

MODELS FOR SUCCESS

**A Set of Case Studies Examining
Gleaning Efforts Across the United States**





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INTRODUCTION

Nationally, gleaning and fresh food recovery organizations are growing in number and strength, providing their communities with healthy and sustainable foods. The National Gleaning Project (the Project) is a multi-year initiative of the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) at Vermont Law School sponsored by the National Agricultural Library, a part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service.¹ Generally, the Project aims to address law and policymaking related to gleaning and fresh food recovery as a means of reducing food waste, incentivizing and/or remunerating farmers for agricultural surplus, increasing food donations to charitable organizations devoted to food insecurity, and supporting local economies. In addition to these issues, the Project also seeks to serve as a hub of legal and other information, including best practices and innovative enterprises, developed by our gleaning partners. Through the creation of centrally located resources, the Project elevates the practice of gleaning as a valuable model for food waste reduction, community development, and social justice for the food insecure.

Despite the growing support for the practice of gleaning, few outside the agricultural and local food policy sectors can define the term. Within communities that recognize and support gleaning, the terms gleaning and food recovery are often conflated. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that there are essentially four different types of food recovery that occur in the United States: (1) field gleaning; (2) wholesale produce salvage; (3) perishable and prepared food rescue; and (4) non-perishable food donations, collection, and recovery.² Field gleaning is defined as the "collection of crops from farmers' fields that have already been mechanically harvested or where it is not economically or logistically feasible to field harvest. It can also include the collection of already harvested food at packing sheds." The United States Department of Agriculture

¹ For more information, please visit: <http://nationalgleaningproject.org>.

² See United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Waste Not, Want Not, Feeding the Hungry and Reducing Solid Waste Through Food Recovery*, at 11 (1999).

(USDA), however, uses a broader definition of gleaning, suggesting that it is “the act of collecting excess fresh foods from farms, gardens, farmer’s markets, grocers, restaurants, state/county fairs, or any other sources in order to provide it to those in need.”

Many advocates argue that gleaning and food recovery, while related, are separate and distinct. Specifically, both practices consist of the collection of surplus crops or food, but for some advocates, gleaning involves a relationship with the farmer who has grown or produced the food, whereas food recovery does not. Regardless of the specific definition of gleaning one chooses to adopt, the main intent of the practice is to recover surplus food for distribution to food insecure populations, meaning there is a charitable dimension to the act. This Project adopts a definition of gleaning that involves the harvesting of a donated agricultural product, in accordance with the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.⁴

As part of its initial phase, the Project developed an online gleaning resources hub. The hub includes a catalogue of state and national laws and regulations pertaining to gleaning and fresh food donation, a comprehensive directory and map of gleaning and food recovery organizations across the U.S., individualized gleaning liability fact sheets per state, and additional web-based resources on a variety of legal and non-legal issues associated with gleaning and food recovery practices. The gleaning resources hub is a living resource, intended to be periodically updated and to evolve as organizations begin to share information and additional resources become available. This report serves an integral function, as it highlights the innovative work of gleaning and fresh food recovery organizations from around the country to provide background on organizational models, collaborative efforts, and examples of successful initiatives that may provide useful models.

Methodology

To develop this report, the Project’s researchers interviewed dozens of local, regional, and national gleaning organizations across the country regarding their specific legal and non-legal challenges. These organizations also provided details and examples for creative and successful models in the face of these challenges. While not every organization is featured within this report, their input was invaluable and helped inform the specific issues addressed. Through a set of detailed case studies intending to focus on a diverse set of organizations, this report highlights a number of successful models and collaborative concepts that are illustrative of the work of many organizations beyond those specifically featured. Given the differences in geography, distribution networks, available funding and support, among other factors, the models of success described here may not be feasible for every organization or community. However, they address a set of considerations relevant to all organizations, such as infrastructure, funding, capacity, and location, providing valuable lessons for emerging or current gleaning organizations.

Key Findings Regarding Overarching Models for Success

From the Project team’s interviews with gleaning and fresh food recovery organizations, a set of “best practices” emerged. Given the unique needs and situations in each community, however, the successful examples detailed below may not prove useful in every case. Generally, the most successful methods emerge when gleaners cooperate with growers in their local communities to problem-solve and collaborate together.

³ United States Department of Agriculture, *Let’s Glean! United We Serve Toolkit*, at 2.

⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 1791.

Table 1

INFRASTRUCTURE & DISTRIBUTION BEST PRACTICES
Avoiding storage by distributing the same day produce is gleaned
Partnering and collaborating with other organizations working in the existing hunger network to quickly distribute the gleaned produce, creating efficiency and deterring competition over resources
Owning, leasing, or creating cooperative relationships with distributors to obtain trucks to help distribute produce, including purchasing refrigerated trucks or drive-in coolers to store produce
<p>Working with or for larger food banks to benefit from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="407 800 1349 863">1. Increased Storage: More cold storage increases the capacity to extend the shelf life of produce <li data-bbox="407 890 1328 984">2. The Food Hub Model: Food Banks can function as a hub/produce pickup location for other agencies and groups, thereby alleviating strain on agencies that already travel weekly to procure other food items <li data-bbox="407 1012 1321 1136">3. An Efficient Distribution Network: Some gleaning groups use food bank warehouse space, crews, and trucks. Some food banks deliver daily shipments of produce directly to smaller agencies that lack fresh food storage space
Consistently hosting several distribution sites at set times in public places (e.g., senior centers, housing developments, schools, etc.) in order to maximize delivery resources, rather than making several individual drop offs to various agencies at numerous locations



Table 2

CAPACITY & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
Employing a paid full or part-time gleaning coordinator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee all field gleaning operations and serve as the main point of contact for volunteers and the growers • Build trust and strong relationships with growers by developing consistent and reliable communication • Invest time to coordinate with growers prior to the growing or market season to better understand their needs and concerns
Relying on experienced and trained staff/field supervisors to lead gleaning events
Creating a professional and legitimate organization with accountable and transparent standards and policies (see Table 3. "Liability")
Sponsoring AmeriCorps VISTA or NCCC programs to manage gleaning events
Spending time in the community and clearly explaining the gleaning organization's goals
Explaining to growers specifically where their donations are going
Employing a manager to welcome volunteers, write volunteer newsletters, send personal thank you emails, and correspond with volunteers to provide clear directions/trainings for designated gleaning events
Developing a purchasing program to offset costs for growers to donate and/or sell foods in order to invest in their operations
Making arrangements to permit farmers to harvest/set aside/deliver their own unsellable produce if farmers do not wish to permit gleaning volunteers on their property
Training volunteers on site/in the field (see Table 3. "Liability")
Coordinating with other organizations to create a support system and transparent practices
Collaborating with food banks to share resources and volunteer time, especially to help sort and package produce before it is distributed

Table 3

LIABILITY
<p>Educating farmers/homeowners about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate laws• How the organization operates, including explaining insurance coverage and staff knowledge and training• Any waivers provided by the organization• Gleaning trainings for volunteers• What will happen at the gleaning event (in verbal and written form)
<p>Understanding food safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following all local and state health and food safety laws• Knowing the origin of the food, including both the producer and supplier (if engaging in fresh food recovery)• Exercising due diligence• Certifying staff in food safety training
<p>Working with volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formally training volunteers and providing an orientation prior to the gleaning event• Having volunteers sign liability waivers
<p>Carrying insurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining liability insurance coverage for staff and volunteers• Maintaining liability insurance coverage for farmers/homeowners and/or property• Maintaining liability insurance

Table 4

EDUCATION AND IMPACT
<p>Providing food education programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshops on food preservation (i.e., canning, drying, and cold storage)• Workshops on fruit tree stewardship• Activities involving youth at local YMCA and/or schools
<p>Hosting Cooking Demos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educating people about how to cook gleaned produce• Providing opportunities for recipients of gleaned produce to experiment with tasting different fresh foods
<p>Documenting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health improvement outcomes for the recipients of gleaned products (if information is available)• Pounds and types of produce gleaned or recovered• People, populations, agencies, communities served• Donors




CASE STUDIES

Field Gleaning⁵

Traditional field gleaning – which consists of gathering excess produce – benefits farmers, volunteers, and the food insecure. As the case studies below illustrate, field gleaning can open unique marketing opportunities and avenues to farmers by increasing the farm’s exposure to volunteers while assisting the food insecure in their communities, either directly or through the agencies, organizations and food pantries designated to receive fresh, local, and diverse foods for distribution. Field gleaning also allows volunteers to engage with their community, gain valuable skills, and understand how their food is grown. The following case studies illustrate a set of models that may assist organizations focused on field gleaning to gain recognition, legitimacy, and support. Additionally, the case studies demonstrate how gleaning organizations have collaborated with other groups to make their operations more successful and viable.

Many successful organizations across the United States glean millions of pounds of produce annually. For instance, Society of St. Andrews has been a nationally recognized leader in field gleaning operations for almost forty years. Relying on the efforts of 57 staff members and 40,000 volunteers a year, Society of St. Andrew gleaned 20 million pounds of produce annually.⁶ With a faith-based mission, Society of St. Andrew works with numerous volunteer groups, including churches, synagogues, scout troops, senior citizens groups, and schools. Due to this extensive volunteer network and the collaborations with committed farmers, donors, and service agencies, Society of St. Andrew is able to maintain costs at 2.4 cents per serving of gleaned food. The Gleaning Network operates primarily in the southeastern part of the United States, but Society of St. Andrew also coordinates a national large-scale produce recovery program called the Potato and Produce Project.⁷ This project is explained in more detail in the “Fresh Food Recovery” section of this report.

⁵ The National Gleaning Project defines field gleaning as the act of a third party (individual or organization) harvesting an agricultural crop directly from the farm or garden for the purpose of free distribution to those in need.

⁶ See <http://endhunger.org/gleaning-network>.

