fit in none of the other categories
- 

We endeavor to meet the needs of our Category A recipients before donating to Category B, and so forth. We also don't distribute food to organizations that perform mandatory proselytizing prior to serving or distributing food. When vetting a beneficiary and a potential conflict of interest is identified, a standard conflict of interest resolution policy can be followed (a vote without the conflicted party(s) present).

## ***8. Gather necessary equipment***

You'll need a few things depending on the structure of your program. You'll have to have an initial investment in the program, so consider raising money right away as a basic "starter" budget. The materials you'll likely need will include:

- **Food bins (\$12-40):** should find some that can easily fit a few cardboard food boxes. We get these from a local supply store called McGuckins, and they cost \$40 each. They are pricy, but they are the best bins we have been able to find. Shop around though! We use a smaller rubbermade-brand bin to store baked goods that costs \$12.
- **Bike trailers (\$Free-600):** you can either buy these, construct them yourself, or ask for donations. Here is the link to instructions on our homebrew trailer:

[http://www.instructables.com/id/Bicycle-cargo-trailer--200-lb-capacity,-\\$30-for-pa/](http://www.instructables.com/id/Bicycle-cargo-trailer--200-lb-capacity,-$30-for-pa/)

You can build one for about \$30 if you have access to a welder and some tools. If you have to buy the tools, it'd still be less then the \$300+ that an equivalent-capacity cargo trailer will cost. Another trailer that has worked great for us:

<http://www.croozerdesigns.com/cargo.html>

It costs about \$150, and is rated to 70 lbs but can easily do more like 150.

Lastly, you can always request donations for used bicycle trailers. You can go to your local bike shops or your friends garage to see if they have something that can be repaired and put to good use!

- **Bungees cords (\$FREE):** To hold food in trailers. You can make these out of old bike tubes and wire clothes hangers. Cut the valve out of the tube. Use a pair of pliers to fold the wire coat hangers into hooks. Then tie the bike tube onto the hooks and viola!
- **Bikes (\$FREE):** You can get bikes from the bike co-op in your town, or from the dump if they set aside abandoned bikes. It's useful to have 1-2 extra "loaner" bikes for people that might not have one.

- **Scales (\$12-25):** Cheap-o bathroom scales work fine, just weigh yourself with the food, and then yourself without the food, and subtract! PRACTICE MATH!

Optional, but useful stuff:

- **Tube Slime (\$40):** Put this goop into the trailer wheels to prevent an excessive amount of popped tires. \$40 will buy a gallon of an off-brand type called FlatAttack that works great.
- **Tool Kits (\$20-50):** We hold all necessary tools for pickups in here, including a wrench for the bike trailer attachment, bungee cords, scales, bike lights, and whatever you think a person could need. We lock these kits up with the bike trailers which are left at every grocery store we pick up food from. We used to leave the scales in the bins, but having an extra box to put things in that can be locked up, really helps with preventing theft and losses. The boxes we use are Pelican brand and were donated. An old artillery box from an army surplus store would work great too. Get creative :).

## ***9. Train volunteers and create a skill-sharing environment***

We wrote a "volunteer handbook" with instructions for doing pickups at each of our donors, so that when new volunteers come on board they can be brought up to speed quickly, and have an easy point of reference. The volunteer handbook has these sections:

- **Communication and contacts:** how to contact everyone, when meetings occur, etc.
- **Doing pickups:** the outline of what happens at a food pickup, hand-drawn maps giving the layout of individual stores, and any specific rules for each store (e.g., Whole Foods requires our volunteers wear close-toed shoes and have identification).
- **Equipment and transportation:** how the various bike trailers attach, what to find in the "tool kit" box (a box locked with the trailer that has the scale in it, along with bike tools and a pump), how to use the car-share service, or find a loaner bike.
- **Benefits for volunteers:** information on using the group membership at the local bike co-op, getting discounts at various stores, etc.
- **Bike maps:** although the web-application we use does this automatically now, we originally

included bike-friendly routes between all our donors and recipients so new volunteers could find the best (safest, least hilly) route.

