

Essentials for Agencies

Food Bank of Western MA

October 2025



Training Agenda

- Agency vs. Program
- Types of Program Contacts
- Points of Contact @ The Food Bank – Who to contact & when
- Maintaining membership
- Food types, fees & costs
- Ordering Deadlines & Closures
- Statements, invoices, and payment
- Monitoring Visits
- Food safety
- Sharing Food
- Religious Activity
- Misconceptions
- Other Important Policies
- Extras
- Communication

Things We Won't Be Covering Today

...So review your Essentials Guide!

- “Expiration” dates and labels
- Fees
- Pick up process

When in doubt, give us a call or
send us an email at
agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org

There are separate trainings for:

- USDA requirements and regulations
- In-depth online ordering explanations
 - Statistics

Recordings of trainings are available on the Trainings page of the website.

Password: F00dBank

Agency vs. Program- Essentials Guide p. 5



Programs

physical locations of food distribution

Types:

PUBLIC

Public programs with a primary purpose providing food assistance or short-term emergency shelter.

- Pantries
- Meal Programs
- Shelters (with a stay of 6 months or less)

SEMI-PRIVATE

Programs that aren't open to the public broadly, but are open to any member of a large community

- Campus Pantries
- Backpack Programs
- School Pantries
- Medical Centers

PRIVATE

Programs that are only open to their own members or residents

- Residential Programs
- Substance Use Recovery Centers
- Internal Pantries
- Daycares

Program Contacts- Essential Guide p.21

- 1. Admin:** Sponsoring *agency's* Executive Director (or similar position). Same person for all programs across an agency. **Signs Basic Membership Agreement (read: annual contract)**
- 2. MAIN Contact:** Primary Food Bank contact at *each program*. ONLY ONE PERSON for each program. Receives all Food Bank communications. Must actively maintain & check email! Authorized to make program changes (ex. hours, adding/removing other contacts)
- 3. Update:** Allowed to update Food Bank contact list
- 4. PWW ("Primarius Web Windows") Contact:** Orders food online, receives order confirmation emails
- 5. Authorized:** Allowed to sign for pick up/delivery orders.
- 6. Food Safety:** Must have at least one Food Safety contact on file for each *program*. Person must have correct type of certification for your program. Must send Food Bank a copy of this person's food safety certificate
- 7. MSR ("Monthly Service Report"):** Completes your program's monthly statistics

Points of Contact at FBWM- Essentials Guide p.4

Agency Relations

Michelle Geoffroy - Agency Relations Manager
Contacts & Essentials Guide, Compliance & Capacity Building, Oversight, Oasis Insight, Stats & Sizes, Statements

Javier Stuart - Agency Relations Coordinator
Monitoring Visits, USDA Compliance, Statistics

Naomi Desilets - Agency Resource Coordinator
Capacity Grants, ACE Points, Program Goals, Network Meetings, Capacity Building, Agency Trainings

Kate Pousont Scarborough – Agency Recruitment Coordinator
Identifying prospective new members, Applications, Initial Inspections, Onboarding

Food Operations

Jimmy Bushey- Inventory Control Manager
Wrong items, Missing items, bad product

Sabrina Pretti – Food Operations Coordinator
Pickup schedule changes/cancellation

Antonio Acevedo- Food Distribution Supervisor
Delivery questions/concerns

Brandie Taggart- Food Procurement Coordinator
Retail pick up

For the following you can contact
agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org

General questions and concerns, Program Changes, Order and Food Quality Questions/Concerns

When to Contact FBWM- Essentials Guide p.4

You MUST contact the Food Bank when...

APPOINTMENT CANCELLATIONS/RESCHEDULES

- (Failure to cancel/reschedule may result in restocking fees!)

