

ALTERNATIVE DISTRIBUTION MODELS GUIDANCE



Second Harvest partner agencies have many options for serving clients outside of their typical distribution models. This document provides guidance on steps you should take when shifting or considering shifting your distribution model. Regardless of which model you chose, please notify Second Harvest, and remember to advertise new distribution models to your community – share on your website, via social media, and/or by using flyers.

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Drive-Thru Distribution

The drive-thru model minimizes time on site, maximizes the number of clients served, and limits points of contact for clients, volunteers, and staff.

1. Ahead of shifting your model, use a satellite view of your space to outline the flow of your distribution. Indicate on your map where staff and volunteers will stand, where signs will be placed, and use arrows to show the direction cars will be travelling. You should share this with staff and volunteers to ensure everyone is informed of the planned flow of the distribution. Additionally, if possible, share this with clients ahead of the distribution so they know what to expect.
2. At the entrance of your drive-thru distribution, ensure the area is well marked, telling clients where to go and what to do. You can designate volunteers or staff to be at the entrance of your drive-thru to:
 - a. Explain the process to clients and ensure they have made space in their vehicle for food items. You can do this by speaking directly to clients or pointing to instructional signage that shares the information clients need to know.
 - b. Use Post-it notes, bar soap, or chalk markers on the windshield to indicate the number of households in each vehicle or a car's place in line. This is helpful for volunteers or staff to know how many bags to put in the vehicle once they reach the distribution area.
3. The intake process can occur at the start of the line or throughout. Ensure you are capturing information while maintaining social distance. Have clipboards and gloves on hand for people conducting intake.
4. Try to have more than one loading zone or use multiple lanes for loading. This can help shorten the amount of time it takes to move clients through the process.
5. On average, it takes 3 times as long to do intake as it does to load the vehicle, plan for this when assigning roles for your staff and volunteers and ensure you have the right mix of people helping where they are needed most.
6. You should always load food boxes/bags directly into the client vehicles, and ensure clients always remain in their vehicle, to maintain social distance throughout the process. If the client's trunk is not functioning properly, does not have room for food, or cannot be opened without a key instruct staff/volunteers to place the product on the hood of the car and step away while the client retrieves the product to put inside their vehicle.

Other Considerations

- Operating a drive-thru model is best for partners with ample open space who are trying to serve many households in a short amount of time.
- When promoting your drive-thru distribution, request that participants only bring one member per household to pick up food to reduce the overall number of people at the distribution.

- You may want to coordinate with local authorities to manage traffic and safety, especially for larger distributions or if you believe that lines will overflow onto public roads.
- It is helpful to use sidewalk chalk, masking tape, traffic cones, or a 6 ft pole to identify the appropriate distance between volunteers/staff and client vehicles. Safety vests, stop signs, and/or traffic wands also keep your team safe and help drivers know who to look out for and when to stop and go.
- Walkie-talkies can also be a helpful tool for communicating between drive-thru entrance, intake, and folks inside your pantry or managing inventory.

Curbside Pick-Up

Like grocery stores and our curbside pick-up model at our distribution centers, your organization can offer scheduled curbside pickup appointments for clients.

1. Curbside is most successful if you can make appointments ahead of time, or plan to mostly communicate with clients over the phone.
2. At the entrance of your parking lot, ensure there is a designated area that is well marked, telling clients where to go and what to do. You can assign volunteers or staff to be at the entrance of your parking lot to direct traffic and/or explain the process to clients.
3. Consider using parking space numbers and signage that directs clients to stay in their vehicles and call you to let you know they have arrived for their scheduled appointment. It is a best practice to have signage available in both English and Spanish or other languages used by your clientele.
4. Volunteers or staff should load food boxes/bags into the client's vehicles while clients remain in their vehicles, maintaining social distance throughout the process. If the client's trunk is not functioning properly, does not have room for food, or cannot be opened without a key instruct staff/volunteers to place the product on the hood of the car and step away while the client retrieves the product to put inside their vehicle.