New volunteers are given a link to the handbook and asked to read it before their first pick up. We also give them a document describing our four volunteer expectations:

1. Do scheduled pick-ups on time and behave professionally (i.e., appropriately as a representative of BFR). Do not take food from pick-ups for personal consumption, or use your affiliation with BFR to get (food) donations outside of pre-scheduled pick-ups.
2. If unable to do a particular pick-up or planning to be away, use the web-application, mailing list, and/or any other means to find a replacement to cover your "shift". Please start this process as soon as possible. If you fail to find a replacement, let BFR coordinators know 24 hours in advance. If you find a replacement via other means than the web-application, please use the web application to fill in the volunteer covering your shift, or let the BFR coordinators know who your replacement is.
3. Report information (e.g, weight and contents) about pick-ups accurately and in a timely manner.
4. Let us know if there's a problem with the equipment or if there were issues with the pick-up or drop-off: 720-4455-BFR/[info@boulderfoodrescue.org](mailto:info@boulderfoodrescue.org).

We always take each volunteer out on their first run. Go over how to attach the bike trailer, where to pick up the food and where to drop off. After that, direct them to the volunteer handbook that outlines how to conduct their pickup in case they forget anything on their next run.

#### ***10. Lower the bar to entry with easy collaboration***

Google Docs! We keep everything from our volunteer schedule, food rescue logs, contacts, and to-do lists on Google Docs. This allows our group to share information easily and efficiently. Also, create an email list where volunteers can collaborate with each other to cover shifts or make trades.

Google Voice is also a useful (free) tool which allows you to connect a single, forwarding phone number to multiple phones. We use this number, which rings our ~5 most involved volunteers, as a primary contact number. Volunteers call this number if they run into problems during a pickup, and donors and recipients can use it for a first contact. By having all core volunteers share



the responsibility of answering the phone, no one volunteer must shoulder the burden alone.

### ***11. Managing money and finances***

Create a bank account that only board members and possibly a financial manager can access. This financial manager could give oversight for the board members, however, Boulder Food Rescue does not have a financial manager. Also, create a comprehensive finance sheet that documents spending and donations. Do regular checks to make sure the bank statement matches your financial sheet. If this is an intimidating process for you, odds are you can find an accountant in your extended community who would be willing to donate some of their time, at least to help you get started

### ***12. Raising money: donations and fundraisers***

One of the most effective ways to fundraise is through personal requests to your network of friends and family. We started by contacting everyone we knew. It can sometimes be hard to ask for money, but do it, and you might be surprised who is willing to help you out. You can make this easier by having a Paypal account that allows people to donate online. After that, work on making the name of your rescue program well known throughout your town or city. This can be done through media outreach and visibility. If you make your mission known as both necessary and effective in your community and direct them to your website, random people will be compelled to donate. You can also approach individuals or businesses to provide money or materials for a very clear goal, like money to construct a bike trailer or bins for food donations. Eventually, start writing grants. With a solid mission statement and a positive and creative future, grants are possible to obtain and can help sustain the entire organization. Here are some fundraising events we've used to raise money:

- Film screening (with free meal), at a local co-op, and suggested donation
- Open-mic (with free meal), and suggested donation
- Selling t-shirts and homemade soap at various "tabling" events
- Food Rescue/Beer Olympics and Concert at local microbrewery
- DIY Concert/ open mic at a big friendly house or coffee shop
- Donate-what-you-can Yoga Class (with after-party)
- Crowd-sourced fundraising: <http://indiegogo.com> (can be an expensive endeavor if you don't meet your goal... they take 14% of what you raise)

### ***13. Get the word out by utilizing the media***

Set up meetings with people from the media, write press releases, etc. in order to have articles published. We have a press group, that is a designated group of volunteers that are allowed to correspond to the media. It is important to give rules about what to say or not in PR situations, because reporters and volunteers often get the story wrong. As a condition for agreeing to an interview, ask to read over anything they write to make proper corrections and clarifications *before* it is published.