Recipe for Success: Organizational Collaborations, Full-time Staff, and Community Relationships

Collaborations such as those utilized by the Society of St. Andrew are instrumental in facilitating the growth of regional gleaning networks and statewide gleaning collectives faced with limited resources. Many organizations achieve success through collaboration and the sharing of resources that allow gleaning and distribution efforts on a larger scale. For example, the Vermont Gleaning Collective provides technical assistance, staff training, and operational support to its member groups to support gleaning efforts statewide.

In addition to such strategic collaborations, a dedicated full-time staff able to oversee gleaning efforts and coordinate between organizations, farmers, and volunteers is essential to a successful program. Long-term staff members develop and sustain relationships with community members and offer a reliable and trusted presence. For many organizations, the Corporation for National and Community Service is a resource for placing AmeriCorps volunteers into various positions. As discussed in more detail, the AmeriCorps program is a significant and valuable source of affordable workers to help start new gleaning programs or grow existing ones.

Finally, both rural and urban field gleans can strengthen community relationships and offer vulnerable individuals ownership of their community and food source. For example, the Oregon-based Linn Benton Food Share partners with fourteen different gleaning groups whose members participate in gleaning efforts. Therefore, those receiving the benefits are actively involved in the solution.

Success Snapshots



Farmers Against Hunger (FAH) - New Jersey Agricultural Society

Farmers Against Hunger recently celebrated twenty years in operation. This organization's success is attributable in part to New Jersey's strong agricultural heritage that has embraced u-pick farming operations. Because so many farmers already purchase insurance for these u-pick operations, and because u-pick farms have a steady stream of foot traffic on the land, these farmers are less concerned about the presence of gleaners on their farms. FAH recovers approximately 1.35 million pounds of produce each year: between 700,000-800,000 pounds of produce are recovered from grocery stores and wholesale markets, while 400,000-500,000 pounds of produce are gleaned directly from farmers, either harvested by the farmers themselves or volunteer gleaners.

Innovative Practices/Collaborations

- Farmers started FAH and play a leading role in the organization, which lends credibility to the organization among farming communities.
- The New Jersey Agricultural Society also hosts programs like Ag. in the Classroom, Ag. Leadership, nutrition education, etc.
- Corporations sponsor gleans and encourage their employees to participate in gleaning efforts.

- FAH works with four main distribution sites each week and the process works as follows: (1) FAH delivers produce to each of these four sites; (2) Approximately 40 different organizations (about 10 organizations per site) arrive at the distribution sites to collect the produce, and (3) those 40 organizations redistribute the produce to the end recipients. Such an effective distribution system allows fresh produce to reach a maximum number of people.
- FAH was instrumental in the passage of three state laws to raise awareness and educate the public about gleaning as a means of addressing food insecurity and combating the issue of food waste. In 2016, the New Jersey State Legislature created the New Jersey Gleaning Week and Farmers Against Hunger Day to engage the public in these efforts.



Ag Against Hunger (CA)

Ag Against Hunger has worked for 25 years with 57 different partners to capture surplus produce for delivery to food banks and schools across a six-state network. The team of five full-time employees distributes 12.7 million pounds of produce each year.

Innovative Practices/Collaborations

- The Schools for Produce Program partners with a foundation, in addition to farmers and distributors, to purchase small-scale salad bars for schools. The program also includes the creation of graphics geared towards children to introduce them to whole foods, including kale and strawberries. Schools do not pay for the produce, but may pay a transport delivery fee if they are unable to pick it up.
- Ag Against Hunger works directly with farmers and uses a traceability system to track which produce was gleaned from which farm, grower, or company. The record keeping system also maintains dates of delivery and pick up, farm addresses, and contact information for farmers, growers, and companies involved in the gleaning operations.
- Ag Against Hunger has an “emergency glean team” that works within 24 hours to remove excess produce from the growing fields before farmers plow them under.





Salem Harvest (OR)

Salem Harvest refers to its volunteer gleaners as “harvesters.” Each of the organization’s harvests is supervised, harvesters are required to follow all the farm’s rules, and the organization carries liability insurance. Salem Harvest gleanes only from farms and backyards. Harvesters can take home half of the harvest, regardless of their income level, while the remaining half of the harvest is donated to needy populations. Harvesters receive specialized training, and harvest leaders supervise approximately thirty (30) gleanes each year. On average, this organization harvests 293,000 pounds of produce per year (approximately 10-15% from backyards and the rest from farms).

Innovative Practices/Collaborations

- Salem Harvest collaborates with the Marion-Polk Food Share of the Oregon Food Bank, which provides boxes, trucks, totes, equipment, storage, and warehouse facilities.
- When Salem Harvesters is unable to harvest all available crops, the Oregon Food Bank’s Pay and Pack program pays farmers to continue to harvest rather than plowing under any excess.
- The Food Share teaches canning techniques and proper freezing and storage to harvesters to extend the life of produce past the growing season.



IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES



Downeast Gleaning Initiative: Gleaning with a Focus on Public Health

Ellsworth, Maine • healthyacadia.org/initiatives/gleaning.html

The Downeast Maine Gleaning Initiative (i.e., the Gleaning Initiative), a project of Healthy Acadia in partnership with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, harvests and collects approximately 50-65,000 pounds of unclaimed produce every year. Focusing its efforts on supporting small organic and diversified farms employing sustainable practices, gleaning and food recovery efforts are designed to build connections where there are gaps between food excess and food access. Since 2013, the Gleaning Initiative has connected over 200 volunteers with 40 different farms, and 25 food pantries and meal sites in both Hancock and Washington counties. The Gleaning Initiative integrates its gleaning operations into the current food system by further connecting community members to organizations and businesses to work together in a more responsive and flexible food economy and inspire a shift towards a more resourceful food culture. Through a collaborative network approach, food security initiatives and food production systems are connected in new ways to increase resilience at the community level. The Gleaning Initiative's contribution to public health can be measured holistically by increased community connectivity, opportunities for healthy outdoor activities, and access to nutritious food.

Background and Operations

Healthy Acadia aims to build healthy communities in Hancock and Washington counties by empowering people and organizations to lead healthy lives through a broad range of community health initiatives. The roots of the Gleaning Initiative began in

2006 with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension coordinating the Maine Harvest for Hunger Program in Hancock County. In 2010, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMaine Extension) and Healthy Acadia started an annual tradition of community volunteers gleaning apples each fall from a local “u-pick” orchard for distribution to food security organizations. The movement continued to grow in 2012 when a Community Development Block Grant was awarded to Healthy Acadia, in partnership with the city of Ellsworth, to expand the gleaning activities to include a full-time coordinator. This grant allowed Hancock County to significantly increase the gleaning efforts and later allowed for the expansion of gleaning efforts into Washington County in 2014. Subsequent state, federal, and private grants continue to sustain the program. Currently, Washington County has a part-time gleaning coordinator and Hancock County has a full-time gleaning coordinator.

Models for Success

The Gleaning Initiative manages volunteer training and placement, farm relations, and food handling and distribution of gleaned food from 40 farms to 20 community meal sites, food pantries, and other organizations in Hancock and Washington counties.

The volunteer management responsibilities are shared with the UMaine Extension Master Gardener Course, which provides 2-5 new champion volunteers every year, and 2-3 returning volunteers from the previous year. A base group of self-motivated gardeners are identified in early March and proceed to develop their personalized scope of work in conjunction with the Gleaning Coordinator and Extension Office Educator. A tentative schedule and activities work plan are collaboratively designed to incorporate flexibility and responsiveness. By working with small farms, farmer’s markets, market gardens, and community gardens, one or two volunteers can be responsible for the relationship with each production system and gleaning model while still working directly with the Gleaning Coordinator. Other volunteers that get trained during the season are then brought out to work with one of these long-standing or champion volunteers by the Gleaning Coordinator and then matched with the champion of that gleaning relationship. The goal is to develop, model, and pass on a sustainable gleaning system in each locality so the community can come to own this activity – and with it, strengthen farm to pantry relations and community engagement in building food security.

Farmers who engage in gleaning activities are able to further connect with their community in ways that would otherwise be considered too time consuming, or seemingly fall outside of their business model. In addition to bringing community members on to the farm to engage with their farmers, occasionally farmers are introduced to potential employees for future labor needs that they cannot always easily fill. The Gleaning Initiative brings people onto the farm who are already “willing to get dirty” which can sometimes be difficult for farmers to find. The gleaning process also provides a collaborative platform for farmers to engage in surplus management. Sometimes unclaimed surplus and seconds can get a second chance at getting sold below market price to a social organization, food bank, food pantry or meal site through connections that are naturally made as part of the farm-to-pantry process of gleaning. In some cases, instances of shared labor, transportation, and marketing allow farmers to receive direct economic value from collaborating with gleaning efforts, such as the case of sorting through large amounts of squash and grading the squash for the farmers’ various market channels in the process. As a result of these mutually beneficial and

supportive activities, donations from farms to their community increase and relationships strengthen, creating more resilience towards the common goals of reducing food waste and improving food security.



The distribution models use strategically-placed storage spaces to create the most resourceful food donation delivery and pick-up systems. In one community, a retrofitted insulated cargo trailer with Coolbot refrigeration is a central hub where food gets dropped off and picked up with extensive sign-in and sign-out quality management documentation. In another locality, two reach-in refrigerators and a cold room serve as a central drop-off location for farmers and gleaning volunteers and as a once a week pick-up location for recipient organizations. By creating a self-serve one-stop-shop produce pick-up location for food pantry and meal site volunteers, The Gleaning Initiative can better serve food security organization volunteers to customize their own produce selection, manage their schedule, and create consistency and increased volunteer satisfaction. These efforts provide increased access and availability of higher nutritional quality food. Throughout its supply chains, The Gleaning Initiative ensures basic food quality and food safety standards with indications to all parties on: 1) proper food handling, 2) safe and proper storage, including food grade containers, 3) general hand washing tips at on-farm stations, and 4) the Good Samaritan Act⁷ and providing donations of food in good faith.