Other Considerations

- This model works best if you do not have the space to implement a drive-thru model through their food package options over the phone ahead of their appointment and customize their food box or bag.
- This model requires volunteer support to take calls from the community and track appointments. The following free online tools may be helpful:
 - <https://calendly.com/> – Free scheduling site.

Limiting Persons in Pantry

This model prioritizes minimizing the number of people in your pantry space at any given time. Especially in times of high Covid-19 infection.

1. Require that just one individual from each household line up for food to minimize the number of overall people at your distribution and reduce the chances of client interactions in line. Other family members should wait in their cars or outside in the parking lot away from others.
2. Use tape, chalk, cones, or some other visual marker to identify 6ft spaces in between clients who will be waiting in line. Use signage, in English and other common languages, to remind everyone to keep their distance to keep themselves and others around them safe from the spread of infection.
3. Inside your pantry, limit the number of people who can shop at a time and do not allow clients to touch any items that they are not going to take. Designate a volunteer or staff member to clean commonly touched surfaces like door handles and countertops frequently - preferably after each client, if possible. This is especially true if you are using shopping carts to assist clients through the pantry or to their vehicles.
4. Keep intake staff supplied with the proper personal protective equipment like gloves, facial coverings, and hand sanitizer.

Other Considerations

- This is not an ideal model due to the challenge with practicing social distancing inside of building with an underdetermined amount of people but works best if your parking lot space is limited or you do not have enough volunteers to try and support a drive-thru or curbside model.
- Consider scheduling appointments so there is not a line, and you can better control the flow of people in and out of your pantry.
- You will need signage throughout the pantry to help clients know what their shopping options or quantity restrictions are.
- If possible, use a 'menu' to let clients shop from a distance and prepare their food package while they wait onsite or in their car rather than allowing them to walk through the pantry space themselves.

Direct Delivery

This model is especially helpful for serving seniors, homebound clients, vulnerable populations, and quarantined households.

1. To offer delivery your organization must have a written process in place that:

- a. Explains the circumstances under which your organization will offer delivery, outlines how you will fulfil delivery and how you will ensure you will apply it fairly and consistently to all participants.
 - b. Acknowledges that food will only be distributed directly to the client or the client's proxy. (For example, you cannot leave food on the doorstep if the client is not home or in a community room for an extended number of hours.)
2. Training: The individuals making the deliveries must have the same training required of your regular pantry staff and volunteers that interact with clients.
 3. When arriving to drop off the food package the person delivering the food should place the items on the ground before they knock on the door or ring the doorbell. They should then step back, wait for the participant to answer the door, and verify that the person at the door is in fact the client before leaving.

Other Considerations

- Delivery takes time and requires lots of staff and volunteer support depending on the scope of your delivery program. Consider scheduling multiple deliveries in the same area or at a single residential complex at a time so you can best use your resources to serve as many people as possible.

Off-site Distributions

Partner Agencies can take food to an off-site location to distribute free of cost through a pop-up distribution. It can be a walk-up or drive-thru option for clients.

1. Partner agencies must ensure all event coordination has been cleared with the business, city, or group at which the distributions will occur and accepts all responsibility for the safe handling and distribution of all food items.
2. Volunteers or staff will be vital during these events to keep a constant flow during distribution which can include client intake, packing food boxes or bags, refilling food items and loading client vehicles.
3. Keeping the food safe should be a high priority and should determine which foods a partner agency is able to safely transport or distribute. Using an infrared thermometer would be the best method to take the temperature of the food during various times of a distribution.
4. Consider how to best maximize the space to allow clients to park and walk up to receive food or an entrance/exit to keep traffic from interfering with traffic on a busy street.
5. Have a designated check-in area with signs to let clients know where to start. This also helps during client intake to track client and household numbers for reporting.