### ***14. Regular meetings create community***

We have weekly "operations" meetings. These meetings have a set agenda with topics added throughout the week by both board members, interns, and volunteers. We use a open and shared document on google docs so that anyone can access and add to the agenda items. You can check out our doc [here](#). One of our interns generally facilitates the hour-long meeting in a comfortable space (typically with a pint of beer). We also have monthly board meetings, or more as needed. At board meetings we follow an agenda of items that are suggested by members of the board prior to the meeting (also through a google doc). One person keeps minutes (notes), and we post those online afterward for maximum transparency. We try to keep board meetings short, efficient and transparent.

### ***15. Celebrate early & often***

One way to both celebrate your volunteers, recruit man and women power, and spread the word about your mission/progress is to hold events. This could be through dinners, educational documentaries, or bike rides. One documentary worth sharing with your community is Dive!

<http://www.divethefilm.com/>

Finding fun and practical ways to thank your volunteers can be a fun project. For our interns at Boulder Food Rescue, members of the board canned some of the intern's favorite foods, including beets, apples, and ketchup. Yummy....

## ***16. Make a plan for long term financial sustainability***

Although the expenses necessary to run an all volunteer food rescue nonprofit can be quite small, growing to a reasonable size and maintaining momentum year after year may require a steady flow of income. Near our one year anniversary, we hired a part time volunteer coordinator and executive director. This was an expensive decision, but we thought it was necessary to keep the nonprofit functioning and growing in the long term. Based on our experience, there are a few models for long term financial sustainability that are worth considering: Donors and paying back tax savings In early 2010, Congress changed the Internal Revenue Code relating to section 170(e) to expand deductions for businesses that donate goods to nonprofit organizations. Previously, the tax deduction allowed businesses to recoup the initial cost of the appreciated item, but with enhanced deduction relating to section 170(e)(3), these donor organizations can now earn up to twice the initial cost. More specifically, the IRS states, "deductions can be equal to the cost of the inventory donated, plus half the difference between the cost and fair market-selling price, not to exceed twice the cost" (NAIER 2011). In general, grocery stores that donate food, calculate this based upon the average fair-market value and the average cost of all donated food. Food rescue organizations are in a great position to take advantage of this enhanced tax deduction. Over the past few years, some of the larger food redistribution organizations that are members of Feeding America have already leveraged this IRS code to fund part of their operational costs. Generally, these organizations reach an agreement with food donors in which the grocery stores provide a portion of the tax deduction as a donation. According to Roger Gordon of Food Cowboy, the typical "handling fee" for food rescue organizations is around 15% of the overall deduction. Local government and trash taxes Many local, city governments have established zero waste goals. Boulder, for instance, established a "Master Plan for Waste Reduction" in 2006. Part of the implementation of that plan involves charging companies a per-pound tax on trash. The proceeds from this tax are used to fund local organizations whose missions also align with the zero waste goals. We have been discussing the possibility of receiving some of these funds in Boulder, which could range from several thousand to more than ten thousand dollars per year. Food rescue organizations are an obvious recipient of these funds and can even work to lobby local government to develop zero waste goals. A social enterprise model Social enterprise models have been receiving a lot of attention in nonprofit communities

as a way for long term financial sustainability. Food rescue organizations can make money by producing and selling food (canned goods, baked goods, etc.) either to individuals, or to organizations that would otherwise be paying a for-profit company for food. There is some liability associated with food production, and some foods must be prepared in a licensed commercial kitchen (check the ordinances in your own community). However, thanks to Cottage Foods bills that have been recently passed in several states, including California and Colorado, there are many types of food that can be prepared in a standard kitchen and sold at local markets. Food rescue nonprofits can also utilize a kitchen to provide vocational training. Successful examples include the amazing D.C. Central Kitchen, or Street Fare, a bakery that operates out of the Boulder Homeless Shelter and sells cupcakes and other baked goods at the local farmers' market.