Measures of Success

- Creating stakeholder feedback loops for constant improvement of day-to-day operations to maximize the economic, environmental, and social value of gleaning activities.
- Focusing on the public health goals of increased nutritional quality and diversity of foods being offered through food security organizations and the emergency food system.
- Building shared success outcomes with strategic partnerships at the local level and ensuring sustainable funding for the program through in-depth collaboration.
- Expanding the model to other localities to embrace similar goals and learn from different operational designs to ensure easy replication of gleaning systems.

⁷ Congress passed the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Bill Emerson Act) in 1996 [42 U.S.C.A. §1791 1996] to create a federal baseline level of protection for food donors. Specifically, the Bill Emerson Act protects a “good faith” donor (a person, gleaner, or nonprofit organization distributing donated products who acts with good, honest intention or belief). These donors are not liable for an injury or death that results from the condition of the donated product, except in cases of gross negligence or intentional misconduct, as defined by the Bill Emerson Act [42 U.S.C.A. §1791 (b)(7-8) 1996]. The Bill Emerson Act also protects landowners from civil and criminal liability in the event gleaners collecting food for donation to charity are injured on the landowners’ property, except in cases of gross negligence or intentional misconduct by the landowner [42 U.S.C.A. §1791(c)(1)(d) 1996].

Collaborations

- Healthy Acadia partners with the UMaine Extension, working with the Master Gardener Program to help provide a consistent source of volunteers.
- Together with UMaine Cooperative Extension, Healthy Acadia co-leads the Hancock County Food Security Network that serves as an advisory council to The Gleaning Initiative.
- Other partners include Good Shepherd Food Bank, FoodCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, Farm to School, farmer's markets, College of the Atlantic, and UMaine Machias.
- The Gleaning Initiative has also collaborated with jail inmate work programs, Drug Court, special needs youth groups, and others. It hopes to see expansion of these particular programs.
- The Gleaning Initiative partners with Good Shepherd and other food banks and commercial kitchens to take advantage of important value-added processing opportunities, such as making applesauce; freezing meat broth, kale and other value added products; and vacuum sealing and freezing products for later use.
- Schools and universities help develop gleaning and processing opportunities such as facilitating volunteers working in commercial kitchens to engage community members with commercial foods.
- The Mainers Feeding Mainers program works with Good Shepherd Food Bank to identify opportunities for economic returns for farmers' surplus management.



Harvest Against Hunger (HAH): Placing AmeriCorps VISTA's to Build Sustainable Gleaning Operations

Washington State • <http://firstharvest.org/harvest-against-hunge>

Harvest Against Hunger (HAH) is a program of Rotary First Harvest (RFH), and partners with the Corporation for National and Community Service to place AmeriCorps VISTA members throughout the state of Washington. HAH works to strengthen established gleaning programs or to help establish new local gleaning groups. The program gleans ½ million pounds a year at eight AmeriCorps VISTA sites. Each VISTA host site varies in size, ranging from regional or statewide organizations to local community action programs. The Harvest VISTA project allows for flexibility to assess and meet the needs of local communities, farmers, and food pantries in order to increase fresh food donations to local hunger relief organizations.

ROTARY FIRST HARVEST

Rotary First Harvest (RFH) is a non-profit corporation and a program of Rotary District 5030 that connects and collaborates with growers, truckers, volunteers, and food banks. RFH's core work for over thirty years has been produce recovery. It works as a large-scale non-profit produce broker connecting produce donors (farmers and processors) with trucking companies to deliver the donated produce at a significantly reduced rate or for free to partner food banks across the state. RFH relies on the



existing infrastructure in the hunger relief system, and through connections and collaborations, it is able to transport between 8-12 million pounds of produce a year. RFH partners with the food bank network of WA, and their biggest partner is Northwest Harvest. RFH has been a leader organization in the area of gleaning and fresh food recovery. Find out more information at <https://www.firstharvest.org>

Background and Operations

Harvest VISTA members build and grow sustainable produce recovery programs during their year of service with HAH by working directly with volunteers and growers. Harvest VISTA works closely with farmers to implement sustainable gleaning practices, coordinate volunteers, and develop processes for distribution and transportation of the gleaned produce. The programs developed by the VISTA members continue to grow to help meet the needs of local communities. VISTA members focus on sustainability beyond the VISTA's term of service, typically resulting in the gleaning project's hiring a part-time or full-time gleaning coordinator.

Since 2009, HAH has developed over 25 produce recovery projects, worked with over

100 VISTA volunteers, and gleaned upwards of 3.8 million pounds of fresh, local produce. Harvest VISTA members have engaged over 800 farmers and coordinated over 16,000 volunteers. The VISTA members require a small cost share and typically serve one year of a three-year project cycle. HAH uses a team of 8-11 yearlong VISTA members, along with 9 summer VISTA members. RFH employs four full-time staff members, including a HAH Program Director. The HAH Program Director acts as the liaison between the Corporation for National and Community Service and project host sites, and also coordinates all the Harvest VISTA members.

Models for Success

- Working with VISTA volunteers.
- Funding a full-time coordinator as a key component to success.
- Engaging volunteers at a local level, building sustainable gleaning and produce recovery programs across Washington by working with volunteers and farmers directly.

Collaborations

- Working with several statewide hunger relief organizations (see next page).

EXCELLENT RESOURCE

Check out The Produce Recovery Resource Guide, written by Harvest VISTA members. The Guide offers extensive case studies that showcase the diversity of gleaning operations across Washington State, along with information on how to start or improve your gleaning project. [<http://rfhresourceguide.org/Article/164>].



Interview with Beth Baker, Program Director, Rotary First Harvest, Harvest Against Hunger

Q: With regards to the VISTA program, do you have any specific information you would want to include, including the benefits and/or lessons learned from using VISTA volunteers (which could possibly be replicated in other organizations)?

A: Rotary First Harvest and Harvest Against Hunger occupy a unique niche in Washington's hunger relief system. RFH's core work as a produce broker, as well as HAH's VISTA gleaning network, requires very little infrastructure or equipment to manage, and allows us to be nimble as we adapt and respond to the changing landscape of hunger and agriculture. This core work has built a sturdy network of partnerships with organizations across Washington, which we support in a variety of ways, including placing VISTA with them to develop and strengthen produce recovery programs.

We see many benefits to working with CNCS to place AmeriCorps VISTA with host sites. The HAH program seeks out a diversity of partnerships for placements, resulting in creative programs and tools developed to support many facets of the hunger relief system. These tools include: a pallet-sized refrigerated pup trailer built to haul small loads of produce behind a passenger car from farm to food bank, a client survey developed to assess which types of produce are most likely to be eaten, and an online portal that connects growers and food pantries and aids in produce transactions. Creative programs developed include: a food bank farm on a converted golf course that grows for 12 food pantries, numerous plant start distribution projects, in addition to numerous produce recovery projects that are adapted to and reflect each community's needs. AmeriCorps VISTA's focus on capacity building rather than direct service has yielded resilient systems in organizations across Washington's hunger relief system that remain in place long after the three-year VISTA project cycle ends.

Drawbacks of the VISTA program include the difficulty of transitioning a new VISTA into each host site organization every year. Often these VISTA members move across the country to participate in the program, and start their terms with little knowledge of the community or understanding of the Washington hunger relief system. This can be both an asset and a challenge, as VISTAs come with diverse experiences from other communities, which enrich the organizations at which they are placed. A key element of the VISTA's work is developing relationships with local growers and food banks, and this social capital can be worn thin when a new coordinator rotates in every year. However, we see an important facet of our work to be cultivating the next leaders of the hunger relief system, and a significant number of our HAH VISTA alum have remained in food systems work.

Q: Why is having a full time coordinator a key to the success of the HAH program, and can you explain the dynamic between the staff at RFH and the VISTAs that creates success?

A: With 8-11 VISTA positions around the state, managing the VISTA cycle of recruitment, interviews, training, supervision, and reporting is easily a full-time position.

We work hard to cultivate this network of VISTAs, and provide monthly conference calls where Harvest VISTA share what's working well and what challenges they find. These calls have led to interesting cross-pollination of efforts, sharing helpful resources, and troubleshooting.

The once yearly training that takes place in Seattle for all Harvest VISTA builds the team as well, and is an important in-person resource that gives RFH a chance to interact in person with geographically distant VISTA and build rapport. Rotary First Harvest and all of the staff, but especially the program director, offer support and resources to both the VISTAs and their host sites. RFH has a good sense of the produce recovery efforts taking place across the state, and is able to offer suggestions, ideas, and connections to Harvest VISTA as it develops projects.

Q: With regards to your direct work with farmers and volunteers, how have the VISTA volunteers facilitated and created sustainable relationships and programs?

A: Harvest VISTA members establish and coordinate gleaning and produce recovery programs in communities across WA by developing systems to facilitate relationships with growers and volunteers. Placing a full-time VISTA member with an organization gives growers and volunteers a consistent individual to work with. Many growers have stressed how important this consistency is, especially during the height of the growing and harvesting season.

Another key to the work Harvest VISTA does is essential program marketing and outreach so that communities are educated about local produce donation possibilities, the Good Samaritan Law, and how they can get involved. Every cohort of Harvest VISTA impart their produce recovery knowledge in a series of articles and case studies that we compile into the RFH Produce Recovery Guide. This repository of gleaning knowledge is a critical element in the sustainability of the program.

Q: Are there any notable or successful collaborations that your organization is engaged in that you feel should be recognized?

A: The statewide network of hunger relief organizations that has developed over Harvest Against Hunger's seven years as a program have resulted in our ability to hear and respond to both the challenges and strengths of the gleaning network and the statewide hunger network. Some of our responses include a program called Farm to Food Pantry (F2FP), in partnership with WSDA, which leverages the relationships and distribution systems developed statewide by our Harvest Against Hunger host site programs. Contract growing arrangements are set up between growers and food pantries, and growers are paid for their produce, which both supports small-scale Washington growers as well as gives food pantries more of a choice in the fresh produce they have to offer to their clients. In the 2016 growing season, the F2FP project doubled the number of growers we worked with in 2015. Additionally, Rotary First Harvest is in the final stages of completing the F2FP Evaluation Report, which is a fine example of how our broader network of current HAH programs participate collaboratively in the statewide hunger relief system, as well as showcasing those HAH graduated programs that are sustainable, and how they continue to have an impact, not just locally, but on a statewide level.



