



ARKANSAS FOOD BANK

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY TOOL KIT



Engaging Elected Officials | Mobilizing Our Community |
Recruiting | Generating Local Media | Building Partnerships



MISSION

The Arkansas Foodbank is the foundation in the fight against hunger. We find pathways to connect people, resources and food to reach those in need, providing dignity, hope and a brighter future for all Arkansans.



THE NEED


No one deserves to go hungry. Yet, *Arkansas is second in the nation for food insecurity. One in six*, or an estimated 515,000 **Arkansans**, do not know where their next meal may come from. For vulnerable populations this rate is much higher with **one in five seniors** and **one in four children** facing food insecurity in Arkansas.

Hunger affects all segments of the population. The majority of those turning to us for help are low income families, children, and senior citizens. However, working families with young children are now the fastest-growing group at emergency food programs in local communities. Nearly 35 percent of the households we serve are among the working poor and many families are turning to us for the first time.

While we admit that we cannot control the causes of hunger, together, we can become advocates and share the stories of the 515,000 children, families, and seniors who represent the broad face of hunger in Arkansas.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction to Advocacy

Why Advocacy?

Engaging in advocacy means that you are seeking to ensure that the people in your community, those who are most vulnerable, have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. Especially when those policy decisions directly impact their lives.



Everyone is an advocate...the problem is most advocate for the status quo.

Mark Ezell, 2001

Definitions of Advocacy

- To pursue and act in the interests of yourself or another
- Supporting a cause, an idea, or a policy
- Mobilizing resources to make your support active
- Motivating people to change
- Creating change in public policy and opinion

Advocacy Goals

- Recruit community partners and supporters
- Build relationships with elected officials
- Collect and share compelling and inspiring stories
- Inspire action through direct campaigns and public media

It Takes More Than Food to Fight Hunger

Advocacy is for all of us and it takes the work of each person to change our communities. Everyone has a voice and can speak out about their experiences and opinions to help the public and elected officials understand what is happening. There is power in uniting individuals to come together to fight hunger.

Advocacy Checklist

Advocacy can occur in many forms. Take a moment to review the list below and check off any actions you participated in within the last 6 months:

- Attended a hunger awareness event in your community*
- Sent a letter or email to a local elected official*
- Met with a local, state, or federal policy maker*
- Shared your personal story of why you volunteer or work to serve others*
- Shared about effects of hunger with people in your community*
- Participated in a social media campaign (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) in support of hunger awareness*
- Wrote a letter to the editor or op-ed piece for local media*
- Partnered with other local non-profits or businesses to promote food security*
- Made a phone call to a local, state, or federal elected official*
- Attended a town hall meeting held by elected officials*
- Led a discussion on hunger awareness*

RESULTS

What were your findings?

How many of these forms of advocacy have you participated in the last 6 months?

Don't have many tasks checked off? Don't worry! Through the process of this toolkit, we will help you discover how you can use your voice to empower community members and elected officials to advocate for positive changes.

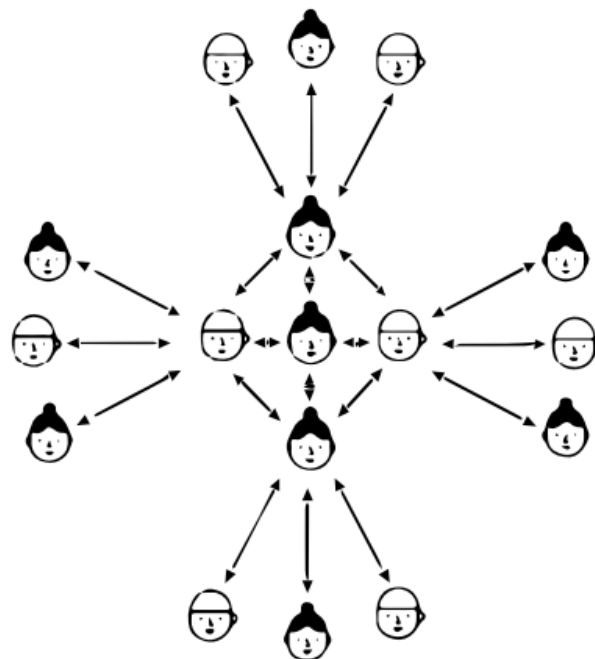
Building Your Team

Using a “snowflake” model

The goal of the snowflake model is to redistribute leadership to where no one person holds all of the power and responsibility.