**Advertising on bikes:** Bike-based food rescue creates a natural opportunity for advertising due to the high visibility of our volunteers pedaling food around. In Boulder, we're working towards attaching billboards to our bike trailers and asking local companies to pay an annual fee to advertise on our bikes. The idea was inspired by the amazing folks at B-Line Bicycle Delivery in Portland, Oregon. B-Line runs a reverse-logistics food rescue operation and sells advertising space on their pedicab-style bikes. One major consideration for us was whom we would advertise for, since we wanted to limit advertising to local companies whose actions align well with our ethics.

### **17. Kick Butt & HAVE FUN!**

Thank you for your hard work, friend! Please feel free to contact us if you need any further guidance, advice, or general excitement.

This section has some questions raised by our friend Dory in Boston while she was just starting to get food rescue going there, along with answers provided by Hana and Elliott, two of our main volunteer coordinators. **Do recipient organizations usually sort/prep/cook the food donations? Or is that something that BFR volunteers do?** We will sort through the donated produce at the grocery store and pick out any of the particularly nasty bits. This is stuff like peaches that are totally smushed, moldy cherries, etc. Recipients will sort what they can afterwards. We do encourage recipients to not waste any of the food we give them, though. This has happened with some of our recipients here. It's cool to give them ideas of what to do with certain, perhaps

not-so-regularly-seen veggies. So, in short: we sort out unusable stuff and allow recipients to prep and cook things accordingly. **Where do you do the sorting?** At the place where you pick up the food. They'll almost surely have a trash/composter where they leave the food for you. **Were there other food rescue organizations already working in Boulder when you started? If so, how did you reach out to them so that you were not duplicating efforts?** There were some food rescue programs (like a big one called Community Food Share) already in progress, yes. We sort of differentiated ourselves by focusing on the things these other groups weren't rescuing, as I understand the story. Big groups often deal with big, big amounts of stuff (think an 18-wheeler of beets or something), and we focus on small, sustainable "just-in-time" food rescue. That's our motto. Sustainable, Just-in-Time rescue for things that nobody else has the capacity to save. But, there may even already be something similar to that in Boston. In that case, you can work with them to fill in all the cracks. Contact them, ask what they do/where their focus is, and plan accordingly. **Did people ever question how you would continue to deliver via bicycle through the winter? If so, how did you field this question?** We said "we're badass". Of course we didn't say that, but that's basically it. We are committed to providing food to the outlets we have. They need it year-round, end of story. Obviously if there's a blizzard out, it might be tough for us to get there (or, specifically use bikes), but there's still food waste and there's still hungry folk. Simply put- we're committed. Also, we subsidize the purchase of winter, studded tires for our volunteers. I think we pay for half of the cost. Safety first, after all. **How did you guys approach to Food Not Bombs to work with them? (It seems like they are probably most similar to the BFR model.)** Funnily, FNB preceded BFR in Boulder. And the founders of BFR were already involved with FNB, so the egg came first here. However, I think you should call the folks at FNB in Boston, see what they do with food, and strategize with them. I bet bridging the gap between FNB and Bikes Not Bombs in JP would be a GREAT place to find both volunteers and donors/recipients... powerhouse duo right there. **Which food waste donor organizations did you reach out to first, and/or how did you prioritize which donors you wanted to work with?** Our first donor was a Whole Foods Market called Ideal. There are a few criteria that help us determine which stores to approach first: We started by approaching natural food stores because there is less corporate jargon, better food, and less intimidation in general. The other thing that we consider when approaching stores is location to high-need recipients. So depending on where a big concentration of shelters, meals, low-income housing units, etc. is located, we would find stores close by that are easy biking distance. Locally owned stores tend to be easier to get on

