



FBNA Agency Partnership Information

Thank you for your interest in partnering with the Food Bank of North Alabama (FBNA.) FBNA is a private, nonprofit organization and a proud partner of Feeding America. We are dedicated to ending hunger by collaborating with partners that have similar objectives as a way to efficiently strengthen our community and assist people struggling with food insecurity without duplicating services. These partnerships take place across our 11 county service area including: Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Madison, Marshall, and Morgan counties.

Attached, you'll find a checklist of required documents to include with your completed application. FBNA receives many requests for partnership; so, ensuring you've thoroughly read and completed each page in its entirety will help expedite your application process. Applications are reviewed on a quarterly basis with particular focus on counties with increased food insecurity or limited services available. Upon reviewing your application, we will notify you as to whether your organization meets all requirements for partnership at that time and begin with the next steps of our partnership process as aligned on page 3.

All agencies are required to complete the General Application Section. Additionally, agencies must fill out the sections pertaining to ALL categories of food distribution that their organization intends to participate in. If you're uncertain on these categories please see their listed descriptions for clarity. We understand that every organization is different and you may have questions regarding the completion of your application or requirements. Our staff is more than happy to help you with this process via phone or email.

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APPLICATION PROCESS & REQUIREMENTS



- APPLICATION PROCESS:**
1. SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION
 2. SITE VISIT BY FBNA REPRESENTATIVE
 3. FOOD SAFETY ORIENTATION

APPLYING ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE EITHER A 501(3)C NONPROFIT OR A CHURCH.

Food assistance programs that are run through a church but do not operate directly on the church premises, and lack their own 501(c)(3) status, must apply as an agency-sponsored initiative.

PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY:

Nonprofit Organizations must provide proof of 501c3 status:

- Include a photocopy of your IRS/US Dept. of Treasury Letter of Determination (stating your 501c3 tax-exempt status) or a copy of the "Cumulative List of Organizations - IRS Publication 78" where your agency is listed.

Churches must provide one of three documents:

- 501c3 letter
 - Include a photocopy of your IRS/US Dept. of Treasury Letter of Determination (stating your 501c3 tax-exempt status) or a copy of the "Cumulative List of Organizations - IRS Publication 78" where your agency is listed.
- A letter from the hosting church on its letterhead, signed by the Church Leadership, confirming that the organization aligns with the IRS criteria for defining a church.

ITEMS TO SUBMIT:

- GENERAL APPLICATION SECTION
- PROGRAM SPECIFIC APPLICATION SECTIONS
- DOCUMENTS TO DEMONSTRATE ESTABLISHED HISTORY OF FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS
 - As an example, this could be a sign in sheet or other documentation of distributions
- BUDGET / FUNDING INSIGHT
- AGENCY-SPONSORED APPLICATION (IF REQUIRED)

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED.

The Food Bank of North Alabama does not establish long-term partnerships with organizations for temporary events or special occasions. For these types of distribution opportunities, please contact our Special Programs Department. Completion of this application does not guarantee affiliation. We reserve the right to decline affiliation to programs that do not meet our criteria. Applications may be waitlisted if there are no current affiliation openings in your area.

Types of Food Assistance Programs We Collaborate With

It is preferred that applying organizations have an established food assistance program with at least six months of operation, though exceptions may be considered for underserved areas on a case-by-case basis.

Food Pantry:

A pantry is where individuals visit the program site and receive bags/boxes of groceries to prepare at home. The groceries could also be delivered to the participants.

Backpack Program:

A type of pantry that delivers groceries to schools for kids to prepare at home over the weekend.

School Pantry Program: A type of program that stocks a pantry at a school for kids and their families to receive bags/boxes of groceries to prepare at home. Intended to meet the needs of the whole household rather than just the student. This may also include secondary/college food assistance programs.

Soup Kitchen / Meal Provider:

A Soup Kitchen / Meal Provider is any Partner Agency that prepares, serves or delivers prepared meals or snacks to individuals in need. This includes after school snack programs , senior daycare, etc.) All meal programs are held to Department of Health standards.

Residential Program:

This type of meal program serves either permanent or temporary residents of a facility. All meal programs that provide prepared food are held to Department of Health standards.

***Please note that due to the SNAP Program's eligibility criteria, we may be unable to accept groups whose residents are SNAP recipients to avoid limiting their access to those resources. However, our goal is to ensure healthy food access for everyone, so we do have potential options for organizations in this situation to help residents utilize all available resources. For more information about this resource, please reach out to our Agency Relations team to discuss your program further.*

Food Assistance Partners can engage in one or more of these programs. For example, some pantries also provide prepared meals, which means they operate as a multi-functional service and can be classified as both a pantry and a soup kitchen.