This model ensures that each person is responsible for identifying, recruiting, and developing leaders. These leaders then develop other leaders, who teach new leaders and so on!

This model creates a grassroots system in which members of a team have shared responsibility for a common goal. Each member works independently to achieve their specific components, but come back together to share goals that have been met.



The benefits of reorganizing

Using this grassroots structure allows everyone to participate in ways that fit their personal strengths and interests. For example: One member in your agency may be great at speaking at events while another is great at engaging with the food pantry recipients and collecting stories. This model acknowledges that everyone has a different skill and all skills are needed to advocate for change.

Grassroots organization also takes the burden off of a single person who may be overwhelmed with the responsibility of accomplishing all of these tasks on their own.

How to implement this structure

Use the following worksheets to help you identify potential leaders and create your agency’s grassroots advocacy network.

Team Roster

Name	Phone	Email

What will your team’s regular meeting time and place be?
Teams work best when they have regular, reliable time to coordinate together.

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____

Team Building and Planning Activities

Worksheet: Developing Shared Purpose

Part One: Individual Work (4 minutes)

- In the first column, write down the unique purpose of your team.
- In the second column, write down whom your team serves: Who is your constituency? What are the people like and what are their interests? What will engage them?
- In the third column, write down the kinds of activities that your team could engage in to fulfill its purpose by serving this community?

Our team's shared purpose:	The constituency we serve:	We will achieve our shared purpose by:

Part Two: Individual Work (2 minutes)

Write one sentence that you think best describes your team's purpose, its constituency and its activities.

Part Three: Teamwork (10 minutes)

Each person should read her/his sentence. Pay attention to what words stick out to you? When you are done, have a conversation about which words best articulate the shared purpose of your entire team and write it down below:

Grassroots Advocacy Team Worksheet

Work with your team to establish the “who, what, when, where, and how” the project goals will be met.

Leadership Team Role	Main Tasks	Necessary Skills	Necessary Personality Characteristics	Time Commitment	How Chosen?
Example: Paper Plate Campaign Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizes paper plate display • Encourages food pantry clients to share their message... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable talking with people • Previous experience at volunteering at the pantry... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate about the work & community • Team-oriented... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 hours/week.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous volunteer...

Storytelling and Story Collection



End the story of hunger by sharing yours.

The next step in grassroots advocacy is to collect stories from your clients, volunteers, and neighbors.

Storytelling is a powerful tool to use to show your elected officials how people are impacted by policy decisions.

Best Practices of Collecting Stories

(Feeding America)

- **Ensure client privacy.** Ensure that you will protect the client's privacy and have them complete a photo release form. Do not provide clients' names or other identifying details without their permission.
- **Be specific.** Ask clients to avoid speaking in generalities and provide specific examples of the impact the program or legislation had on the client.
- **Keep it tight.** A story should be long enough to provide personalizing detail, but short enough that it can be retold in a few paragraphs. You may collect far more details from a client interview than you eventually use in their "final" story.
- **Use discretion when necessary.** If a client story mentions a business or brand, consider replacing the name with a descriptor, especially if you think the story reflects poorly on the business. For example, a client lost his job at the hardware store, not Lowe's, or a client used SNAP to purchase tomato soup, not Campbell's.

Developing Your Story Bank

Keep at least **five stories** on hand to share with your elected officials, supporters, or media outlets about the effects of hunger and food insecurity in your community. Consider the following guidelines when developing your story bank:

Who will coordinate your story bank?

Determine where you will store your collected stories (*Excell, Google Doc*)

Who will be responsible for updating the collection database?

Who will be trained to collect the stories? What do they do after stories are collected?

Who determines which stories will be used and when?

Storytelling and Story Collection



Developing Your Story of Self

Before you decide what part of your story to tell, think about these questions:

1. What will I be calling on others to do?
2. What values move me to take action and might also inspire others to similar actions?
3. What stories can I tell from my own life about specific people or events that would show (rather than tell) how I learned or acted on those values?

What are the experiences in your life that have shaped the values that call you to leadership in this campaign?