board because managers make the decisions instead of corporate headquarters, and it usually provides them with good image in the community.**How do you measure the metrics of the food waste that you rescue?**We lock up bathroom scales at all the donors with our trailers. The volunteer will weigh themselves, then weigh themselves with the food, and subtract the difference. Then we use our web application to keep track of all the data (weight and contents of donation, e.g. apples, oranges, potatoes, etc.)**How did you convince food waste donors to let you park trailers in their parking lots, and put bins in their stores? Have there ever been issues with this set up, or has anyone ever made suggestions on how to improve it?**Bins in the store- we use the bin system in order to make it easier on them. We say that we try to find a place to store the bin somewhere between where they cull the food and where they throw it away. It makes it easier on them overall, so they've been receptive to storing it. Trailers- You can ask, and try to store the trailer at the end of the bike racks, so its not really in their way. Some of the stores have told us that it is in their way, or there isn't enough bike parking for people, so we have found nearby bike racks to store it on in those situations. **Do you provide your volunteers with bicycle safety training and/or make them sign a waiver before they volunteer for pick ups (in the case that, god forbid, anyone ever got into an accident)?**No. Most of our volunteers are bikey people anyway, so they are down. But that's not necessarily a good assumption to make. Its a volunteer program, and I don't think we are held responsible for them if they get in an accident, but I'll look into that more. We go along with them on their first pick up and try to give advice about how to steer the trailer, and the best route to take (avoiding highways with bad bike lanes, taking bike paths and fun routes). Then we also try to encourage our volunteers to use bike lights at night, by storing extra bike lights they can put on the trailers while they are out.**Do you have a schedule or document that you use to keep track of your volunteers and food runs?**Yes. We used to use a spreadsheet on google docs for our schedule. We do about all of our coordination by google docs. Now we have a web application that we use that a few people developed which is WAY easier for changing things and organizing volunteers. Once you get going, we can probably add you to the web application that we use (we can put different regions on it) and you can use it as well. When you are ready for that, email us ([info@boulderfoodrescue.org](mailto:info@boulderfoodrescue.org)) about setting it up.

Boulder Food Rescue was founded on August 27th, 2011 by Caleb Phillips, Becky Higbee and Hana Dansky. The organization has grown organically and passionately and been a learning experience for all involved. A first glimpse of awareness about food waste in Boulder began for Hana when

she started jumping in dumpsters at the beginning of 2009 as part of a class project. After seeing how much food was thrown away, she felt a need to do something about it. She spread her knowledge and bounty of food with Caleb and other friends, who then started diving themselves. As a result, a community began to develop surrounding food appreciation. To share the food and educate a larger group of people, Hana and her roommates began organizing weekly 'freegan' dinner parties for friends and beyond (usually around 50 people a week). However, it was clear that serving a free meal to college students was not meeting the greatest need, and there was more to be done to stop good food from being discarded. Caleb and Becky felt the same way: Caleb had grown up in shelters and remembers many bland meals lacking in nutrition. Becky had been disgusted by the food waste in her own home when she was growing up. When Caleb called about a freegan brunch one day, Hana suggested they start Food Not Bombs instead. They cooked a giant meal and served it in the middle of town, while simultaneously biking around and looking for homeless people to give it to. Food Not Bombs Boulder grew into a weekly event. At this point, all the food for the meal was "dumpstered", carefully sorted, cleaned and cooked. Finding more food than they could ever serve, Becky and Caleb began donating boxes of fresh vegetables they would find to local soup kitchens that were in need of them. Food Not Bombs continued to grow in Boulder, serving up to 120 in the park every Saturday. Caleb, a research scientist by trade, Rhonda, a colleague, and Becky decided to take a more rigorous investigation of food waste in the community. After collaborating with the local food bank and talking to food rescue organizations nationally, they published a research paper about food waste in Boulder and Broomfield County through the University of Colorado. One result of this research was that in terms of pounds, there appeared to be enough discarded every day to feed everyone who was hungry in the two counties. This observation, paired with the knowledge that local dumpsters were overflowing with perfectly good food, convinced the trio that it was time to get more organized. At first, local bakeries and restaurants were donors, providing excess bread, pastries, and leftovers. The first large donor was Whole Foods Market (located at Ideal Marketplace in Boulder, CO). When they asked tax-deductible receipts could be provided for donations, it seemed time to file for our own 501(c)3 status. Caleb put it all together and Boulder Food Rescue (BFR) was created. From there, BFR grew rapidly, in part by utilizing the strong communities that had already been formed through 'freegan' dinner parties and Food Not Bombs meals. A system of food rescue was developed that was in-line with the greater ethics of the movement: using sustainable human-powered transportation and keeping expenditures and