Programs that provide prepared meals, such as Soup Kitchens, Meal Providers, and Residential Programs, must include at least one member of the food preparation team who holds a nationally recognized food manager safety certification, such as the ServSafe Manager Certification. While this certification is not a prerequisite for application approval, it must be obtained within 90 days of the program becoming an agency partner. The Food Bank of North Alabama may offer resources to assist with obtaining this certification.

Operational Requirements for Membership

The following are the essential operational requirements to become a partner with The Food Bank of North Alabama.

- All agency partners are required to provide food for underprivileged or underserved communities. Ensure that food from the Food Bank and the USDA is **given out for free** to the ill, needy, and children based solely on eligibility.
- Your organization must be situated and distribute in the North Alabama area within the counties we serve: Colbert, Cullman, Dekalb, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, or Morgan County.
- Consistent adherence to food safety guidelines is mandatory.
- Redistribution of products received through resources provided by the Food Bank of North Alabama to other nonprofit or for-profit entities is not allowed. This means you cannot collect food for another organization or share any part of your food procurement with another program without prior authorization from The Food Bank of North Alabama.
- You must have responsible personnel (or volunteers) who are accountable for record keeping, finances, volunteer training and education, food safety, and inventory control.
- Adequate physical storage space is essential, including appropriate storage for the types of food your group plans to distribute. If you intend to distribute temperature-sensitive items, you must have suitable refrigeration and freezer units.
- Organizations receiving resources from The Food Bank of North Alabama cannot store or distribute food from an individual's private residence (*residential programs may be an exception*).
- You must have reliable and clean vehicles for transporting food from our warehouse to your facility. Vehicles should be free of debris, trash, machinery, and any chemicals.
- It is necessary to utilize sign-in sheets or another tracking system to monitor the individuals served, according to the required demographics for reporting. Most Agency Partners are not required to collect names or other identifying information. We discourage keeping copies of photo IDs or other personal identifying information due to the risk of identity theft for your participants and liability for your program.
- You must possess the ability and willingness to access and submit information online, along with a regularly checked email address.

- A clearly defined program budget must be established, along with reliable funding sources.
- You should be willing and able to pay shared maintenance handling fees at the current rate of \$0.14 per pound.
- Agencies must pick up from the warehouse at least 6 times a year.
- For programs that provide food bags or boxes for pickup or delivery, you need to operate on a regular schedule that is clearly communicated to your community through public notification methods. (signage, website, social media, flyers, etc)
- Your site must pass an inspection prior to approval and undergo at least one inspection no more than every two years thereafter. Programs experiencing high leadership turnover or primarily serving minors may require more frequent inspections to ensure proper training and compliance with standards and food safety procedures.
- You may set additional criteria for the individuals you serve; however, these criteria must be consistent and posted at your pantry/feeding site. They must also comply with the nondiscrimination policies set forth by The Food Bank of North Alabama, Feeding America, and our donation partners. Discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, or age is prohibited.
- Any client who believes they are facing discrimination should have easy access to complaint procedures and/or be provided with alternative resources for obtaining food.
- Participants must not be required to attend religious events, follow religious practices (such as prayer), or perform “volunteer” work to receive food assistance. **This stipulation does not apply to food recipients who choose to volunteer their time or are members of the religious organization. Volunteers or congregants remain eligible to receive food, even if they choose to participate or volunteer!
- Due to elevated temperatures throughout the year, particularly during summer, we mandate the use of thermal blankets or coolers that can effectively cover and contain any frozen products being transported. When available, thermal blankets may be obtained from the food bank, but insulated blankets that meet food bank standards can also be purchased from external vendors like U-LINE.
- Recognize that a significant portion of the items we receive is sourced through a food reclamation program. Agency Partners acknowledge that food is accepted "as-is." While warehouse staff and volunteers inspect the food, the agency commits to checking all items to ensure they meet safety standards.
- Any changes in communication methods, leadership, or program operations must be reported to the Food Bank of North Alabama within 30 calendar days to ensure there is no disruption in service.
- Partnerships will undergo evaluation at the end of each two-year cycle, along with necessary site inspections. Agencies that are approved to continue their partnership will renew and update their agreements at that time.

Initial Site Inspection

The Food Bank of North Alabama and Feeding America stipulate that agencies must pass a site inspection before being approved for partnership. Following approval, the site will undergo inspections at least once every two years.

What are the key criteria for the initial site inspection?