AGENCY CHANGES

- Executive Director change
- Billing contact change
- Organization name/address change
- Change/loss of 501c3 status

PROGRAM CHANGES

- Location (including storage or food prep spaces)- REQUIRES INSPECTION
- Hours
- Phone number
- Primary contact change
- Food safety certification change

Tips to Maintain Your Membership- Essentials Guide p.24

- **Keep your federal and state taxes up to date!**
 - If not up to date, or if your 501(c)3 status changes, your agency, and all programs under it, will lose nonprofit status. Loss of nonprofit/charitable status means loss of Food Bank membership!
- **Place an order at least once every six months**
 - If your program doesn't order at least once/year, we will not send a renewal contract
- **Current & accurate stats are a must!**
 - If missing multiple months or submit multiple months with errors, will trigger suspension
 - For EFPs – stats determine program size. Program size determines MEFAP & USDA case limits
- **Maintain current food safety certificates**
 - Will be required to obtain certification within 60 days of a staff/volunteer change; failure to do so will result in suspension
- **Pay invoices on time**
 - Programs with balances 90+ days overdue will be placed on Free Food Only status.
 - Programs with balances 120+ days overdue will be suspended pending payment

Food Types- Essentials Guide p.6



Buy-In

Available to ALL programs

Product bought by the Food Bank, available at wholesale prices. These are the only products that have a “cost” at the Food Bank



Donated Product

Available to all programs EXCEPT some campus pantries

Candy and some beverages (free), non-frozen perishables, salvage by the case and frozen perishables



Fresh Produce

FREE

Because this product is highly perishable, it is available to all programs for FREE, with no case limits



MEFAP

Available to Public and Semi-Private programs

Free state-funded food. Case limits apply based on program size. See p.45 in the Essentials Guide for more details.



USDA

Available to new Public programs after 6 months

Free federally-funded food. Additional paperwork and regulations apply. Case limits apply based on program size.

Fees vs. Cost: Why Does it Matter?- Essentials Guide p.6-8

When we talk to the public, it is critical for all of us that we accurately portray the relationship between the agencies and The Food Bank.

We advise agencies not to discuss cost, fees, or “prices” with media, or to say they “purchase” or “buy” food from The Food Bank because....

...The emergency food system is complex and nuanced!...

...Even if **you** accurately describe “shared maintenance fees,” media may not portray it that way...

...And donors may not perceive it that way. They may perceive “fees” as “selling food,” which can result in decreased donations (*this has actually happened!*)

By maintaining consistent messaging across the network, we prevent inaccuracies & misconceptions that undermine the public’s trust in The Food Bank & our agency network, which can negatively impact the work we ALL do.

Ordering Deadlines- Essentials Guide p.28

In general...

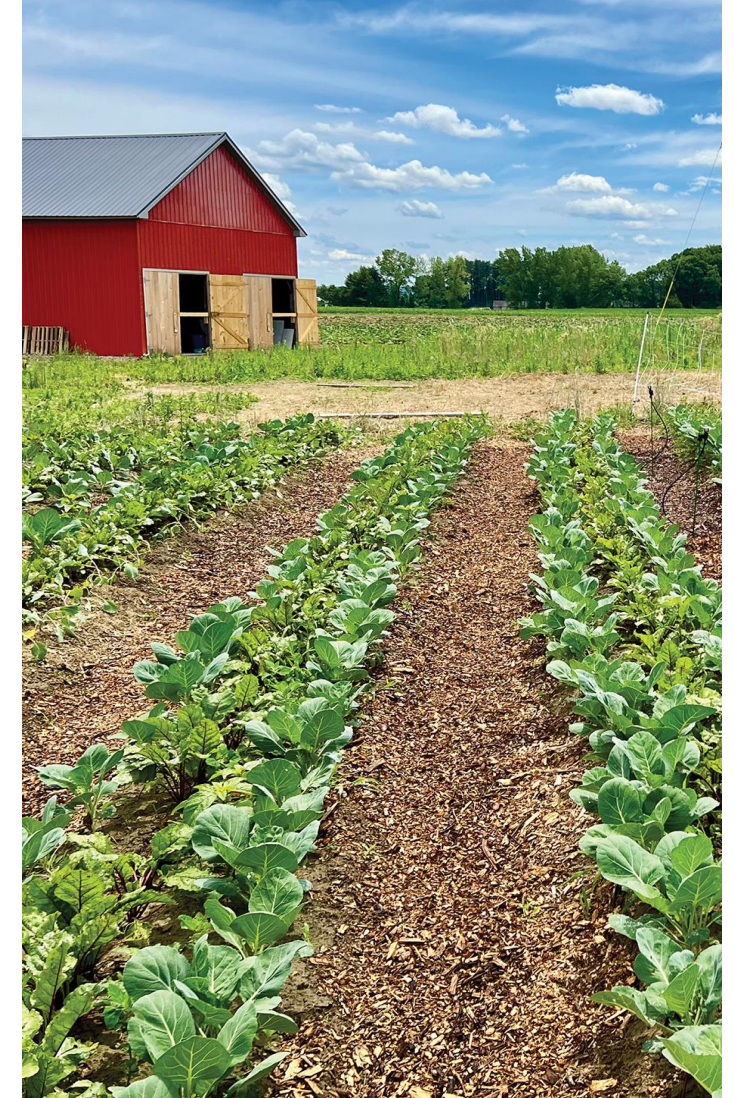
1. You can OPEN your order up to 4 business days before your pickup/delivery date. You must SUBMIT your order at LEAST 2 business days before pickup/delivery. **Orders cannot be placed over the weekend for Tuesday pickup/delivery (need to receive order by Friday)**