consumption to a minimum, while directing as much fresh and nutritious food as possible to those with the greatest need. A simple scheme (described in this handbook) was developed to enable easy food rescue, using plastic bins that stay at grocery stores and are picked up daily by volunteers with bikes and bike trailers. As the nonprofit grew and gained legitimacy, new donors were approached and new volunteers came on, including two amazing interns, Helen Katich and Nora Leccese, who helped tremendously in the development of Boulder Food Rescue from the very beginning. Natural allies emerged in the community through the local bicycling co-op, a food co-op, pay-what-you-can meal, and numerous organizations that serve the needy in Boulder. BFR has prospered in large part due to the hard work, passion, and idealism of its volunteers and organizers, who created a million new ideas and hopes for the future. With more than 50 active volunteers, BFR relies on the adage that 'many hands make light work'. With the right community, passion, determination and persistence, BFR is proof that radical grass-roots change is possible, and can develop into a serious and much-needed nonprofit organization.

### ***Reflections after one year***

*The following is a short essay written by one of our founders (Caleb) about lessons learned during the first year of Boulder Food Rescue...*

It's been almost exactly a year since I sat down and started filling out the paperwork to create a 501(c)3 nonprofit called [Boulder Food Rescue](#). Since then, we've grown from the three founders (myself, Hana Dansky, and Becky Higbee), to a crew of more than a hundred folks in Boulder who are passionate about issues surrounding food: both reducing waste and getting nutritious fruits and vegetables to folks who wouldn't otherwise have access to them. This week, we'll hit 250,000 lbs of food rescued. Last month, we rescued almost 24,000 lbs. Every month, we have rescued more food than the last. And, perhaps most excitingly, there are food rescue groups in Oakland and Denver that are beginning to use our model. This, to me, indicates that we're doing something right; we've developed a powerful model that supports a straight-forward idea. And, we're addressing very real issues.

This month, Hana, who has been working as a full-time volunteer since we started the organization, took the position of Executive Director. Having a paid staffer is a big step for us, and I have great faith in Hana's ability to lead the organization. We're currently

[fundraising](#) to support the position (contribute if you can!). Prior to Hana taking the helm, I've served as the *de facto* Executive Director. It's been an absolutely enjoyable experience, from which I've had the opportunity to learn a great deal. With Hana taking over, I thought I'd write a little something about what I've learned, running an all-volunteer nonprofit. Maybe there's a book somewhere that tells you to do these things, but I haven't read it. These are simply the things that I've gathered, some of them seemingly by accident and some through a lot of hard work:

**Be Uncompromising:** When we started Boulder Food Rescue, we decided that we wanted to solve the issues of food waste and hunger (malnutrition) in our community. We wanted to create an idea that could spread to other areas. But, in hindsight, perhaps most importantly, we wanted to do it without substantial environmental impact—using bicycles to transport the food. In the first couple months, I fielded a lot of criticism about this. Were we being too idealistic? Too stubborn? It couldn't work in the winter, could it? What if there was too much food? Could food be transported safely when it got hot? Well, it works. And, more than that, I think that the uncompromising nature and sheer stubbornness of this goal is responsible almost directly for our success. Doing food rescue by bike draws attention to what you're doing, it conveys your commitment and passion, it provides access to a ready set of natural allies vis a vis the bike community, and perhaps most importantly, it's *fun*. In hindsight, I can't underestimate how important that decision was to getting us where we are.

