Stocking the Campus Pantry to Serve your Students

Ensuring a Holistic Sourcing Strategy

Campus Pantry leaders have the complicated responsibility of sourcing food to keep the campus pantry well-stocked with a variety of foods that meet the unique needs of their student community. The Minnesota Food Shelf Client Survey Results can be a good starting place to better understand the foods and experiences that individuals most want to see in their food pantry experience. Results from several surveys point to the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy, and eggs as well as the importance of a welcoming environment that allows for food choice. Stocking your campus pantry can be a full time job to navigate the broader hunger relief system and engage community support when food sourcing and demand can be quite variable. This guide provides some broader context to help consider sourcing choices and strategies.

Knowing what to Source

Each campus community will have different student demographics and food needs. To make sure that food sourcing has the most impact for students and is the most cost-effective for the program, it is crucial to know what is most important for your campus pantry to source. Consider what works best for your program:

- Survey students to understand the foods that are most important to them at the campus pantry.
- Distribute food in a "choice by category" distribution model, allowing for easy view of what food items are in high demand and require more frequent stocking.
- Clarify internally if the campus pantry is responding to on-campus student needs or for individuals to take home for their household; this distinction influences the types of products that the pantry stocks.

Growing your Food Sources

To effectively stock a campus pantry, it might require several different food sources or vendors. Pantries are encouraged to expand their food sources so that they are not overly dependent on one primary source. It often takes many partnerships to keep shelves stocked with a variety of choices. It could be valuable to build relationships with:

- The regional food bank (see additional information below)
- Wholesalers
- Nearby community food pantries
- Nearby community meal programs
- Local retail grocery stores or nearby bulk grocery stores
- Local growers and gardeners
- Community, civic, and/or business organizations interested in hosting food drives

Target Local Donations and Food Drives

Consistently keep a ready list of high-demand food items to share with the campus and broader community to provide guidance for food and fund drives. Food drives can be a tangible way for individuals and organizations to give back and it is valuable to know that the food collected is best meeting the needs of the community. Don't hesitate to provide guidance on what is most useful for the campus pantry and students.

Basics for Common Food Streams

Being aware of the costs and level of effort connected with typical food streams for a campus pantry can help to identify what works best for the program. The high level themes below provide some broad guidance about each food stream that you might access no matter the vendor or source.

Food Stream	Donated Food	Retail Food Rescue	USDA Commodities	Wholesale Purchase
What is it?	Donated food can be provided by your community or accessed through a regional food bank	Food "rescued" from retailers and/or restaurants that is no longer able to be sold but still safe to eat Food shifted into the hunger relief system, "rescued" from waste	TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) distributes surplus food from the open market into the hunger relief system, usually through a regional food bank	Wholesale purchase food can be accessed from multiple vendors, including local grocery stores, wholesalers, or through a regional food bank
Considerations for this source	High variety of food with smaller quantities of a single product Often shelf-stable food items Increased amount of fresh produce available Low or no cost to campus pantry	Mostly perishable food items, which may include produce, dairy, deli, meat and bakery Food items require additional volunteer labor to pick-up, receive, and/or sort High variety of food Low or no cost to campus pantry	Perishable and shelf-stable food items available Pantries that distribute TEFAP must be open to distribute food to the broader community, not just students Low or no cost to campus pantry	Ability to have food consistently available Requires less volunteer or staff labor for sorting Most expensive food for a campus pantry

General Food Sourcing Tips

Some best practices and tips from other campus pantry leaders include:

- First look at your options for low or no cost foods, such as donated and TEFAP, before accessing purchased products from your food bank or purchasing locally.
- Explore options for food rescue to source no cost perishables, but understand that food rescue does take more time and effort.
- While community food drives are a great way to raise awareness, they often can be a lot of effort. Weigh the pros and cons when determining if you'd like to do one.

Considerations for Food Bank Partnership

Many campus pantries partner with a regional food bank to source a portion of their food. Food banks serve as food distribution centers in the hunger relief system and typically cover a certain geographical service area. Regional food banks can often offer low cost, good quality products for campus pantries, similar to their community food shelf counterparts. Regional food banks may be affiliated with the Feeding America national network or may be independent food banks unique to the region. The chart below details considerations for the two common ways to partner with a regional food bank.

Partner Model Considerations	**Direct Partnership**	**Partnership through an Intermediary Non-Profit Agency**
501c3 Requirement	Often requires a 501c3 organization - Campus Pantries often use their Foundation	Non-Profit Agency serves as the 501c3 organization for the Campus Pantry
Partnership Agreement Paperwork	Partnership agreement is signed with the foundation or other 501c3 entity (possibly the college itself)	Partnership agreement is signed by the intermediary organization and campus pantry is listed as a "program" of the main "agency"
Food Safety Requirement	Will require campus pantry leader or designee to complete food safety training and serve as food recall contact.	Will require campus pantry leader or designee to complete food safety training
Invoicing and Billing	Invoiced directly and paid for by the Campus	Send to intermediary organization from food bank; costs may be shared with campus pantry or covered by intermediary organization
Data Tracking including Service Statistics	Submit monthly service statistics, including number of individuals (children, adults, seniors), households, and pounds distributed directly to the food bank. Pantries accessing TEFAP must ask shoppers to self-declare that they are at or under a given income level and provide an address once a year either verbally or using the TEFAP form.	Submit monthly service statistics, including number of individuals (children, adults, seniors), households, and pounds distributed directly to intermediary organization to submit to the food bank.
Funding and Grants	Pantry works through foundation or independently to access funding and grants. If TEFAP eligible, can apply directly for the Minnesota Food Shelf Program annual funding.	Funding may be funneled through intermediary organization. If TEFAP eligible, intermediary organizations can apply for Minnesota Food Shelf Program annual funding with campus pantry service statistics.