Holiday and Inventory Closings change the ordering schedule!

2. The Food Bank offices & warehouse are closed for 10 major holidays, and close 4x a year for inventory at the last two business days of every quarter (end of Dec., March, June, and Sept.) with extended closings between Christmas/New Year and June inventory –July 5th

Online Ordering vs Warehouse vs Office Closures

3. Online ordering closed- means online ordering is not accessible. Warehouse closed- means no pickup or delivery appointments available. Online ordering may still be available. Offices closed- means all office operation are closed, online ordering still available (unless noted otherwise).



Unexpected Closures

Usually weather-related

Will be posted on our outgoing phone message and the following websites:

- <https://www.foodbankwma.org/>
- <https://www.wwlp.com/>
- <https://www.westernmassnews.com/>

Pickup appointments will be rescheduled

Delivery appointments will be rescheduled as pickups

Statements vs Invoices- Essentials Guide p.30-31

Invoices

- You will receive 3 copies of your invoice
 - Sign one copy and leave it with Food Bank staff
 - Have the other 2 copies cosigned by someone else at the program
 - Keep one copy on site, forward the other to your treasurer/billing department
- We check invoices during monitoring visits
 - Keep a copy of all physically signed (and cosigned!) invoices on site at your program.
 - You may keep electronic copies of these physically signed invoices.

Statements are available online at the end of each month

- Lists all financial activity for your program for the month, including all invoices with outstanding balances or credits, payments and grants applied
- You'll only receive a statement if your program ends the month with a balance due.
- If you have grants available on your account, the current balance will be listed at the bottom of your statement – these are automatically applied to your orders until funds are depleted!

Payment

- Please include 5-digit program number with payment!
- Please pay amount shown in "Total Due" box on monthly statement, OR include invoice number with payment
- Cannot pay with credit card or personal check

Monitoring Visits- Essentials Guide p.32

Must be completed every 2 years

Time commitment:

- Private programs: 30-60 minutes
- Non-USDA Public Programs and Semi-Private Programs : 1-2 hours
- USDA programs: 3-4 hours

What we look at:

- Pre-visit: file review, current tax-exempt documents, monthly statistics
- Food Bank invoices
- Eligibility requirements, intake procedures, and record keeping
- Food safety inspection
- Review program contacts
- **NEW: Retail pickup**
- For USDA programs: sign-in sheets inventories, and signage

Invoices to Have on File:

Non-USDA programs:
Previous fiscal year + current
fiscal year

USDA programs: Previous 3
fiscal years + current fiscal
year

Food Safety Certification- Who needs what and how often?

Essentials Guide p. 13

Who: Any program that **does not** prepare any food
i.e. pantry, internal pantry, etc.

What: ServSafe Food Handler Certificate (or equivalent)

How often: Every 3 years

Basic/Food Handler: Available online thru ServSafe website or rServing. Course and exam cost \$6-\$15

Required that at least one person who is regularly overseeing distribution has this certification and copy on file at the Food Bank

Who: Any program where food is prepared and served

i.e. youth programs, meal sites, rehabs, shelters, etc.