Hidden Harvest: Creating Jobs by Combating Food Waste

Coachella, CA • hiddenharvest.org

Hidden Harvest recovers and gleans over 1 million pounds of fresh produce per year in the Greater Palm Springs Region in southern California. Executive Director Christy Porter explains that the program focuses on two major issues: 1) minimizing food waste by recovering fresh, healthy, locally grown produce from area farms and packinghouses to feed the food insecure; and 2) paying for labor, since they do not use volunteers in the field. Along with field gleaning, Hidden Harvest also engages in recovering fresh produce from packinghouses. In its 16th year in operation, Hidden Harvest works on a large scale, serving 55,000 people a month through its own programming, and distributing fresh produce to over 60 partner agencies serving low-income families in their region.

Background and Operations

Hidden Harvest was started to address food insecurity by gleaning and distributing food left on fields after harvest. The organization's Executive Director recognized the significant opportunity presented by agricultural surplus, contacted local growers about the issue, and Hidden Harvest was founded. As a first matter, the organization set out to secure insurance. However, it was initially difficult for the organization to raise money for insurance to cover the farm workers, facility, and the growers. From the perspective of Hidden Harvest's Executive Director, insurance is a necessity. Currently, Hidden Harvest maintains a two million dollar liability insurance policy to cover all growers.

The organization's budget is divided into service and administrative costs. The organization decided to hire skilled labor rather than to rely on volunteers for its operations. Initially, however, it was difficult to raise money to pay the farm workers' wages. After years of working within this model of paying skilled farm workers, the public now eagerly supports and donates to cover the cost of labor and other services. The Board of Directors covers all administrative costs, allowing 100 percent of donations and grants to be applied directly to the cost of services. About 2.5 pounds of produce is recovered for every dollar that is donated.

Models for Success

- Hidden Harvest hires skilled farm workers to field glean and pays them a living wage.
- Although Hidden Harvest does not use volunteers for gleaning in the fields, it has nearly 200 people who dedicate 1,500 volunteer hours a month to wash, box, and bag the produce at its facility. Volunteers also assist at the senior markets, making them an essential part of the organization's success.

“The market does such good things for seniors because it is founded on choice, meaning each person can get what they want to eat.”

CHRISTY PORTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
HIDDEN HARVEST

- Hidden Harvest hosts senior markets, which are similar to farmer's markets. The organization distributes produce to 20 locations twice a month. The senior markets are all founded on choice, meaning each person can take what he or she wants to eat. Each senior can take home about 9.5 pounds of produce with every visit.
- Hidden Harvest also engages in “pop-up” markets where it goes to schools and acts like a “drive-through.”

Collaborations

Hidden Harvest traditionally traveled up to seventy miles to different delivery locations, spending large amounts of time and money on travel alone. Now, a Feeding America affiliate performs all the deliveries, totaling nearly one million pounds. Thus, time spent previously doing deliveries can be spent on food recovery efforts.





Linn Benton Food Share: Gleaning Recipients Working for a Solution to Hunger

Linn and Benton Counties, Oregon •

<http://communityservices.us/nutrition/detail/category/gleaning-programs>

Linn Benton Food Share (LBFS) is the Regional Food Bank serving Linn and Benton Counties, Oregon. LBFS provides food and other services to a network of 68 non-profit agencies in the Willamette Valley. Of this number, fourteen are gleaning organizations. Linn Benton's gleaning program is a unique model where each gleaning member participates in the day-to-day operations and gleaning efforts of the respective group. Self-declaration of household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline is the only criteria for membership. As a result of this low-income membership, businesses that sell agricultural products can receive Oregon's Crop Donation Credit (up to 15% of wholesale value) for the products they donate and are "gleaned" by groups. In relation to the emergency food system, the LBFS Gleaning model helps lower demand at local food pantries and meal sites by providing this weekly supplement of good food to active members and adoptees.

Background and Operations



The 14 gleaning groups are independent, non-profit organizations. Each group must fund raise and seek grant funding for its respective operations. Members who cannot physically participate in the gleaning events can be "adopted" by other gleaners, who provide a portion of their harvest to these individuals. Many of the gleaners are disabled, elderly, and all are low-income. Linn Benton Food Share is a department of a Community Action agency, and is the only regional food bank in

Oregon that funds a "Gleaning Programs Coordinator" position. Gleaning groups and LBFS volunteers currently utilize the LBFS warehouse for group repack projects (frozen and dry goods, depending on group type and distribution).

Linn Benton Food Share requires that each gleaning group have a field coordinator to oversee volunteers at all times during a gleaning event, ensuring that the volunteers do not cause any damage to donors' fields. The Linn Benton Food Share Gleaning Programs Coordinator holds yearly field training workshops and oversees large field gleans. Also, LBFS requires that every gleaning group be covered by Liability and Volunteer insurance. This reassures donors in allowing volunteers onto their fields. Linn Benton Food Share coordinates the insurance process, which is a cost savings for the groups. Finally, Linn Benton Food Share provides field training workshops to gleaning group participants and provides them with specific rules and practices to follow in the fields.

Linn Benton's vision is "Everybody Eats," and it works with emergency shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens, child and senior care centers, shelter homes, and gleaning groups to help feed families in need.

Models for Success

- Gleaners are themselves also the recipients of the donated products, using household income self-verification as qualification for membership. Gleaner members that actively participate in any glean split their harvest, with half going to their household, and the other half going to “adoptees” (elderly and disabled members who are not physically able to glean in the fields). Active members are asked to contribute up to 8 hours per month in volunteering for the group. Food cannot be denied to any member failing to complete this hour requirement, however. Non-glean donation pick up activities are shared equally among all the membership.
- Each group carries volunteer insurance and each member receives coverage while engaged in gleaning activities for group. In addition, each group is required to have liability insurance. LBFS coordinates with insurance companies to provide a blanket insurance policy covering all 14 gleaning groups as a coalition.

Collaborations

The Linn Benton Food Share Gleaning Program participants glean on Oregon State University agricultural fields and countless privately owned farm operations. The OSU Extension program provides some nutrition services to the gleaning program.





Salvation Farms: Integrating Agricultural Surplus into the Food System and Building a Collaborative Gleaning Network

Morrisville, VT • <http://www.salvationfarms.org>

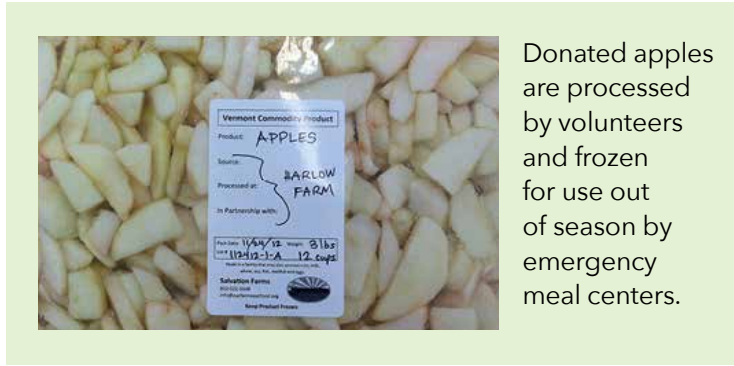
Salvation Farms serves as the coordinating entity for the Vermont Gleaning Collective (VGC) and the Vermont Commodity Program (VCP) with the overarching goal of capturing agricultural surplus throughout the state of Vermont and distributing it to institutions, partners, programs, and individuals with limited access to food. Salvation Farms provides assistance and support to the Vermont Gleaning Collective, which is an organized network of community-based gleaning programs in Vermont. In 2015, the VGC collectively recovered 217,696 pounds of produce, comprised of 57 different types of crops from 89 different farms for distribution to 70 recipient sites. The Vermont Commodity Program augments these efforts by aggregating, performing quality assessments, and case packing gleaned crops. This work often includes repackaging crops from bulk containers into quantities suitable for a meal site or an individual/family. Additionally, the VCP sometimes engages in minimal processing.

Background and Operations

Salvation Farms originally began in 2004 as a pilot project of Pete's Greens, a certified organic, four-season farm in Vermont. A year later, the project evolved into a community based gleaning project with financial oversight from the Northeast Organic Farming Organization of Vermont (NOFA). Over the course of three years, the project captured 88,000 pounds of food with the assistance of hundreds of volunteers that committed over 2,500 hours. In 2008, Salvation Farms joined the Vermont Foodbank to incorporate this successful model into the Foodbank's operations, building and strengthening relationships between Vermont's farmer donors. Through that partnership, over one million pounds of produce was gleaned and donated from 120 farms over the course of three years. In 2011, Salvation Farms sought status as an independent non-profit to focus the organization's efforts on providing oversight and technical support for capturing and managing agricultural surplus within Vermont. Specifically, the organization recognized a need to develop programs beyond gleaning as a means of instituting a systems approach to address food security, food waste, and farm resiliency and viability.

Salvation Farms has grown to partner with numerous farms, organizations, institutions, agencies and community based gleaning groups to expand its operations beyond the fields of the farm. Salvation Farms donates gleaned produce at distribution sites that serve Vermont's most vulnerable populations. Those sites include, but are not limited to: senior centers, food shelves, affordable housing developments, and preschools. To establish relationships with farms, Salvation Farms approaches farmers prior to the growing season either to affirm and improve on an existing relationship or to establish a new one. Salvation Farms relies heavily on volunteers to glean surplus produce. AmeriCorps VISTA members or interns assist with administrative roles at Salvation Farms, as well as provide assistance during the gleans. After gleaning, Salvation Farms stores crops for a few days in order to build an inventory for weekly distribution. This allows sites to prepare for the delivery and creates a more efficient delivery route. If food is highly perishable, Salvation Farms delivers the food on the day of the glean.

