



Division of Student Affairs  
Rutgers Student Food Pantry  
Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
39 Union Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

foodpantry.rutgers.edu  
ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu  
848-932-5500

## ORGANIZE A FOOD DRIVE

Collect food and/or monetary donations for The Rutgers Student Food Pantry. There are a few models for how to hold a food drive. This guide focuses on the “single-site drop-off” model, where people bring food donations to a place, on a specific date, where volunteers are waiting to receive it.

“There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.” Mahatma Gandhi

### STEP 1: DECIDE HOW YOU WANT TO COLLECT FOOD

**Single-site drop off:** You ask people to bring food donations to one location during set hours on a specific day. Volunteers stay at the collection site.

**Extended food drive:** You set up multiple collection points with drop boxes where people can leave food over the course of multiple days or weeks. Volunteers collect the donations once per day.

**Event-related food drive:** Your team partners with a local event – like a sports game, music festival or student organization event – and sets up collection sites at the event.

**Bins:** Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships will provide bins for your food drive. You can make arrangements to pick up the bins just prior to your drive. Bins are available on a first come, first serve basis.

### STEP 2: ASSESS VOLUNTEER NEEDS

Establish a small committee to plan and coordinate the food drive. Select an overall coordinator (that may be you) and team leaders for individual tasks. Depending on the size of your food drive, there could be 2 to 6 team leaders.

Teams can help share the work, motivate volunteers/donors and hold each other accountable to deadlines. Many hands make light work!

Schedule a training session for the team leaders. Provide the leaders with background on the selected organization, a list of key dates/times (timeline of preparation), responsibilities needed to carry out the food drive and contact information for you and the other team leaders.



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The team leaders should:

- Help recruit volunteers for the food drive
- Promote the food drive throughout the community
- Set up the collection site
- Lead a shift during the event
- Help coordinate food sorting and delivery after the drive

### **STEP 3: FIND A DROP-OFF LOCATION**

Identify the desired location for food drop-off and collection such as a student center or residence hall. Make sure you follow proper procedures to reserve space.

Contact the appropriate person or office (Meetings & Events Office, hall director, etc.) to get permission to hold the drive there and ask if they'd like to participate in any way. When you call, make sure you have information on the food drive (the goal, the preferred date, background on the organization the food will support, etc.).

Depending on the size of the drive and the number of volunteers, you might want to hold it at multiple locations. Keep in mind, this requires more logistical organization and volunteers but will yield more food.

A location that is centrally located, with built-in traffic is ideal.

Once you nail down a location, work out logistics with your contact there:

- Where specifically the food drive can be held (e.g., at the entrance of the store or a section of the parking lot)
- The date and the allowed hours of operation for the drive
- Where the food will be stored before pick up
- Place to accommodate the volunteers who will organize the food for pick up

### **STEP 4: RECRUIT AND MANAGE VOLUNTEERS**

Ask your family, friends, colleagues, neighbors and faith group members to help make the food drive a success.

Develop a roster of all the volunteers. Be sure to get each person's full name and contact information so you can keep everyone informed during the planning stage.

Host a meeting three to five weeks prior to the food drive so the volunteers understand the goal of the food drive, what is required of them, the timeline of the drive, and background on the selected organization you are supporting. Provide a take-away sheet with the information from the meeting.



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Develop a schedule for the volunteers so that you have sufficient support throughout the day. Keep in mind, peak hours will need more volunteers than the early and later hours of the event. Communicate the schedule to all the volunteers two weeks prior to the food drive so there is time for rescheduling if needed.

Suggested tasks for volunteers include:

- Make and distribute flyers/signs for the event
- Promote the event through their contacts and local community organizations
- Staff the event (including set up and take down)
- Transport food donations to the recipient organization
- Follow-up communication, including the results of the drive and thanking the supporters

For more tips on project management, see the [Nuts and Bolts Guide for Organizers](#).

### **STEP 5: GET THE WORD OUT**

The key to a successful food drive is to get the word out about the event. Promote! Promote! Promote!

### **STEP 6: FINAL PREP ARRANGEMENTS**

Touch base with the recipient organization, your team leaders and your contact person at the drive location to confirm all details, including:

- Plans for bin pick up (from 39 Union Street) and drop-off prior to the drive and food pick-up following the drive
- Food sorting instructions (if any)
- The staffing schedule for the day of the food drive
- Two to three hour shifts are best
- Create three to four large signs that your teams can post within a block or two of the food drive on the day of the event
- Be prepared with information for people who tell you they need food. Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships will provide you with postcards for the Rutgers Student Food Pantry to have at your table if needed.

### **STEP 7: EVENT DAY**

- Set up the food collection site (i.e.. two tables with chairs behind them; refreshments behind the volunteer chairs, boxes/crates clearly labeled for various food types)
- Post the Food Drive signs in visible areas and have flyers available
- Welcome volunteers as they arrive and show them how things will work
- Volunteers (not contributors) should put the food in the appropriate crate to ensure efficiency



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- Relax, smile and enjoy the wonderful event that is bringing together the community
- When the drive is over, clean up the area and take down the signs. Leave the area the same (if not cleaner) than when you arrived
- Thank the hosting organization and the volunteers

### **STEP 8: FOLLOW UP (WITHIN ONE WEEK AFTER THE EVENT)**

Send a thank you note, call or email to all volunteers (using the method by which they prefer to be contacted). Include how much food was donated and whether there are plans for additional food drives or other volunteer opportunities. Call or write a thank you note to the hosting organization. Again, let them know how much food was donated and convey their important role in the success of the program and the difference they are making.

While it is still fresh in your mind, develop a list of lessons learned for future events. Check in with the local food organization to see if they have suggestions to include.

Keep in touch with volunteers and local communities for further volunteer opportunities.

### **TIPS FOR MEETING THE RUTGERS STUDENT FOOD PANTRY NEEDS**

Get more information on our needs before you start implementing your plan. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. You'll want your plan to be well-grounded, and you'll want to be armed with information for your volunteers! Here are some suggested areas to discuss:

- Who is a contact person to work with for coordinating the food drive?
- Is this a good time of year for them to receive donations? Identify a date for the food drive that works for them and you
- What types of food are in short supply?
- What specific food is needed?
- Do they need healthy, age-appropriate food, like low-sodium or low-sugar foods, and/or easy-to-open packages?
- Do they need culturally-appropriate products?
- Do they need any non-food items?
- Are there any foods or packaging that they cannot accept? Can they accept fresh food?
- What quantities (e.g., large or small packages) of each food type do they prefer?
- What is their preference on how the food should be sorted at the collection site? (e.g., canned food, boxed food, condiments, etc.)
- Does the organization have boxes or crates for sorting the food?
- Determine how the food will be delivered to the organization. Can they pick it up or do you need to deliver it? When is the best time for pick up and delivery?

ADAPTED FROM [CREATE THE GOOD](#)