What: ServSafe Manager Certificate (or equivalent)

How often: Every 5 years

Highest level of food safety. Available online thru ServSafe website. Course/exam package prices vary. Can also search for a course/exam near you.

Required that at least one person who is regularly on hand during food prep have this certification and copy on file at the Food Bank.

Food Safety Certificate Examples



Need to Knows- Food Safety- Essentials Guide p.13-20

- CANNOT repackage meat products
- CANNOT repackage grains, pastas, baked goods, etc.
- Can ONLY repackage fresh produce
- If a can is severely dented (cracked), dented at seam, rushed, or “bubbling” at top, throw it out!
- If it has no label (except produce) throw it out!

When transporting perishable and frozen goods, always have a freezer blanket or cooler on hand large enough to cover all the product.

- Our staff may refuse to release cold storage product if the person picking up doesn't have equipment to maintain cold chain.
- Frozen foods must remain frozen from the time they leave the Food Bank to the time they reach the program.
- Make sure fridge/freezer are at proper temperatures to keep food from spoiling.

Need to Knows- Food Safety

- Food should be transported directly from Food Bank/retail donor to your program
- Check food temps when picking up food *and* when it arrives at your program
 - ALL programs required to keep temperature logs! This applies to food picked up at the Food Bank AND food picked up from a retail donor
 - For programs that do not use a refrigerated vehicle, freezer blankets or coolers are now required
- Storage:
 - At least 6 in. off floor and 2 in. from wall
 - Don't store raw meat over ready-to-eat food
 - Don't store chemicals or hygiene products over food! Store UNDER food, or preferably in a separate storage area entirely
- Dates on many products are NOT related to food safety!
 - See p. 19-20 in the Essentials Guide, or...
 - "Keep or Toss" in the "Notable Links" section on the Online Ordering landing page

NEW: OTC Meds, Vitamins, Supplements & Pet Food Essentials Guide p. 12

Over the Counter (OTC) medications are approved by the FDA for use without a prescription to treat, cure, or prevent specific health conditions. They have been rigorously tested for safety and efficacy.

- Examples: pain relievers, cold/flu medications, allergy medications, antacids, topical medications, and fluoride toothpaste.
- If programs choose to accept and distribute OTC medications, they must comply with any federal, state, or local restrictions or licensing requirements.
- At a minimum, product must be within expiration dates, packaging must be intact and tamper-resistant, and must have an intact, readable label that includes the name of the drug, list of ingredients, net quantity of contents, potency per recommended dose, directions for use, storage requirements (if any), control number, expiration date, name and address of manufacturer, and any applicable warnings.

Vitamins and dietary supplements are **not** considered drugs and are not intended to treat, cure, or prevent diseases.

- Examples include vitamins, herbal supplements like ginkgo or St. John's Wort, minerals like magnesium or zinc, protein powders, probiotics, and melatonin.
- These products must include a Supplement Facts panel that lists ingredients, serving size, and daily value percentages.
- They are regulated by the FDA and therefore should be handled in accordance with safe food handling practices.

Pet food is subject to the same food safety and handling standards as human food.

Distribution of products containing THC, CBD, or other cannabinoids is prohibited.

Sharing Food- Essentials Guide p.11

1. Food may not be sold, traded or provided in exchange for services

2. Food Bank food cannot be shared with other programs/agencies

3. Food Bank food may not be given in return for volunteering or participation in religious ceremonies

4. Preferential treatment (including special distribution times, shopping, or pickups) is not allowed



Religious Activity- Essentials Guide p.41 (Basic Membership Agreement)

Food may not be provided in exchange for participation in religious activity

- All religious activity must occur at a separate time or location than the food distribution.
 - This includes distribution of religious materials
- Praying with or holding religious activities with people are waiting in line for food is not permitted.
 - Even if voluntary, it must take place at separate location or time.
- Special distributions/deliveries for church members are not allowed

A very quick, voluntary prayer is allowed before meals

Common Misconceptions

1. **Is there an income limit for people to receive food?**
Nope! Except for USDA food, there are NO income restrictions on food, from the Food Bank or any of our retail partners.

In fact, Public programs MUST serve everyone, regardless of income.

2. **How often can a program get good from the Food Bank?**
As often as your program needs and is able.