Salvation Farms also uses gleaned surplus crops in the Vermont Commodity Program, which captures, cleans, packs, and processes larger volumes of surplus crops to stimulate the local food economy. The Program began as a set of pilot projects at sites including Green Mountain College and the Southeast State Correctional Facility, but now has permanent roots in its Winooski, Vermont facility. The Commodity Program engages unemployed or underemployed individuals (trainees) in a four-month workforce development program intended to provide them with skills for jobs in the food/



Donated apples are processed by volunteers and frozen for use out of season by emergency meal centers.

agricultural or manufacturing sectors. The repackaged and processed agriculture surplus is intended to supplement, but not compete with, the for-profit market for locally produced foods that serves institutions throughout Vermont.

Models for Success

- Salvation Farms serves as the organizing entity that provides technical and operational support and assistance to the Vermont Gleaning Collective, which ensures that gleaning organizations prepare their gleaners with a set of best practices for food safety, as well as quality control so that those who receive the food have a dignified experience.
- Salvation Farms prepared a “Community Based Gleaning” guide to assist groups interested in starting a gleaning initiative and is presently refining an operations manual for VGC members that reflects accepted practices and recommends procedures for gleaning in Vermont.
- Salvation Farms created a website for the VGC to help streamline the registration process for volunteers across the state and assist in data collection. Farms, distribution centers, and volunteers can participate in the website. The data collection system records the following information: glean date, farm location, crop volume, collection method, distribution date, and recipient site as well as volunteer engagement.
- Salvation Farms and the VGC also promote farm identification. Each box of gleaned produce should have a label identifying the farm where the produce came from, crop identity, and glean date to build community around and support for local farms.
- The Vermont Commodity Program serves community based gleaning organizations, farms, and farm aggregation businesses by managing large volumes of agricultural surplus while providing workforce development skills.

Collaborations

In addition to the many collaborations highlighted above between Salvation Farms, farmers, recipient organizations, and various state and local entities, in 2016, Salvation Farms asked Vermont farmers to collaborate in a different way

and participate in the Vermont Food Loss Survey. Fifty-eight vegetable and berry farmers responded to the survey. Their responses led to the comprehensive food loss estimates Salvation Farms presented in their report titled *Food Loss in Vermont: Estimating Annual Vegetable and Berry Loss*. The Vermont Food Loss Survey involved partnerships with participating farms and is an important data tool to assist Salvation Farms in its mission to manage surplus agriculture. The survey revealed that roughly 14.3 million pounds of wholesome produce never leaves the farm. Of that produce, 32% of the crops were never picked. Sixty-eight percent of crops were already picked, but the farm had neither sold nor donated the crops.

“It’s not really the farmer’s fault when there is food loss on farms. Gleaners help move food into the community when the farms can’t afford to.”

THERESA SNOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SALVATION FARMS



Boston Area Gleaners: Using Distribution Partners to Expand Reach

Waltham, MA • <http://bostonareagleaners.org>

Boston Area Gleaners (BAG) partners with more than seventy (70) farms to glean fruits and vegetables for distribution to over 600 hunger relief agencies in eastern Massachusetts. The organization focuses its efforts on three main activities, which include field gleaning, farm storage gleaning, and post-harvest farm pick up. More than half of the product gleaned by BAG goes to its distribution partners, the Greater Boston Food Bank and Food for Free. In part, because of these partnerships, the organization doubled its gleaning totals year-over-year in both 2014 and 2015. In 2016, BAG gleaned 421,167 pounds of produce, including over 60 varieties, and amounting to more than 1.6 million four-ounce servings.



Background and Operations

Boston Area Gleaners was founded in 2004 and incorporated as a non-profit in 2007. The organization began as a partnership with a single farm. The following year, the organization was able to triple the pounds gleaned with the addition of another farm partner. Presently, BAG consists of four permanent staff - including an executive director, a distribution program manager, a gleaning program manager, and a development assistant – and at least two seasonal staff from July-December each year.

The gleaning program focuses outreach to farms that begin at the organization's geographic base, which is comprised of seven counties within eastern Massachusetts, but largely concentrates its efforts on four of those counties. Outreach to farms typically occurs during the slower winter months and includes service reviews with existing farm partners, in addition to offering gleaning services to new farms. The organization targets farms based on geographic location, as well as size, product variety, and quality. BAG prioritizes partnerships with larger farms because of their influence on local pricing and demand, which lends credibility to the organization, captures more volume per unit of effort, and creates additional partnership opportunities through farmer referrals.

In 2015, the organization saw a 63% increase in the number of farms gleaned, a 39% increase in volunteer participation, and a 35% increase in the number of recipient agencies. Because the organization is growing so rapidly, it has also expanded its distribution networks and the people served. The organization recently partnered with Daily Table, which is a price-controlled, non-profit retail store that includes fresh produce and prepared meals consisting solely of surplus or excess food. Additionally, BAG partners with the Greater Boston Food Bank, Food for Free, and the Merrimack Valley Food Bank for the bulk of its distribution; BAG also delivers directly to a growing number of pantries and meal programs.

Models for Success

- Because of its relationship building efforts, Boston Area Gleaners has been invited to work with some of the largest farms in eastern Massachusetts.
- Volunteer gleaners are required to sign a waiver before arriving at a gleaning site, sign up for individual gleans through a customized web-based system that includes a product tracking component, receive training in the field, and are never unsupervised.
- BAG has a central storage facility located on an agriculture extension site with both cold and dry storage and owns company vehicles for pick up and distribution.
- In addition to gleaning primarily Grade A produce, the organization is expanding its capacity to glean Grade B product, thanks to its partnerships with Daily Table and other processing agencies such as Commonwealth Kitchens.

Collaborations

Because of the many collaborations between Boston Area Gleaners and other organizations that are able to fulfill distribution and processing functions, the organization has been able to focus most of its resources on the actual gleaning and recovery of produce. In addition, these collaborations have enabled the organization to expand its reach, adding more recipient organizations, agencies, and individuals each year.



FOOD BANKS INVOLVED IN GLEANING

Food banks across the United States are increasing their fresh food donations in order to provide healthy, high quality produce to the people they serve. Food banks can collaborate with local gleaning and fresh food recovery organizations, establish plant-a-row programs, purchase directly from local farmers, pay a small fee to encourage farm donations, or even start their own field and fruit tree gleaning programs to provide fresh produce to their communities. Food banks distribute gleaned produce according to various methods (e.g., produce markets, senior programs, back-pack programs, produce drop-offs, etc.) and some also establish food bank farms or community gardens. Some food banks even offer other services beyond gleaning and recovering fresh foods, such as nutrition education, cooking and canning classes, and workshops on light processing of fresh foods.

Many of these food banks are part of the larger Feeding America network (<http://www.feedingamerica.org>) and can receive excess produce from around the country and recover produce from grocery stores or food manufacturers. Several food banks expressed the importance of providing a variety of the freshest produce possible to their partner agencies and to the individuals they serve. Food banks are realizing the opportunity and role they can play to facilitate and provide infrastructure, capacity, and stability for those involved in gleaning and fresh food recovery.

Although this section highlights food banks that are involved directly with field gleaning, there are other innovative programs that partner with gleaning organizations while supporting local growers. These programs are worth mentioning due to their impact on increasing fresh food donations, the economic support they can provide to local growers, and the ways in which these programs can strengthen local food systems. Food banks across the country have started direct purchasing programs, in which they coordinate contracts with local farmers before the growing season to purchase produce at or just below wholesale prices, thereby creating another avenue for growers to help with losses while supporting the hungry in their communities. Two examples are the Mainers Feeding Mainers program at Good Shepherd Food Bank in Maine, and the Farm to Pantry Program at the Mid-Ohio Food Bank in Ohio (refer to text boxes for more information). Further, Bellingham Food Bank is an example of a food bank that not only engages the farming community by gleaning, but also by purchasing directly from local growers through their Food Bank Fresh program as described in the case study below.

Direct Purchasing

GOOD SHEPHERD FOOD BANK



In 2010, the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Maine started a program called Mainers Feeding Mainers (<https://www.gsfb.org/how-we-help/programs/mainers-feeding-mainers>) that supports farmers by paying a wholesale price for their produce. Not only is the Mainers Feeding Mainers program a community building initiative, but it also creates gleaning and produce donation opportunities. The Food Bank creates a letter of understanding with the farmers, wherein the Food Bank makes a commitment to buy a

certain amount of produce, but includes flexible measures if a crop fails. Overall, this program strives to produce more long-term economic stability for these farmers and allow them to grow their businesses. Since 2010, Mainers Feeding Mainers has partnered with more than 50 growers to acquire and distribute over 4 million pounds of fresh, local foods to Mainers in need. Several programs operate under Mainers Feeding Mainers, including a farm to pantry and a farm to warehouse program, both of which offer transportation to help eliminate another barrier for local growers. The farm to pantry program coordinates over 75 pantries' contracts with local growers. The farm to warehouse program delivers the fresh foods to the Food Bank warehouses for proper storage and year round distribution. At the end of the growing season, the Food Bank hosts a "harvest celebration" for the participating farmers in order to gather feedback about the program and allow the farmers to network with each other around a common cause. Currently, the program is growing its storage and processing capabilities that will expand the shelf life of the fresh, local foods to serve Maine's hungry year round.

MID-OHIO FOODBANK

In Ohio a similar program exists at the Mid-Ohio Foodbank (<https://www.midohiofoodbank.org/programs-services/our-programs>). The Foodbank is the largest produce distributor to the hungry in Ohio, distributing 24 million pounds of fresh produce to a service area covering twenty counties. The Foodbank is also a member of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks that coordinates the Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program, a program included in the State of Ohio's budget for the Association

to purchase all Ohio-grown produce and distribute to Ohio member foodbanks (<http://www.ohiofoodbanks.org/programs/program-detail.php?id=3&page=10>). Beyond this program, the Mid-Ohio Foodbank prioritizes purchasing fresh produce, and contracts with local farmers during the winter months. The Foodbank also coordinates a farm to pantry program where the Foodbank helps to develop relationships between the local agencies and the farmers to deliver directly to the local agencies. Overall, the Foodbank strives to acquire local foods when possible and to encourage the growth of the local agricultural markets in the process.