**Don't pay for anything you might be able to get for free:** Time and time again I've been surprised at what other organizations and individuals are willing to give as a gift, when all we do is ask. People have donated bike trailers, tools, and a tremendous amount of their time and expertise. We've managed to survive a year on an extremely small budget and in part that's because we're frugal, creative, and crafty. Knowing what you can get for free, what you can ask to have donated, and what you *must* pay for, is essential for keeping costs down.

**Be Persistent:** Simply put, grocery stores don't want to donate food. As profit-motivated organizations, it's not immediately clear that it's in their best interest. Their employees are overworked and distracted by other projects. They (often) hire communications personnel trained

to convey their business in the best possible light (even when it isn't strictly true) and to politely turn away any inquiry that may require a bit extra work or distract from the central mission. While this is especially true of grocers, it's also true of restaurants, caterers, and bakeries. Every single one of our donors told us "no", usually many times, before they eventually said "yes". And, it was sheer persistence and commitment to our ideas that allowed us to patiently ignore the "no", while waiting for the "yes" we knew was coming. This stubborn persistence takes work, but I think it has been essential to our succeeding to the extent that we have.

**Lead By Example:** I don't have any training in managing people (or employees). I know there are classes on this that tell you what to say and how to motivate employees and volunteers. I don't know if those things work, but here's what has worked for me: work to the standard that you want other people to work to. If you do the jobs that no-one else wants to do, and do them well and happily, then other people may decide to follow your lead. If you come to meetings, and show up on time, and work with passion, it may rub off. I try to work harder than anyone else that I ask to help me so that when I do ask for help, I have a chance to have earned the permission to make that request.

**Ask for Help When you Need It:** The first month the nonprofit existed, we ran in the red. I paid for things out of pocket and watched our negative balance grow. Then, one morning, I wrote an email to about 30 of my friends and family. I told them what I was doing and asked for a little help monetarily to get things going. I was blown away by the generosity. We went from a negative balance of almost \$1,000 to a positive balance of ~\$2,000 almost over night. It was due to these people that we were able to get off the ground to begin with. Then, sometime during the Spring, I had to ask for help again: I ran into a personal conflict between the 40+ hours a week I was putting into Boulder Food Rescue, and the 80+ hours a week I needed to put into my thesis to finish by the deadline I had set. I was overworked and stressed out, and for a moment there, I stopped enjoying the work that I had enjoyed the most because it felt like I was just moving, robot-like, from one task to the next. Then I did something that doesn't come naturally (to me at least): I asked for help. In particular, I asked Becky, Hana, Helen, and Nora if they could take over some of the things I had been doing (on top of all the work they

were already doing). I was blown away by their response and willingness to take on more responsibility and to help me when I needed it. In addition to reminding me what it means to be a good friend and helping out when it's needed, they showed that they wanted to do more and were more than happy to step up.

I don't want to even start to claim that this is all there is to running a successful all-volunteer nonprofit organization\*. I think there's a great amount that is domain-specific: minutia about how to do outreach and recruiting, and we've learned plenty there too, which we've tried to package into a handy publication to help other food rescue groups get started. But, for me at least, these five things are the big ones. They have become a personal mantra and I think they might be generally adaptable to other organizations. While they feel obvious in hindsight, a year ago I wouldn't have even known where to start if someone asked me how to run a nonprofit. I'm extremely thankful for the opportunity I've had to develop these skills and all the wonderful people I've worked with. I know that Hana will be a fantastic leader of the organization—in many ways I feel that she's naturally a better leader than I am. I've done my best to create an organization with momentum, but in the end we got lucky too: we found a strong community, we tapped into an issue that a tremendous number of people seem to be able to readily relate to and want to help with, and we've been the beneficiaries of a huge amount of generosity. I'm excited to see where Boulder Food Rescue is at its second anniversary, and to hear all about the necessary lessons that came with taking a one year old organization through its second year.