3. **How often can guests come to your program?**
As often as you are able to provide

4. **Can guests pick up for another household?**
Yes! As long as they provide the information you need for your monthly stats, a neighbor or friend can pick up for another household. Some programs ask the other household to complete a form giving that permission to pick up for them but that is not required. However, unless the other household has completed a USDA eligibility declaration, a neighbor CANNOT pick up USDA food for them.

Common Misconceptions (Continued)

5.

Do we need to ask for ID?

You can REQUEST ID, but you cannot require it. MEFAP and USDA both prohibit photo ID and SSN requirements.

There is no requirement that any program ask for ID or ANY verifications, including for USDA. It is prohibited to deny food to TEFAP/MEFAP participants if they refuse to reveal any information that is not a requirement of TEFAP/MEFAP.

6.

Can guests come to my pantry if go to another?

Yes. The Food Bank encourages people to use as many services as they need to achieve food security.

7.

Can we serve people from another town? What about another state?

With the exception of USDA product, Food Bank food (and food from our retail partners) has no residency restrictions.

Public programs may have a defined service area but cannot refuse service to guests who reside elsewhere. For guests residing outside the program's service area, programs may provide limited service and refer to local resources.

Other Important Policies

Cannabinoids

Food Bank member agencies are prohibited from distributing products that contain CBD, THC, and other cannabinoids

Information Security

Programs must adhere to MA CMR 201 17.00 – Standards for the Protection of Personal Information

Non-Discrimination

Programs may not discriminate against any person on the grounds of race, color, citizenship, immigration status, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military, or protected veteran status.

Extras for All Programs



SNAP

Outreach events, telephone referrals, application assistance, case management, staff and volunteer trainings



Advocacy

We work with state and federal legislators on policy priorities including SNAP, MEFAP, and TEFAP (USDA). Advocacy Alerts let our network supporters know when they can take action



Nutrition

General wellness and nutrition basics, shopping on a budget, health eating in recovery, diabetes prevention and management, cooking demos, food samplings, recipes, and nudges



Agency Training Institute

Trainings for agencies specific topics and themes requested each year

Extras for Public and Semi-Private Programs



Oasis Insight Network

Online client tracking tool. Gather demographic information and track multiple types of assistance. Reporting feature creates monthly Food Bank reports, organizes info for other grant funders



Retail Pickup

Pair with local retailers to pick up food. Additional reporting requirements apply. See Essentials Guide p.62



Delivery

Limited availability, see Essentials Guide p.50-61 for the application.



And more!

Disaster plans, annual Program Goals, Capacity Building Grants, Emergency Grants, ACE Points, and networking meetings

Communications & Open Dialog

- **NewsBites**
 - Weekly newsletter, sent to online ordering and primary program contacts. Information for programs and clients. Includes recipes, recalls and new product information, and early close dates and policy change information
- **Phone**
 - Public programs need to provide a phone number for public listing. Outgoing message must include location, hours, and ability to leave message
 - Messages from Food Bank and guests must be returned within 2 business days
- **Email**
 - Primary communication method. Agencies required to maintain active email address. Must have at least one other email address on record, in case we can't reach anyone at the primary address. For general communication, send to agencyrelations@foodbankwma.org.
- **Food Bank website**
 - Nutrition info and recipes
 - Member agency locator
 - Training announcements, recording and materials of past trainings
 - Network Call notes
 - Password: F00dBank



Communication & Open Dialog continued

- **Network Calls**
 - 2nd Thursday at 2pm
 - 4th Wednesday at 3pm
- **Area Meetings**
 - Quarterly call for Berkshire member agencies and local partners
 - Quarterly in-person meetings at agency sites (location varies & rotates by county)
 - Quarterly calls for campus pantries, and agencies that use Oasis Insights
- **Talking with the media**
 - Wording when engaging with media that sustains donor and community confidence & cuts down on confusion
 - Partnership with FBWM & leveraging resources
 - Abundance rather than scarcity
 - “Food Bank” vs. “food pantry”
- **Open dialog, concerns/complaints and partnership**
 - Food quality issues, missing items
 - Food needs/likes/dislikes
 - How can we better help you?



Contact Info

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FOOD BANK
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS
TOGETHER, WE END HUNGER