Bellingham Food Bank (Bellingham, WA)

<http://www.bellinghamfoodbank.org/getting-great-food/small-potatoes/>

The Small Potatoes Gleaning Project, managed by Bellingham Food Bank, gleans more than 100,000 pounds of produce a year with the help of over 100 active volunteers. A full-time staff person at the Food Bank coordinates Small Potatoes, along with other agricultural initiatives. To create an efficient distribution system, other agencies and smaller food banks (known as food pantries or food shelves in other areas of the U.S.) pick up fresh produce weekly from the Food Bank. The Food Bank has the capacity and volunteers to sort all the produce on-site, eliminating barriers for smaller agencies to take on handling more fresh produce. Overall, the Food Bank invests heavily in fresh produce programs and directs funds to improve and expand cold storage in their facilities. The Food Bank partners with smaller agencies and larger food banks across the region, including Rotary First Harvest (refer to the section on fresh food recovery), to move excess fresh produce across the state. This strong distribution has proven beneficial to the gleaning programs throughout the state.

Models for Success

- Hiring a full-time coordinator— After becoming part of the Food Bank and hiring a full-time staff person, Small Potatoes significantly increased how much produce could be gleaned per season. The coordinator could ensure that farmers had all their questions answered in a timely fashion and that standards and policies were made transparent to farmers so they could have confidence in what happens to the food they donate.
- Utilizing Salesforce database management program— The Food Bank uses the Salesforce program (see <http://www.salesforce.com/platform/database/>) to manage the Small Potatoes' donors, announce volunteer events, and more. Since many gleaning events must be coordinated on short notice, Salesforce allows the Coordinator to send out an announcement email to over 400 individuals on the volunteer list. Once enough volunteers RSVP for a particular glean, that event is closed and is listed as “full.”
- Contracting with local farmers to purchase produce before the growing season— Food Bank Fresh Program coordinates with local farmers to purchase food before the growing season either as a wholesale contract or a commitment to buy via a local food hub. In some instances, payment is made in advance; in others, Food Bank Fresh Program reserves discretionary funds to purchase based on what is available. In some circumstances, this has proven a better method for year-round access to local produce.





GleanSLO (San Luis Obispo County, CA)

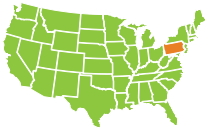
<http://www.gleanslo.org>

GleanSLO, the gleaning program at the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, engages in backyard fruit tree harvests, field harvests, and fresh food recovery at farmer's markets. The opportunities to glean are numerous due to the year round growing seasons in California. GleanSLO operates seven to nine gleans a week in the summer and fall months and one to two gleans a week in the winter, totaling nearly 200,000 pounds of produce gleaned per year with the assistance of 600 active volunteers each year. Since GleanSLO's inception, it has gleaned more than one million pounds of local produce. The Food Bank handles the administration, program staff, fundraising, and overhead costs for the gleaning program and provides for necessary infrastructure and equipment.

Models for Success

- Prioritizing volunteer trainings and coordination– Empowering volunteer leadership is a key program component. Volunteer Harvest Leaders are responsible for leading more than 50% of the gleans. Hiring an AmeriCorps member is a cost-effective way to lead the volunteer coordination.
- Working under the food bank model creates a streamlined process and provides support with regard to infrastructure, distribution, tracking, and traceability– GleanSLO can access the Food Bank's trucks, insurance, and equipment for gleaning events, which keeps costs down for the gleaning program. The Food Bank infrastructure allows GleanSLO to easily track information because local hunger agencies provide figures to the Food Bank for accurate reporting. GleanSLO and the Food Bank can therefore keep a detailed log of donors and the amounts donated.
- Using the GleanWeb website platform– GleanWeb includes a harvest calendar, volunteer information and sign-up, crop donation form, a support/sponsor page, and more (see <http://www.gleanweb.org>).





Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (Pittsburgh, PA)

<https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org>

For over twenty years the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (the Food Bank) has operated a gleaning program. The Food Bank employs a full time coordinator as the main point of contact with the farmer and supplies the trucks and equipment needed for each gleaning event. In 2013, the Food Bank sourced almost half a million pounds of fresh produce directly from farms within a 100 mile radius of Pittsburgh, PA. The gleaning program sends out a “glean alert” to an email list of volunteers to fill each glean and the volunteers collect the gleaned produce in bins to be distributed to local food pantries or through the mobile pantry called “Produce to People.”

Models for Success

- Hiring a full-time staff member to coordinate all produce sourcing for the Food Bank, including coordinating the gleaning program, with assistance from the AmeriCorps VISTA program – It is critical to have a trained and consistent point of contact to build relationships with the local farmers.
- Offering five flexible options for farmers to donate fresh foods – 1) Farm Pick-ups, where farmers may donate excess produce to the Food Bank or directly to partner agencies, or the farmers may drop-off at the Food Bank warehouse; 2) Gleaning, where volunteers arrive at the farm to glean in the fields after harvest; 3) Cost recovery program, where farmers can sell their excess produce and seconds to the Food Bank; 4) Plant a Row, where farmers can designate certain fields to plant and harvest that will be donated to the Food Bank; and 5) Farmer’s Market Connection Program, where farmers can donate directly their excess produce to a member agency at the end of the market day.
- Distributing gleaned produce directly to member agencies and through the Produce to People Program – The Produce to People program offers large-scale distribution of fresh produce at seventeen different community sites. Each family who participates receives 30-50 pounds of food consisting mostly of fresh produce.





Vermont Foodbank (VT)

<https://www.vtfoodbank.org/gather-food/gleaning>

The Vermont Foodbank Gleaning Program rescues nearly 500,000 pounds of locally grown produce a year. Of this, nearly 150,000 pounds is harvested with the help of volunteers and the remaining produce is donated or picked up directly from local farms to be distributed to 225 food shelves, meal sites, and senior centers throughout the entire state of Vermont. The Gleaning Program partners with over 80 farmers a year to coordinate gleans and/or pick-ups, and organizes over 800 volunteers through the Foodbank. Two full time gleaning coordinators, along with a Director of Community Health and Fresh Food Initiatives, are on staff at the Foodbank to coordinate and lead the Gleaning Program.

Models for Success

- Hiring two full-time gleaning coordinators – these coordinators are able to build relationships with the farmers and develop a strong communication system. A local presence on a weekly basis is critical to show the farmers that the produce is helping those in need.
- Using a “produce event” model for the distribution of gleaned foods, called the VeggieVanGo™ Program – The Foodbank delivers fresh foods to schools and hospitals as community gathering places for a more creative, timely way to get a larger amount of food into the hands of those who need it. For instance, the Foodbank can hand out 5-10,000 pounds of produce per event.
- Providing workforce development and job training via the Community Kitchen Academy (CKA) – CKA utilizes rescued foods from various locations, including gleaned produce from farms, to help train underemployed and unemployed Vermonters for careers in the food service industry. The meals prepared by students are distributed to food shelves that are located on-site.



FRUIT TREE GLEANING⁸

Although traditional field gleaning can effectively and efficiently gather excess produce and create unique opportunities for volunteers to develop community relationships with growers and agencies that receive food donations, field gleaning no longer solely applies to a large agricultural field in a predominately rural area. Urban settings are now popular and valuable places to glean—from urban community gardens, farms, and public orchards, to private gardens, backyard fruit trees, and orchards.



Backyard Bounty at the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County (CA)

Backyard Bounty has harvested over 1.2 million pounds of food from private properties in the Santa Barbara area since 2007. The gleaned produce includes oranges, limes, avocados, persimmons, and tangerines. This healthy, fresh produce is then distributed to those in need throughout Santa Barbara County via 300 different agencies. The group harvests from backyards, gardens, farms, and orchards – which include private properties, public and historic properties, as well as commercial properties.

Innovative Practices/Collaborations

- The volunteer leadership program, called the Pick Leaders, includes three or four people who are safety trained and are covered under the Foodbank’s car insurance.
- Backyard Bounty uses VolunteerHug to track volunteers and has combined its tracking efforts with the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County to better track volunteer interests, participation hours, communication, and opportunities across the organization.
- Many volunteers come as students from nearby colleges.
- Backyard Bounty is able to use the Foodbank’s warehouse, crews, and trucks to distribute the food they glean.
- The organization has implemented a new section of the Backyard Bounty program, which includes gleaning produce from the local Santa Barbara Farmer’s Market. One exemplary volunteer spends every Saturday morning with his son working with the Farmer’s Market vendors to “rescue” produce at the end of the market and directly distribute it to agencies that afternoon.



⁸ The National Gleaning Project defines fruit tree gleaning as the act of a third party (individual or organization) harvesting fruit and nuts directly from trees and bushes for purpose of free distribution to those in need.

CASE STUDIES



Village Harvest (CA)

Craig Diserens, Executive Director

Village Harvest started fifteen years ago (2001) by accident in the suburbs of the Bay Area, in what is now known as Silicon Valley. The area had been the largest fruit producing area in the world and now it is full of tech companies. Friends organized a first community harvest in Palo Alto with 22 volunteers and 9 homes participating, and with 1,200 pounds of freshly-picked citrus donated to a local food pantry, the stage was set for the later Village Harvest organization. Today, this volunteer-powered organization gleanes up to 1/4 million pounds a year primarily from homes and backyards, and over 2.3 million pounds since inception. As the largest home-oriented group in the country, every year more than 1,000 volunteers harvest from more than 600 homes (out of 3,400 who have offered their fruit) and 30 old, often historic orchards surviving from the agricultural past. There are seven teams serving four counties, and the organization continually evolves into small semi-autonomous teams. There are an average of four harvests each week year round, and trained volunteers plan and lead the harvests. Executive Director Craig Diserens says that Village Harvest wants to demonstrate how every community can engage in this kind of gleaning so that “all the abundance gets put to use, which should be simple.” The staff consists of one full-time person (Craig) and three part-time employees who guide and train volunteers; handle ongoing communication with homeowners, volunteers, and food agencies; manage the computer software infrastructure that makes the scale possible; and handle nonprofit administration.