This chapter is a brain-dump of all the research, resources, and background information we've gathered about food rescue. For some things, like other food rescue groups, there are many to list so we've focused on the largest, representative organizations, and have provided them in no particular order

*\*note from the editor: we are no longer all volunteer:/*

### ***Some lovely organizations that rescue food***

1. Feeding America <http://www.feedingamerica.org>. *[These folks organize most of the nation's largest food banks, i.e., traditional food rescuers, under one umbrella]*
2. Food Not Bombs <http://www.foodnotbombs.net> *[Outspokenly a protest, not a charity, Food Not Bombs chapters have been rescuing and serving food around the world for more than two*

decades]

3. B-Line Urban Delivery. B-Shares Program. <http://b-linepdx.com/b-shares/> [An early inspiration for us, B-line does bike-based food rescue using reverse-logistics and a unique "share-based" fundraising model]
4. Food Shift. <http://foodshift.net> [Our friends in Oakland, trying to create a national movement to end food waste]
5. City Harvest. <http://cityharvest.org> [In New York City, City Harvest is the largest direct food rescue organization in the world and are a consistent source of inspiration].
6. OzHarvest. <http://ozharvest.org> [Australia's amazing Food Rescue organization]
7. DC Central Kitchen. <http://www.dccentralkitchen.org/>. [Washington DC's fantastically successful food rescue organization, which uses a large central community kitchen as part of their model]
8. Philabundance. <http://www.philabundance.org>. [Philadelphia, PA]
9. Senior Gleaners. <http://www.seniorgleaners.org>. [Sacramento, CA]
10. Food Runners. <http://www.foodrunners.org/> [San Francisco, CA]

### **The Larger Context: Background Reading**

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3. Environmental Protection Agency: Composting
4. <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conservation/rrr/composting/basic.htm>
5. United States Department of Agriculture: Gleaning  
<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm>
6. Dana Gunders. National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) report on food Waste. 2012.  
<http://www.nrdc.org/food/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>
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13. U. S. D. of Agriculture. Food security in the united states: Definitions of hunger and food security. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/labels.htm>. April 2011.
14. U. S. D. of Agriculture: Economic Research Service. Loss-adjusted food availability. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/foodconsumption/FoodGuideSpreadsheets.htm>. April 2010.

#### ***Other things we have written***

1. Caleb Phillips, Rhonda Hoenigman, Becky Higbee, and Tom Reed. Food Redistribution as Optimization. <http://arxiv.org/abs/1108.5768>. [*Our scientific study on food waste in Boulder and Broomfield Counties, Colorado*]
2. Rhonda Hoenigman, Caleb Phillips, Shari Leyshon, and Becky Higbee. Nutrition and Very-Perishable Food Rescue: A study on the contributions of fresh produce to one relief agency in Boulder, Colorado. <http://www.boulderfoodrescue.org/index.php/report-on-nutritional-impact-of-direct-food-rescue/>

#### ***Other Handbooks and Toolkits for Collective Action***

1. Kieth McHenry. Hungry for Peace. Sharp Press. 2011.  
[http://www.foodnotbombs.net/cooking\\_for\\_peace\\_promotional.html](http://www.foodnotbombs.net/cooking_for_peace_promotional.html)
2. Frog Design. Collective Action Toolkit. <http://www.frogdesign.com/collective-action-toolkit>  
  
<http://www.boulderfoodrescue.org/index.php/materials/>

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