Other Considerations

- Using thermal equipment like a refrigerated truck, thermal blankets or coolers filled with ice help maintain refrigerated food at safe temperatures.
- Shorten your distribution hours in extreme temperatures to maintain your food, staff, or volunteers safe.
- If you cannot keep refrigerated food cold for an extended amount of time, consider distributing shelf-stable items or non-refrigerated produce.
- Promote your event two weeks in advance on your social media pages, website or create a poster that you can place in your pantry for clients to see.
- Provide flyers to your food bank clients that include your off-site distributions dates, times, and locations.
- Consider partnering with another organization that can help distribute food safely or help promote your event.

Other Guidance and Considerations

Handling Walk-Ups – even if you are advertising a drive-thru, curbside, or delivery only model it is wise to be prepared for what to do in the event a client walks-up requesting food assistance. This guidance is important while considering the safety of walk-up clients.

- Market your changed distribution model widely to discourage clients from trying to walk up and receive food assistance.
- Assign a specific staff member or volunteer to serve walk-up clients.
- It is a good practice to have a table that physically blocks walk-up clients from easily accessing the pantry entrance or space where volunteers are entering and exiting working with your drive-thru or curbside clients to avoid confusion and over-crowding. You can use signage, or sidewalk markings, to designate areas where clients can wait outside the pantry while staff or volunteers access food packages for walk-up clients.
- It is important to have a staff member or volunteer assigned to clean and disinfect high touch places often throughout your distribution.

Social Distancing – there are several tips available online for practicing social distancing and taking measures to limit the spread of viruses. Here are some of the ones to focus on when operating your food distribution.

- Do not allow anyone who has been sick or has been exposed to someone who has been sick, to work or volunteer at your organization.
- Limit the number of people you allow to work or volunteer at a time or in a particular space, especially if the space is small or not open or well ventilated.
- Require your staff and/or volunteers to wear personal protective equipment following

local health department or the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines.

- Ensure people, including staff and volunteers, are staying 6 feet apart from one another.
- Provide opportunities to take hand-washing breaks and make hand sanitizer readily available for staff and volunteers.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces often, including before, after, and during distribution times.
- Display the [CDC Guide](#) poster or others from their [toolkit](#) website in a highly visible area for volunteers, on a sandwich board, and/or on your website.

Blessing Box/Little Free Pantry – A “Little Free Pantry,” “Blessing Box” or similar outdoor pantries designed for an organization and/or the public to leave food, and for others to pick up anonymously. While well intentioned, these structures are typically unsecured and unmonitored. Food from Second Harvest should not supply these types of distribution points under any circumstances.

- Storage of the food is a concern as far as potential for pest activity, temperature abuse (even for shelf-stable), expiration dates, and chemical contamination. The fact that these are not monitored and are unlocked elevates the food safety risk.
- Donations placed in the box by the public are not protected from the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act as they will not be received and inspected by an organization prior to their distribution. The organization or person operating the self-service pantry may also be liable for illness, injury, or damages that may occur in the operation of the program.
- While well intended, these types of distribution programs do not meet specific food safety and handling guidelines, and these models of food boxes would not meet IRS (Internal Revenue Service) 170e3 Regulations, Feeding America, or Second Harvest guidelines.

Redistribution of Food – Second Harvest works with our partner agencies to build orders that meet their needs and storage capacities. In some instances, an agency might receive more food than they can safely store. Partner agencies should refrain from redistributing Second Harvest food to other pantries, meal sites or other organizations unless approved by Second Harvest.

- Partnership with organizations that provide direct delivery is not considered redistribution if the food is not stored at an organization’s site and is given to clients immediately.
- Partner agencies that redistribute food to other organizations may be subject to suspension from Second Harvest programs.
- If you notice your pick up or delivery orders are too large for the number of clients you serve, please call us and we will adjust your order accordingly. Our hope is to give you the correct amount of food to fit your needs so redistribution is not an issue.