Innovative Practices/Collaborations

- Village Harvest concentrates on community engagement and creating opportunities for volunteers to be part of the solution to the problems of food waste and hunger.
- Village Harvest makes it easy for property owners to donate their excess produce if they are physically able to harvest it themselves by having a spreadsheet of drop-off locations with available days and hours of agencies collecting food to feed the hungry in their communities.
- The organization carries several different layers of insurance coverage (commercial and volunteer insurance) to ensure that there is protection for volunteers, homeowners, and all stakeholders involved.



Portland Fruit Tree Project (OR)

Andy Fisher, Interim Executive Director, andy@portlandfruit.org



Portland Fruit Tree Project (PFTP) started in 2006 as a volunteer-led initiative gleaning fruit trees in private properties in Portland. It has since expanded to establish community orchards in

public lands and harvest large-scale orchards on agricultural lands, up to sixty miles outside the city limits. Today, this grass-roots, non-profit organization continues providing a “community-based solution to hunger, food insecurity and lack of access to fresh, healthy produce” by focusing its gleaning efforts on perennial crops (i.e., large orchards and backyard fruit trees). PFTP harvested about 62,000 pounds of fruit in 2016 through four different kinds of gleaning events:

1. **Harvesting Parties:** harvesting parties are open to anyone to participate, but half the slots are reserved for low-income participants (in 2015, 46% of participants self-identified as low income). Half of the produce can go home with the participants who glean it and the other half is donated.
2. **Group Harvests:** group harvests are coordinated in conjunction with social service agencies that provide services to low-income people. All of the participants are low-income and in general they take 100% of the harvested fruit with them.
3. **Benefit Harvests:** PFTP hosts harvests specifically for business partners with the vast majority of the harvested fruit distributed to food pantries or other agencies.
4. **Large Orchard Harvests:** during these harvests, the Oregon Food Bank has transported the thousands of pounds of harvested fruit to low-income people in need. However, PFTP is exploring the use of this fruit in the manufacture of special label cider to help fund the organization’s operations.

In 2016, about 900 people participated in 117 harvesting events that were held from June through November. PFTP delivers the fruit it gleans to small food pantries directly so that the food stays in the community. This practice helps to “keep the food local.” Only if PFTP has a large harvest will it redistribute gleaned fruit at the state level.

Notably, while PFTP began as a gleaning organization, it has shifted its focus towards public health. It participates in the CSA Partnerships for Health program, in which it provides fruit to County health clinic patients as part of a subsidized CSA. PFTP believes that the social capital it creates through its program is an invaluable contribution to addressing health disparities and food insecurity.

Best Practices

- The PFTP carries both liability and volunteer (accident) insurance.

Innovative Practices/Collaborations

- PFTP collaborates with several different food distribution partners (including Oregon Food Bank and Urban Gleaners), as well as several community orchard partners (including Portland Community Gardens and Janus Youth), as well as group harvest and benefit harvest partners (Portland Kitchen, JOIN, Street Roots, and New Seasons Market), and also educational partners (Friends of Trees, Home Orchard Society, Xerces Society). For a complete list and more information, see <http://portlandfruit.org/our-partners>.
- The organization hosts educational programs about harvesting and caring for the trees. It provides training in fruit tree stewardship at its community orchards. See <http://portlandfruit.org/community-orchards>.

FRESH FOOD RECOVERY⁹

The following section illustrates how gleaning groups can diversify their operations to include several different forms of gleaning or fresh food recovery, depending on the need and availability of such produce in their community or region. This section describes models of fresh food recovery from farmer's markets, wholesale markets, warehouses, or grocery stores. Farmers, retailers, and distributors can directly provide excess fresh fruits and vegetables to vulnerable populations by connecting with gleaning and food recovery organizations. Many farmers feel comfortable donating their produce by bringing excess produce to the market or giving directly to an organization rather than allowing volunteers on their land, but it is a personal preference for each farmer. Therefore, fresh food recovery is another viable option for organizations and farmers who want to help combat food waste and food insecurity in their communities. Organizations have discovered ways to encourage growers to directly donate their excess crops through tax incentives, pick and pack out fees (PPO), and through other similar programs.

Across the U.S., programs have been created to encourage farmers to harvest, pack, and sometimes transport the fresh produce donations by offsetting these costs through a "pick and pack out fee" (PPO). Examples of this model include the California Association of Food Banks' Farm to Family Program and the Fresh Food Program at the San Antonio Food Bank in Texas. In California, the Association moves over 150 million pounds of produce a year throughout the state and beyond, offering a PPO fee to growers that helps offset the costs of labor and packaging.¹⁰ The Association does not own a facility; instead, it picks up and delivers to the end distribution points by working with third party logistic companies. In San Antonio, Texas, the Food Bank owns a warehouse outside of the city where it is able to package, clean, and sort the incoming fresh food donations and then deliver these donations to 19 other Texas food banks.¹¹ The Food Bank also offers a PPO fee, funded with state monies available through the Texas Department of Agriculture.

⁹ The NGP defines "fresh food recovery" as the act of recovering perishable, unprocessed, and unpreserved foods from off-farm sites, such as farmer's markets, wholesale markets, warehouses, grocery stores, and cafeterias, or the direct donation of agricultural products to an organization by a grower (e.g., farmer or gardener).

¹⁰ <http://www.cafoodbanks.org/farm-family>

¹¹ <http://safoodbank.org/fresh-produce-program/>



The growing importance of urban gleaning is also resulting in creative ways to move fresh and perishable foods quickly through densely populated areas, for example, by bicycles. For instance, at Boulder Food Rescue in Colorado,¹² along with other organizations who participate in the Food Rescue Alliance,¹³ volunteers use bike baskets or trailers to move small amounts of fresh and perishable food quickly, keeping small donations from slipping through the cracks, while maintaining potentially low infrastructure costs in urban communities. The GleanKY case study discussed below details an organization's attempts to quickly and efficiently capture and distribute fresh produce while replicating a county-based gleaning/fresh food recovery model across the entire state of Kentucky.¹⁴

Farmer's markets are also growing in popularity as a venue for fresh food recovery. Depending on the size of the market and the variety of its vendors, farmer's markets can literally be a "one-stop-shop" where fresh, perishable, and prepared foods can all be recovered at once. Most farmer's markets are open air and/or seasonal, and therefore, are not a consistent source of fresh food. However, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS) conducted a study which found that in select

¹² <http://www.boulderfoodrescue.org>

¹³ <http://www.boulderfoodrescue.org/index.php/food-rescue-alliance/>

¹⁴ <http://www.gleanky.org>

areas of the country, particularly in the northeast and on the west coast, there may be anywhere from 22 to 68 farmer's markets of varying size within 30 miles of a gleaning organization.¹⁵ As such, farmer's markets present an opportunity not only to recover fresh produce, but also to meet farmers and vendors who may be interested in working with gleaning organizations and who are open to learning about fresh food recovery. Organizations can diversify their gleaning operations to cover wholesale and farmer's markets to effectively combat food waste and food insecurity in their communities, as seen in the case study on Food Forward.

Further, food recovery organizations tap into different forms of food hub models to collect and distribute excess produce across a state or region. A successful example of this concept can be seen throughout Washington State, where gleaning networks connect through Rotary First Harvest (RFH) to collect, transport, and distribute gleaned and recovered foods to food banks and other agencies, primarily through existing, underused infrastructure.¹⁶ RFH (referring to itself as a "non-profit produce broker"¹⁷) solicits donations of surplus produce all across the state and then contacts trucking companies who will donate or significantly discount the extra space available between deliveries to transport millions of pounds of fresh, healthy produce to partner hunger agencies every year. RFH demonstrates that slight tweaks to the model can grow success and use existing resources to advance the work of hunger relief efforts.

A similar model that connects and transports donated tractor-trailer loads of produce to hunger agencies across the 48 contiguous states is the Society of St. Andrew's Potato & Produce Project.¹⁸ This Project rescues over ten million pounds of produce that are rejected every year by commercial markets because of minor imperfections. The Potato & Produce Project, like Rotary First Harvest, connects farmers to truck drivers and hunger agencies. Operating in the current food recovery system allows Society of St. Andrew to move the fresh produce without the need to invest in infrastructure or duplicate efforts.

Another example of an innovative food hub model for donated produce is the pilot Hub and Spoke Program of Southern Maryland.¹⁹ This program is tailored to grow and distribute all produce within a five county radius with the goal of keeping the produce as fresh as possible and within the community where it grew. This goal is met by filtering the donations through a "hub" called Farming 4 Hunger, and then by distributing the produce from the hub to the certified "spokes" or hunger agencies. The program works directly with farmers to encourage fresh food donations through a proposed tax credit that will help cover the costs incurred to harvest, package, and transport the donated produce. These food hub models are examples of a "win-win" process to providing economic or infrastructure support to farmers, increasing fresh food donations within a state, and providing hunger relief organizations with the freshest and most nutrient-rich produce possible for the communities they support.

¹⁵ C. Price and M. Harris, *Increasing Food Recovery from Farmer's Markets: A Preliminary Analysis*, at 6, USDA ERS (2000), <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr-food-assistance-nutrition-research-program/fanrr-4.aspx>.

¹⁶ Refer to case study, *Harvest Against Hunger* (field gleaning) for more information, or see <https://www.firstharvest.org>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ <http://endhunger.org/ppp/>.

¹⁹ For more information see *Hub and Spoke Program*, Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, http://www.smadc.com/food_farms_nutr/hubspoke.html (last visited May 20, 2016).

