

# Prospective Member Agency Information

Interested in starting a food pantry or communal meal site? Perhaps you already run one, and are looking for ways to access more food. Maybe you've heard of the Food Bank, but you're not sure what we do or what "membership" means. This guide clarifies what we do, explains membership, and helps you determine if becoming a member agency is the right fit for you.



## What is the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts?

Our mission is to feed our neighbors in need and lead the community to end hunger. We source, store, and distribute food to a network of over 170 independently operated food pantries, meal sites, and emergency shelters in Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties. We also provide direct distribution to clients through our Mobile Food Bank and Brown Bag: Food for Elders programs. In our last fiscal year, we distributed over 13.3 million pounds of food throughout Western Massachusetts.

## What does it mean to become a "member agency?"

Joining the Food Bank network isn't a merger — your organization retains its independent identity and non-profit status. Our member agencies are independent non-profit organizations and houses of faith throughout Western Massachusetts.

## Who can join the Food Bank's member agency network?

We are currently accepting membership from the following types of programs:

- Food pantries and meal sites that are open to the public
- Emergency shelters (must have an average stay of less than 6 months)
- College/university pantries (please contact us for campus pantry membership brochure and criteria)
- Food pantries based in medical settings such as a hospital or medical center

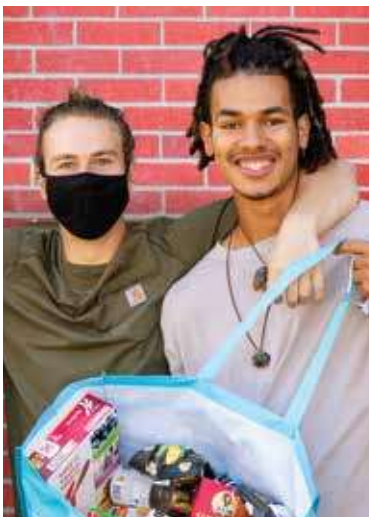
## What are the requirements for membership?

Our member agencies must be sponsored by a 501c3 organization that is classified as a public charity incorporated for the purposes of serving the ill, needy, or infants; or by a church, synagogue, or other house of worship.

## What are the benefits of membership, and what are the costs?

As a membership-based organization, our member agencies pay an annual membership fee of \$125. There are LOTS of benefits to becoming a member... mainly, access to food! We also provide additional support services, including:

- Weekly newsletter featuring community resources and funding opportunities
- Nutrition workshops and recipes
- Door-to-door food delivery from the Food Bank to your program. (For eligible programs when space is available. Most programs will need to use their own vehicle)
- SNAP application assistance for your participants
- Networking opportunities with other food pantries and meal sites across the region.
- Free training workshops on fundraising, volunteer management, communications, and more!



## Types of Food Available to Member Agencies

Food Bank Fact: Beyond canned goods, our member agencies enjoy a variety of fresh, nutritious offerings—local produce, dairy, and meat! Most importantly, the majority of our provided food is FREE. While some items have monthly case limits, there's no restriction on how often programs can order each month. Explore our diverse product categories:

**Fresh Produce:** Product either donated or bought by the Food Bank. *FREE.*

**Non-Frozen Perishables:** Product donated to the Food Bank from various types of food donors. *FREE.*

**MEFAP:** MEFAP stands for the "Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program." State funded. Case limits apply based on program size. *FREE.*

**USDA (TEFAP):** TEFAP stands for "The Emergency Food Assistance Program." Federally funded. Additional paperwork and federal regulations apply. Case limits apply based on program size. Available after 6 months of membership. *FREE.*

**Donated:** Product donated or purchased by the Food Bank, often with grant funds. Available for a "Shared Maintenance Fee" of either 19 cents or 10 cents/pound based on county.  
*19¢/lb non-Hampden county*  
*10¢/lb Hampden County*

**Buy-In:** Product bought by the Food Bank, available at wholesale prices. (These are the only products that programs "buy" at the Food Bank.)

## Food Safety Requirements

We require all member agencies to have a valid food safety certificate on file with the Food Bank. For food pantries, we require a basic level of certification. For meal sites, we require a Food Safety Protection Manager certificate. If you don't have a volunteer or staff person who has these certifications, don't worry! We offer classes in both levels of certification. We also conduct a food safety inspection of all new programs, and all member agencies are reinspected once every two years.

If you're interested in membership, contact our Agency Relations team either by email at [agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org](mailto:agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org), or by phone at 413-247-9738. We'd be happy to send you an application!

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

**USDA** United States  
Department of  
Agriculture  
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Food Bank of Western Massachusetts  
25 Carew Street, Chicopee, MA | 413-247-9738  
[foodbankwma.org](http://foodbankwma.org)

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