



Connecticut Foodshare

Our Community, Our Food Bank

Guidance for Prospective Partners

Connecticut Foodshare partners with a network of food pantries, community kitchens, and emergency shelters that serve people in need across the state. If your organization offers food assistance to an underserved community and is filling a gap not met by an existing program, we encourage you to apply for partnership during our next application cycle.

What does it mean to be a Connecticut Foodshare Agency Partner?

Agency partners enter into a formal agreement with Connecticut Foodshare and access food, guidance, and other support to advance our shared mission of alleviating hunger.

How do I become an Agency Partner?

Connecticut Foodshare accepts new partners through a formal application process. Our ability to add new partners depends on how much food and resources Connecticut Foodshare has available. When the date of our next application cycle is determined, we will update our website [here](#). During each application cycle, Connecticut Foodshare may identify specific towns or regions that we will consider requests from, to help fill gaps in our existing partner network. If you would like to sign up to get an email alert when our next application cycle opens, click [here](#). Once the next cycle opens, the application will ask eligible organizations to describe their organization and food assistance program. Organizations with 501(c)(3) status will be required to attach their federal IRS determination letter with their application.

Does Connecticut Foodshare provide food for events or fairs?

Connecticut Foodshare focuses our resources on food assistance programs that offer regular and reliable year-round service. Connecticut Foodshare does not provide food to organizations that limit their food distributions to one-time events, special occasions, or holidays.

Who is eligible to be an Agency Partner?

Connecticut Foodshare will consider partnership requests from qualifying food pantries, community kitchens, and emergency shelters. Emergency shelters must be part of the State's Coordinated Access Network (CAN) to qualify. We are not currently considering requests from programs that prepare meals for non-emergency settings, such as daycare centers and group homes. We prioritize requests from programs that have a track record of serving the community, are open to anyone in need, reaching an underserved community, and in a location where other food assistance options are limited. Whenever possible, we encourage collaboration with established programs to enhance services already available in the community, rather than launching a new program, to reduce duplication of efforts. Additionally, eligible partners need to meet Connecticut Foodshare's partnership requirements.

What are Connecticut Foodshare's partnership requirements?

Connecticut Foodshare's partnership guidelines uphold standards set by Feeding America, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Connecticut Department of Social Services, and our

organization to support safe, reliable, dignified, and accessible food assistance. Minimally, eligible partners are required to:

- Be an eligible organization, meeting one of the following three categories:
 - 501(c)(3) Public Charity, as defined by the federal IRS, that serves people in need
 - Church or religious organization without 501(c)(3) status that serves people in need
 - Government entity without 501(c)(3) status that serves people in need
- Distribute food free of charge directly to people in need and without requiring the recipient to pay, pray, or perform work to eat or enter the food distribution setting.
- Be committed to serving our community with respect and not discriminate for any reason.
- Follow food safety standards for the transport, storage, and distribution of food.
- Provide food assistance on a regular schedule, at least two times per month, every month.
- Commit to ordering from Connecticut Foodshare at least 5,000 pounds of product per year (excluding food ordered for Thanksgiving) and placing at least one order per month.
- Maintain an up-to-date program listing with Connecticut 2-1-1.
- Participate in a formal site inspection at least once every two years.
- Maintain appropriate records and report number of people served each month.
- Sustain program operations and pay any fees assessed by Connecticut Foodshare.
- Appoint a main contact person to regularly communicate with Connecticut Foodshare.
- Submit a completed Partnership Application with all required attachments.
- Agree to and sign the Connecticut Foodshare Agency Partner Agreement.

How do partners receive food from Connecticut Foodshare?

Connecticut Foodshare offers partners a variety of food, including shelf-stable, produce, refrigerated, and frozen items. Most of the food distributed by Connecticut Foodshare is surplus food donated by the food industry. Partners place orders using an online system and orders are picked up by appointment Monday through Friday at one of our distribution centers, located in Wallingford and Bridgeport. Partners may be eligible to receive regular delivery from Connecticut Foodshare, as our truck schedules allow. To be eligible for delivery, orders must be at least 500 pounds and placed regularly.

Can a program get all its food from Connecticut Foodshare?

The quantity and variety of products available from Connecticut Foodshare relies on donations from the food industry and can vary throughout the year. Agency partners typically do not source their entire food supply from Connecticut Foodshare. To supplement their food supply, partners organize local food drives, work with local farms, and raise funds to purchase food.

What are the costs involved in partnering with Connecticut Foodshare?

There are fees involved in partnership with Connecticut Foodshare, including a “shared maintenance fee” of up to \$0.19 per pound on most donated food and a delivery charge for partners participating in the delivery program. Additionally, Connecticut Foodshare accesses wholesale pricing to purchase select items in bulk and makes those products available to partners at 100% of our cost with no mark-up through the Grocery Purchasing Program.