CASE STUDIES



Food Forward: Scaling Up Gleaning & Fresh Food Recovery

Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, California • <https://foodforward.org>

An organization that has been participating in fruit tree gleaning since 2009, Food Forward has evolved over the years to expand its gleaning and fresh produce recovery efforts to include farmer's markets and wholesale markets. Food Forward fulfills its mission to combat hunger and food waste in its community by recovering excess produce from backyards, public spaces, and farmer's and wholesale markets – all while donating 100% of the recovered produce to direct-service agencies throughout Southern California. Food Forward reaches over 100,000 clients in a month through its diverse network of food distribution partners.

Background and Operations

Food Forward operates under three core programs, (1) Backyard fruit tree harvest – the original program led by volunteers (gleans around 300,000 lbs. per year); (2) Farmer's markets – which started in 2012 and these gleans occur at 17 markets in the LA region and two markets in Ventura County (gleans around 550,000 lbs. per year); and (3) Wholesale markets – started in 2014, the wholesale recovery program at LA wholesale market is where Food Forward staff work daily with wholesalers at the market, using two 26 foot box trucks to transport the gleaned produce (14 million lbs. of produce gleaned a year). There are 13 paid staff members who coordinate the events and develop relationships with farmers at the markets, complete quality assurance, and volunteer when needed. Food Forward has 120-160 events per month that are exclusively volunteer-led, with over 500 volunteers assisting each month. From this group, about 150 lead volunteers facilitate events and communicate with volunteers directly.

“Food Forward rescues fresh local produce that would otherwise go to waste, connecting this abundance with people in need, and inspiring others to do the same.”

– MISSION STATEMENT

Agencies pick up the produce themselves at the location of the glean, or a gleaning leader delivers the gleaned produce to the location to drop off the gleaned produce. Agencies tend to pick up produce directly from the farmer's markets where they weigh the produce at the market.

Models for Success

- The key element to the success of the farmer's market program includes consistency, as demonstrated by the same reliable “super-dedicated” volunteers that come every week and give the farmers confidence to know where their donations are going.
- Each program has a unique relationship with each group, from homeowner, to farmer, to businessperson. However, three tenets/key elements exist in each relationship: 1) clear communication and transparency, 2) consistency, and 3) appreciation.

- Regarding volunteers, Food Forward has a paid volunteer manager and volunteer coordinator to facilitate each gleaning event. The volunteer manager creates a volunteer newsletter that makes each volunteer feel part of the community. Also, each volunteer receives a thank you email and clear directions to the location of the designated gleaning events.
- Currently, volunteers handle some logistics, but as the organization grows the volunteers can become hired as staff, thereby allowing for more consistency in all of the programs.
- Food Forward keeps detailed, accurate records of all its gleans and distributions.



GleanKY: Using a County-Based Model to Successfully Recover

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Kentucky • www.gleanky.org*

GleanKY recovers produce from grocery stores and farmer's markets, while also performing field gleans, but it limits its efforts to only fresh produce. GleanKY does not have any storage, warehouse, or processing facilities, so it formed partnerships with over 60 feeding agencies that it makes immediate deliveries to after the produce is gleaned. A full-time staff member coordinates all of the deliveries while a network of several hundred volunteers distribute, deliver, and pick-up the gleaned produce every day. In 2016, GleanKY was able to glean and recover over 275,000 pounds of fresh produce.

Background and Operations

In 2010, three friends came together to start GleanKY to address food waste and hunger in Kentucky. GleanKY has grown since 2010, working with small farms and from a county-based model, which it continues replicating across the state. It focuses on local relationships and so avoids having to move food across the state. The largest potential for food recovery is at the farmer's market. Many farmers bring more produce to the market than they can sell; the farmers have the option of donating their leftover produce at the end of the market. GleanKY also recovers produce from Costco in order to get bulk fruit and veggies.

Models for Success

- A model of gleaning, distributing, and eating in the same day helps avoid needing expensive storage to handle the perishability involved with handling fresh produce.
- Leadership is important at GleanKY, who has hired a former volunteer coordinator as a full-time staff member. The organization also created site leaders who are volunteers that glean regularly at many different locations.
- GleanKY recruits volunteers by holding monthly volunteer orientations during the growing season and publicizing the events wherever it can via posters, websites, etc.
- The organization uses a “Record a Gleaning” form to track all of the gleaning that takes place in each county within its service area. To see the form, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/GleaningForm>.
- The data entered into this form populates an excel spreadsheet that allows GleanKY to calculate volunteer hours, pounds gleaned and delivered, etc.
- GleanKY carries general liability insurance and requests that all of its volunteers sign a liability waiver releasing GleanKY and the gleaning source (farm, grocery store, farmer’s market, etc.) from any liability related to injury while gleaning.

Collaborations

- The Kentucky Farm to Food Bank program reimburses farmers to below wholesale cost, which works well for larger farms. On smaller farms, GleanKY can work with farmers to complement or collaborate in their gleaning and harvesting efforts.
- GleanKY began partnering with another non-profit organization in its area, FoodChain, to process excess produce in an effort to provide job training and make large quantities of fresh produce more accessible to the agencies it serves. For more information, see <http://smileypete.com/business/2016-08-02-food-chain-glean-ky-get-450000-grant-add-processing-kitchen-expand-services>.

“Gleaning truly is a win-win-win: farmers’ harvest isn’t going to waste, our neighbors in need gain access to nutritious produce, and volunteers get to participate in the process of doing good from start to finish. Our model is simple: you need a vehicle, a box, and an hour. Multiply these resources and all of a sudden, you have a network of hundreds redistributing excess fresh produce across the region. I’m so grateful to be able to do tangible good each day. When I see the joy fresh produce brings to my neighbors in need, I can’t imagine doing anything else!” – STEPHANIE WOOTAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GLEANKY



Feeding Florida: Offsetting Costs for Farmers to Donate Excess Produce

Florida • <http://www.fafb.org/programs/farmers-feeding-florida>

Florida Association of Food Banks (FAFB) consists of 14 Feeding America affiliated food banks and member organizations. The Association's regional distribution centers reach 2,500 distribution points, and they recover nearly 21 million pounds of produce a year through their Farmers Feeding Florida Program (FFF).

Background and Operations



Since traditional field gleaning is not always the best method of produce recovery in the southeast due to the long growing season, FAFB started a food recovery initiative called Farmers Feeding Florida (FFF) to allow farmers to become partners in hunger relief efforts. FFF is designed

to help large-scale growers and packers who harvest millions of pounds per year to incorporate donations into their daily operations through a systemic, streamlined process. FFF offsets incremental costs by paying farmers to get produce off the field using their own work crews, for pennies on the pound (i.e., the pick n' pack cost).

The FAFB received a grant from Feeding America to create a staff position of Regional Fresh Produce Sourcer to work with growers/packers to integrate processes for separating food for donation while making the process cost efficient. Funding for FFF comes from a combination of grant-funding from the Florida Department of Agriculture (encouraged by the initiatives of the Department's Division of Nutrition and Wellness) that provided a \$1.2 million grant (from general revenue dollars) from the State of Florida through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to assist in covering the costs of its pick n' pack practices.

“Feeding Florida’s *Farmers Feeding Florida* program serves as an investment in the frontline defense of healthcare by providing hungry Floridians with a healthy, nutritious, and consistent supply of fresh produce.”

– ROBIN SAFLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FEEDING FLORIDA

Models for Success

- The pick n' pack cost gives farmers the ability to continue offering employment to their workers and recover a better quality product faster than volunteer gleaners. This program allowed food recovery efforts to increase from 4 million pounds recovered per season to 21 million pounds recovered per season. The FAFB also convened an advisory council of major commodity groups (including the University of

Florida, Florida A&M, the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, and the Florida Farm Bureau) and a contractor with extensive experience in Florida's commodity agriculture community. The council helped the FAFB network with farmers and brainstorm about the role of the agriculture industry in combatting food waste and hunger.

Collaborations

- The Association and other similarly sized organizations shoulder costs by investing in cold storage and refrigerated trucks. They also create ways of moving food to capitalize on the resources they have (i.e., just-in-time drop off to facilities whose clients will pick-up same day, mobile pantries, working with regional Housing and Urban Development agencies to arrange low-income community drop-offs, etc.).

“Farmers have the unmarketable but wholesome produce; we have the means to share it with hungry people. Across the Feeding Florida network, we have refrigerated facilities to process donations as well as a fleet of 160+ refrigerated trucks to safely transport and distribute it statewide. Our member food bank employees and volunteers are trained and certified in proper food handling to ensure the quality of produce donations. Farmers Feeding Florida is endorsed by Florida's major commodity groups and is supported by the Florida Department of Agriculture, the Florida Legislature and grants from private foundations.”

– FROM THE FEEDING FLORIDA WEBSITE

CONCLUSION

Food waste and hunger continue to plague society, as evidenced by alarming rates of food insecurity in the United States and major efforts to address food waste through recovery. In addition, food system advocates continue to grapple with the lack of access to fresh, healthy produce for a significant number of the country's population. This lack of access has profound implications for the public health and welfare of the nation. The types of gleaning and food recovery efforts discussed in this report highlight successful efforts being made to combat the issues of food waste, hunger, and lack of access. Successful models exist for traditional field gleaning organizations, food banks involved in gleaning, fruit tree gleaning organizations, and fresh food recovery efforts from markets, restaurants, and retailers.

Regardless of the types of gleaning effort involved (and all efforts are applauded), the National Gleaning Project has sought to determine best gleaning practices and models for success that can be replicated throughout the country so that gleaning efforts can continue to grow and improve. Key findings for successful gleaning groups included: 1) investing in infrastructure and distribution solutions, 2) building relationships with similar organizations to create additional capacity to handle produce and combine recovery efforts, 3) taking steps to reduce liability concerns by carrying adequate and appropriate insurance policies and, 4) engaging in community education and outreach efforts.

It is the hope of the National Gleaning Project that this report will be useful and instructive to new gleaning organizations beginning their gleaning efforts, as well as to established organizations seeking to grow their efforts or experiment with new models.