FAMILY & CHILDHOOD

Parents/Family
Growing up
Your Community
Role Models
School

LIFE CHOICES

School
Career
Hobbies/Interests
Finding Passion
Overcoming Challenge

ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE

First Experience of Organizing
Connection to key books or people
Role Models

Think about the challenge, choice and outcome in your story. The outcome might be what you learned, in addition to what happened. Try drawing pictures here instead of words. Powerful stories leave your listeners with images in their minds that shape their understanding of you and your calling.

CHALLENGE:

CHOICE:

OUTCOME:

--	--	--

Story Collection Worksheet

Date: _____ Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Story: _____

- Story type:
- Client
 - Staff
 - Volunteer
 - Donor
 - Community

- Story type:
- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
 - What brings you to the pantry/meal center today?
 - What is something important about yourself you would want people to know?
 - What resources do you have access to help provide food for you and your family? Like SNAP, WIC, support from family or friends
 - What obstacles do you face in order to access to feed yourself and family?

HOW TO SHARE



Website | Email | Newsletter

Arkansas Foodbank
4301 West 65TH Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72209
501-565-8121 Phone
501-565-0180 Fax
www.arkansasfoodbank.org



Photo and Likeness Release Agreement

*Participant's Name: _____

I hereby consent to the photographing, transcription, recording and/or reproduction of my name, likeness, story, pictures, voice, performances and/or other images of me or my property (collectively, the "Images") by the Arkansas Foodbank, its agents, employees, contractors, successors, assigns, media partners, or any member food bank of Feeding America (collectively, the "Foodbank").

For good and valuable consideration, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I also hereby grant to the Foodbank the irrevocable and unrestricted right to use and publish, and to license and allow others to use and publish, the Images throughout the world for any charitable, commercial or fundraising purpose in any manner or medium, including, without limitation, newsletters, promotional or marketing videos, television broadcasts, direct exhibition, training materials, the internet, slides, transparencies, and advertising or promotions on billboards, signs and vehicles (including the Foodbank's trucks).

I represent that I am 18 years of age and have the right, power and authority to enter into this Release or, if I am under 18, my parent or guardian has executed this Release on my behalf. I further represent that the use of the Images will not violate the rights of any third party and will not cause the Foodbank to incur any liability for payment to any third party. The provisions of this Release are not in conflict with and do not violate any commitment, agreement, obligation or understanding that I now have or will in the future have with any other third party.

I hereby release the Foodbank and anyone using the Images from any and all claims, losses, demands, damages, liability, costs and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses, whether for invasion of privacy, violation of right of privacy or right of publicity, violation of copyright, or any other claim which I now have or may hereafter have by reason of (i) the use of the Images, (ii) the alteration of or change in quality, whether deliberate or not, that may occur or may be produced in recording and reproducing my image, likeness, appearance or performance or (iii) the inaccuracy, alleged breach or actual breach of any representation, warranty or undertaking I have made herein.

Neither I nor the Foodbank will be liable for consequential, incidental, or special damages in connection with the use or publication of the Images. In addition, I waive any and all rights to injunctive relief in the event of any dispute with the Foodbank or its licensees, and I agree my sole remedy in such a dispute shall be at law. I hereby waive any argument or defense that the terms of this paragraph deprive me of an adequate remedy.

This release constitutes the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof. This release supersedes any prior agreements or other oral or written communications concerning the subject matter of this release. This release shall be governed and construed by the laws of the United States of America and the State of Arkansas, without reference to conflict of laws principles.

I agree that I have read this document completely before signing it and I understand its contents.

*Participant Signature: _____

*Date: ____/____/____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

If participant is under 18 years of age, parent or guardian must sign:

*Parent/Guardian name (please print): _____

*Parent/Guardian signature: _____

MEMBER AGENCY: _____

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION: _____

Paper Plate Campaign

Paper plate campaigns are a powerful and personal way to engage your elected officials on the issue of hunger in your community.

Each decorated paper plate represents a person in your community who is directly impacted by the food assistance your agency provides.

As Congress makes critical decisions about the nutrition assistance programs, this is a great campaign tool to educate fellow community members and elected officials how the families in your community are directly impacted by hunger.



Steps to a Successful Paper Plate Campaign

Step 1: Purchase the Plates

First, you'll need to get the paper plates. Pick them up from local grocery stores - some local grocery stores may be willing to donate a box of plates to your agency.

Step 2: Decide Your Goal

What message or story are you wanting to share? Is there a local bill that is focusing on a school lunch program or is Congress negotiating new child nutrition legislation? Decide who to target and what your agency and your constituents need.