Thanks to generous support from the community, many of the fees have been temporarily waived. See below for the current fee structure.

Fee structure from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027	
Item	Fee for Agency Partners
Annual Membership	\$0
Delivery (if participating)	\$0
Donated Food	\$0
Produce	\$0
Government Food (if participating)	\$0
Grocery Purchasing Program	100% of cost with no mark-up

What best practices does Connecticut Foodshare recommend?

When designing your food assistance program, we encourage you to talk with your community to understand the strengths and gaps in existing services, and the needs and preferences of the people you serve. We also encourage you to take time to visit other food assistance programs for insight and inspiration. Those visits may even present opportunities for you to collaborate and join forces with an existing program. A few more tips to help you plan:

- **Space:** The amount of space needed can vary depending on your goals. Pantries come in all sizes, ranging from a well-stocked storage closet to a larger room with shelving and coolers that mimic a grocery store experience. We encourage programs to make their spaces as welcoming and accessible as possible, with items like clear signage, seating if there is a wait time, accommodations for individuals with disabilities, translated materials, and more.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Programs will need either paid staff time or committed lead volunteers to oversee program operations, including ordering food, recruiting volunteers, serving clients, maintaining inventory, and recordkeeping. The amount of time required will vary depending on how often your program is open and on the level of services offered. Volunteers from the community (including those from local schools, companies, faith groups, and civic organizations), interns from local colleges, and AmeriCorps VISTAs are also excellent sources of support.
- **Distribution Process:** Whenever possible, Connecticut Foodshare recommends a choice model where guests can visually and physically choose the food items they prefer. This approach creates a more welcoming and dignified experience for guests, and it reduces food waste.
- **Food Storage & Shelving:** Food should be stored in a safe and secure location at the program site. Dry goods must be kept at least six inches from the ground, six inches from the ceiling, and four inches away from the wall. Perishable goods must be kept in proper cold storage with thermometers in each unit. Food storage spaces should maintain an ambient temperature of 50 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Connecticut Foodshare offers food safety training to partners that distribute groceries. Programs that cook meals or provide onsite snacks must have additional manager-level food safety certification through ServSafe or a similar certification organization.
- **Pest Control:** Monitoring for pests is essential to maintaining a safe food environment. Connecticut Foodshare partners must maintain a pest control system, either with regular self-checks by program staff or through a paid pest control service. Programs should be prepared to pay for pest control services if/when a pest issue arises.
- **Hours of Operation:** It is important to offer reliable access to food. Connecticut

Foodshare requires that all agency partners offer consistent hours, distributing food at least twice per month, every month, on a set schedule. Hours of operation must be posted in a visible location at your program and on Connecticut 2-1-1 to help community members know where and when to get assistance. When selecting your hours of operation, be sure to prioritize hours that are most convenient for the people you serve and avoid duplicating hours of programs nearby. You can review food assistance programs in your area on [Connecticut 2-1-1](#).

- **Guest Intake Information:** Connecticut Foodshare encourages programs to minimize the information collected from program guests, as it can have a significant impact on a person's willingness to seek assistance. Connecticut Foodshare considers self-declaration – a person stating they are in need – as sufficient proof of need. Additional income requirements will apply to organizations participating in government commodity programs available through Connecticut Foodshare.
- **Connection to Other Resources:** In addition to providing food, we recommend that program staff and volunteers take steps to connect guests with other community services. There are many ways to do this depending on your goals and resources, such as providing resource flyers from other nonprofits, making referrals, and more.

What does it cost to run a food assistance program?

The costs of running a food assistance program will vary depending on your space and goals. Many new programs decide to start out small and then expand in time once they have more experience with running the program. Basic expenses include:

One-Time Costs: • Shelving to store and display food • Tables to display food • Refrigeration (glass-front is recommended; some spaces may need electrical upgrades to accommodate commercial units) • Infrared thermometer and in-unit thermometers for cold storage • Computer with printer for guest intake, reporting, and referrals • Chairs for waiting area • Carts and U-boats to move food • Shopping carts for guests to mimic a grocery store experience • Signage to post program name and hours of operation • Vehicle to pick up food, if applicable	Ongoing Costs: • Staffing • Rent and Utilities • Supplies, such as grocery bags, office supplies, cleaning supplies, etc. • Pest Control Service, as needed • Vehicle operating costs, if applicable • Food purchases from Connecticut Foodshare and other sources
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Thank you for your interest in partnership. Do you have more questions?

Contact Codi Wayton at cwayton@ctfoodshare.org or 203-741-9215 to get connected with the Connecticut Foodshare staff person assigned to your region.