- Food and non-food household items must be stored on separate shelves, with chemicals (including personal hygiene products) kept below food items.
- The storage area needs to be clean, adequately sized, properly maintained at the correct temperatures, and secured to prevent tampering and deter pests.
- The "First Expired, First Out" method for food circulation should be implemented.
- All food must be stored at least 4 inches off the floor and ceiling, and a minimum of 1 inch away from the walls to allow ventilation.
- Shelving should be in good condition and free from rust.
- Functional thermometers must be present in all food storage areas, including refrigeration and freezer compartments. Dry storage should be insulated and air-conditioned year-round:
 - Required temperature ranges include:
 - 32 – 40 degrees for refrigerators
 - Zero (0) degrees or below for freezers
 - Dry storage should not exceed 80 degrees.
 - *Many of our established groups use digital thermometers that operate on Wi-Fi. If you need thermometers and would like to consider this option before making a purchase, please reach out for more information.*
- Monthly pest control measures must be implemented, along with maintained pest control logs.

Handling Fees – Shared Maintenance Costs

The Food Bank utilizes a handling fee system, also known as Shared Maintenance. This fee does not cover the cost of food itself; rather, it relates to expenses such as product acquisition, truck maintenance, fuel, driver wages, and salaries. Currently, the fee stands at \$0.14 per pound.

Certain donated items may have different handling costs, such as “Half Shared Maintenance = \$0.07” or “No Shared Maintenance = \$0.00.”

Additionally, our Food Bank’s Inventory Procurement team acquires popular products (usually single-serve items) at wholesale prices, which are then stored in the warehouse for the convenience of our agencies. The items available through this program are not donations and are priced similarly to what you'd find at Sam's Club or Costco.

Agency Orientation

Every prospective agency is required to participate in the New Agency Orientation prior to partnership approval. This orientation covers important policies and procedures for being an Agency Partner with the Food Bank of North Alabama, along with essential food safety training. It is crucial for your program's Leadership, Main Contact, and Primary Pick Up Driver to attend. If food distribution is managed by others not listed, please ensure their participation in the training as well.

Food Safety Training

Feeding America mandates that all distribution partners engage in Food Safety Training. The foundational training for food banking includes self-navigated slides and a 30-question multiple-choice exam. This training must be completed by the leadership of the Food Assistance Program and Pick Up Drivers, but it is highly recommended that ALL program staff and volunteers participate to maintain food safety standards.

Additionally, groups that provide prepared meals are required to have a Food Safety Manager certified through a recognized National Food Safety Program, such as ServSafe. For more information on how to obtain this certification, please reach out to the Agency Relations team.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

We appreciate you taking the time to review this information! We hope it has been beneficial for you. If you're ready to move forward, please contact our Agency Relations department to request an application. We look forward to learning more about your program and discovering how we can collaborate to combat hunger throughout North Alabama!

FOOD BANK NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity* and sexual orientation*), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. *The enclosed "non-discrimination" language herein was added pursuant to the May 5, 2022, USDA memorandum. However, although included as currently required for audit compliance by the USDA, the State of Alabama objects to its inclusion, applicability, and the application of this language due to currently pending legal challenges in the matter of *The STATE OF TENNESSEE, ET AL. V. USDA, ET AL.*, Case No. 3:22-cv-00257, and may be subject to change or removal

Completion of an application does not guarantee affiliation. We reserve the right to decline affiliation to programs that do not meet our criteria. Applications may be waitlisted if there are no current affiliation openings in your area.

Pre-Application Quick Self-Evaluation



We are thrilled that you are considering applying for a partnership with the Food Bank of North Alabama. Food assistance programs play a crucial role in our battle against hunger in the region. While running a food assistance program can be challenging, the most successful initiatives are built on strong foundations and succession plans. Before you proceed with our application, please take a moment to review the following information and ensure that your organization meets all our minimum criteria for consideration.

All partners must be a recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization or meet the IRS Church designation. They should operate within one of our 11 service area counties and align with one or more of the categories specified in our application packet.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Human Resources

- Reliable leadership, whether paid or volunteer, responsible for maintaining records and managing inventory.
- Capable individuals available to help with the loading and unloading of food.

Physical Resources

- You have secured a facility that offers sufficient storage space and is not located in a private home.
- You have been providing food assistance for a minimum of six months.
- Regular pest control services are performed at your facility.
- You have suitable refrigeration and freezer units if you plan to distribute temperature-sensitive items.
- You possess dependable and clean vehicles for transporting food from our warehouse to your facility.

Financial Resources

- A well-defined program budget along with reliable funding sources is in place.
- You are prepared to cover the shared maintenance fees at the existing rates.

Information Resources

- You have established your operating hours and service days, ensuring a consistent schedule each month.
- You can utilize sign-in sheets or another tracking method to log the individuals served and are able to report this information electronically every month.
- You are dedicated to adhering to food safety guidelines and completing the necessary food safety training as required by Feeding America and the Food Bank of North Alabama.
- You have internet access and a working email account that you check frequently.

For a comprehensive list of operational requirements, please refer to the full application guide.