Encourage personal, local stories. Have your clients/partners/volunteers respond to specific questions about child nutrition in their lives. See a list of example questions below.

- What would you like your elected officials to know about hunger?
- How is the food you receive important to you and your family?
- Why do you come to the food pantry?
- What would happen if the help you receive was cut?
- What does hunger mean to you??

Paper Plate Campaign

Steps to a Successful Paper Plate Campaign

Step 3: Spread the News

Get the word out around your agency about the paper plate campaign through phone calls, meetings, site visits, or during pantry days.

Schedule a time where your clients, partners, and volunteers have an opportunity to write their own message on the plates. Many food pantries carve out extra time to do these during volunteer events, child feeding programs, community forums, or other public events.

Step 4: Collect and Distribute

There are many ways you can use your paper plates. Collect your plates and divide them into small packets to share when you meet with your elected officials. Post pictures on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and challenge your community members to do the same. Be creative and think outside the box!

Step 5: Report Back!

Share your progress with Arkansas Foodbank staff, tag @arfoodbank, or share on Facebook. Tell us how many plates you have, how you used them, and what your best stories were.

Quick tip: Tag the back of every plate with the name and city/county of your agency, or your business card so they will remember your name

Contacting elected officials

Introduce yourself - Engaging and building relationships with elected officials and allies within your community is a critical component of advocacy. Begin by sending an email or writing a letter to introduce your agency and the role it serves in your community. Be sure to include a personal story.

Request legislative change - Communicating regularly with our elected officials and their staff is critical to building long-term, valuable relationships and can help build a foundation to request positive changes to legislation.

Utilize social media - Sharing your work on social media can create awareness around legislative issues that impact your clients.

Like/follow your legislators on Facebook and Twitter

Comment positively on their blogs or social media posts

Tips for engaging elected officials on social media platforms:

Make it personal - share why you care

Make it relevant - how does hunger impact their district?

Make it clear - tell them what your request is

Make it positive - focus on the issues



The Arkansas Foodbank will provide example letters and templates for its partners to use when specific legislative issues come up throughout the year.

The following is a sample email written by a pantry director from Lonoke, Arkansas. (see next page)

Contacting Elected Officials

Sample email written by Family Resource Services, Lonoke Arkansas

Dear ...,

I appreciate you getting back to us.

Family Resource Services (Lonoke's Food Pantry) was started in 2009 from a ministerial alliance meeting in Lonoke because more people were calling the churches needing food. The pantry serves families with children, the unemployed, the disabled, senior citizens, veterans and gives out each month food to average of 225 to 300 families and for 665 to 750 individuals. With Lonoke having a population of approximately 4200, you can see the need in our community.

Our purpose at FRS is to address the need for emergency food for those living within the Lonoke School District. We have so many families in our community that their children go to bed hungry. We need help bringing awareness to the hunger issues in our community.

The pantry's main sources of food comes from Wal-Mart, Arkansas Foodbank, USDA commodities, businesses, individuals, churches, organization and school donations. FRS would not be here if not for their support. It is all about neighbors helping neighbors! The pantry tries to provide nutritious foods to hungry families with the help of programs like TEFAP and SNAP. I don't know what our clients would do without these great programs. Lonoke is a great community to be part of and has a lot of non-profits in our community.

So with all of the help, the pantry still needs financial help. We have utilities, insurance, gasoline, food purchases, supplies, rent and other operational expenses to pay. Our community has been hit so hard with all of the non-profits we have and our donations have been going down. So what we need is help with some grants. I realize that Cabot is in our county and there is only so much financial help, but Lonoke needs help also. Jimmy, since you are the Field Representative and Grants Coordinator for Senator Boozman, we were hoping Senator Boozman could help us.

Please let me know what else we can do. Thank you from the Pantry and all of our clients.

Jane Fowler, Director
Family Resource Services
(Phone number)

Conducting a Site Visit

Checklist

- Decide what type of visit you want to have.
- Decide when you want to schedule the visit.
- Decide who else to invite to participate (should you include agencies, partners, community leaders, agriculture leaders, etc.).
- Decide whether or not to include people you serve.
- Decide whether or not to include media.
- Extend the invitation to the member of Congress' office and don't forget to follow-up with staff.
- Make sure your member of Congress knows the type of visit, who else will be involved, and if there is a media component.
- Identify your ask.
- Develop a run-of-show and talking points.
- Schedule pre-meetings with other participants.
- Develop handouts.
- Send your handouts to the member of Congress's office before the day of the visit as preparation for their office.
- Send a thank you note to the member of Congress and follow up with staff on any promised information.

Sample Site Visit Invitation Letter

The Honorable **FIRST LAST**
U.S. Senate or House of Representatives
District Office address

Dear Senator or Representative **LAST NAME**:

On behalf of I am writing to invite you to visit our food pantry that serves in (*describe location, e.g. southern Arkansas;*) Arkansas County.

A report from Feeding America shows that **X** percent of your constituents in **state/county/congressional district** live in households that struggle to put food on the table. In the coming year Congress will reauthorize the farm bill. The farm bill sets food policy and support for numerous critical nutrition and agriculture programs and is a critical cornerstone of supporting both the agriculture community and those that rely on federal nutrition programs. The next farm bill has enormous potential to help reduce hunger and support agriculture.

FOOD PANTRY/BANK knows that in order to end hunger in **STATE** we must protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), strengthen The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and advance donation policies and incentives in the farm bill.

We are grateful for your service and commitment to **STATE/CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT** and look forward to working with you to strengthen federal nutrition programs to better meet the challenges facing our community. We will follow up with your office about scheduling. In the meantime, please contact **NAME** at **PHONE** or **EMAIL** with any questions.

Sincerely,

Feeding America's Run of Show Sample

MemberX Food Bank Visit

[Date]

SAMPLE

[Time]

[essential contact details – include contact information of lawmaker staffer, food bank lead, principle people participating, in case of an emergency]

[key messages: include one sentence ask; any food bank or local data that is pertinent here – keep it straightforward and simple]

AGENDA

Introductions – Food pantry director (5 mins)

- Front door / waiting area
- Visit overview
 - Director
 - Tour
 - Meeting

Short Pantry Tour– by directory and staff (15-20 mins)

- Lobby
 - Very briefly cover:
 - Personal story
 - Food pantry background
- Food pantry tour
 - Tips:
 - Try to tie the tour to your ask (i.e. if you're making a SNAP ask and have SNAP enrollment area, go by there; or show off your fresh produce and talk about how hard it is for food insecure people to get fresh produce and how SNAP is helpful)
 - Make sure to include some locations with good photo ops for them to use in a future newsletter to their constituents.

Final location of the tour – photo op and final ask (5 mins)

- Tips:
 - Make your legislative ask or reemphasize your legislative ask if you were able to get it into the tour.
 - Get a card off a staff member to follow-up
 - Follow-up via email with pictures, any newsletter or article you shared with your board, volunteers, etc. and reemphasize your ask.

Helpful Resources

Map the Meal Gap: <http://map.feedingamerica.org/>

County, state, and national data on food insecurity:

Feeding America Advocacy Center:

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/>

Talking to Kids about Hunger:

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/talk-about-hunger/>

Share your voice about Feeding America:

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/raise-your-voice.html>

Marshall Ganz, Telling your Public Story:

<https://marshallganz.com/publications/#papers>

Find your local elected officials here: <https://www.arkansashouse.org/learn/district-map> or <http://www.arkansas.gov/senate/senatorSearch.html>

Feeding America's Advocate Resource Center:

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate-resource-center>

Hosting a SNAP Challenge

Consider hosting a SNAP Challenge which can give community members a chance to understand the struggle of obtaining adequate food that millions of low-income Americans face. Challenge the participants to make decisions based on a limited budget.

<http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/take-action-snap-challenge-toolkit.pdf>

Expand Your Reach

Consider alternative ways to advertise your food pantry services in your community:

- Local newspaper – feature stories are free advertising
- Website – a link on partner agency websites
- Word of mouth – find your community champions
- Community calendars – community newspaper, daycares and schools
- Libraries – librarians make referrals and help families to find information
- Laundromats – bulletin boards
- Agencies serving families with young children – midwives, daycares, child protection, women's shelter, high school adult learning program
- Grocery store – bulletin board, grocery bag insert
- Doctor's office – nurse or administrative staff
- Community networking groups – share information with other service providers
- Presentations at service clubs – Lions, Kinsmen, Rotary, Women's Institute, Farm

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



Member of:



arkansasfoodbank.org

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