Partnership Criteria
The Houston Food Bank (HFB) recognizes 3 different types of partners: Food Pantries, Meal Sites/ Transitional programs, and Mobile Only Sites. This document is intended to be a side guide for active partners and a guide for potential partners. For information on ordering, policies, and further guidelines please reference the Partner Guidebook.

**ORGANIZATION CRITERIA**

Each partner must be designated a 501(c)(3) umbrella organization. A copy of the 501(c)(3) determination letter or a letter of affiliation or affirmation must be submitted to the HFB before membership can be activated. Any changes in this designation must be reported to the Houston Food Bank immediately and may affect partnership with the HFB. A copy of this letter of designation by the IRS will be kept on file at the HFB.

A partner that is a church, or a program directly sponsored by a church, may use the non-profit designation of the parent affiliation of that church. In such cases, the partner must submit a letter on the church’s letterhead affirming that the program is directly associated with that church and that the church is affiliated with the parent organization.

Only authorized partners may qualify to partner with the Houston Food Bank. Authorized partners include churches, social service organizations, licensed non-profit senior centers, shelters, and soup kitchens.

In the event of a disaster situation or of a specified event, the HFB reserves the right to partner with partners and organizations that may not traditionally meet the requirements of the HFB. Further, the HFB reserves the right to expedite the temporary membership of a partner for these purposes, if deemed appropriate and necessary. Temporary Partners must be designated as a 501(c)(3) organization.

The HFB reserves the right to refuse service to any organization that does not meet the minimum requirements of the HFB, does not correlate with its mission statement, or does not abide by the HFB’s policies and procedures as listed in this guidebook.

The HFB reserves the right to revoke the membership of any partner for reasons mentioned in the Partner Guidebook and this Partner Handbook or for any reasons determined by the HFB.
Partner must serve clients under the client choice method. This method of service allows the clients to select the items that best suites the needs of their families. Please see the Client Choice Handbook for further assistance.

The partner must agree to be open for distribution at least 4 times a month, one of the distributions occurring in the evening hours or on a Saturday for a minimum of 2 hours.

The partner must offer some form of social service to clients, i.e. nutrition education, budgeting classes, medical screenings, SNAP outreach.

Prior to approval each partner must identify which partner category best fits their distribution plan. Although this partner status can be revisited and modified as needed, a determination must be made before the partner is approved to partner with the HFB.

All partners may expect members of HFB staff to make unexpected drop in’s for compliance checks and friendly check in’s with your team. HFB may also send secret shoppers to your distributions to ensure both HFB’s and the partner’s customer services to clients.

Potential partners applying to HFB must meet the following criteria to begin the process of applying:

- A current Food Dealer’s Permit from your city or county
- Completed Civil Rights Training and Food Safety Training
- A 501(c)(3) or, for faith-based organizations, the IRS's approval via the 14 Point Criteria
- Have been distributing food for a minimum of 6 months prior to applying

Once approved as a new partner a $500 deposit is expected no later than the Friday before your HFB On Boarding meeting.

**FOOD PANTRIES**

A food pantry is a front-line partner that distributes food from HFB to people in families, children, seniors, and any individual at risk of hunger.

A Food Pantry meets the following requirements:

- Is open a minimum of **four times a month** to offer food assistance to clients
  - Offers **extended hours** to better assist working clients
• Is open to the **public**, may not have geographical restrictions

• Must offer **social service outreach**

• Use the **client choice distribution** method

### MEAL SITES & TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

A **meal site** is a place where prepared food is offered to the hungry without a fee. A **transitional program** is a licensed site where clients who fit specific criteria are housed for a determined amount of time.

Soup Kitchens, Shelters, and Transitional programs sites meet the following requirements:

- Serves prepared meals onsite
- Meets all HFB requirements such as inspections and licenses to serve prepared meals onsite
- Is regulated by TDFPS to provide licensed services to targeted population

Transitional programs **may not collect** their residents Social Security, SNAP benefits, receive state or federal reimbursements, or charge rent.

### MOBILES

A **mobile food pantry** is a food pantry on wheels. Mobiles can bring fresh produce to the community in a refrigerated truck. They can serve 150-200 families per distribution. Mobiles can be used by food pantry partners and mobile only partners.

Mobile only partners meet the following requirements:

- A **paved** space to accommodate a Class 6 truck to safely enter, park, and exit your space. Space must be a single use lot. No shopping or strip centers. No apartment complexes.
  
  - Provides **volunteers** (10-20) to assist in product distribution
  
  - Ensures families are pre-qualified with the HFB intake form
  
  - No shopping or strip centers allowed. No apartment complexes
  
  - Host 2 distributions per month
  
  - If food is removed from the mobile prior to distributing to the clients then it must be stored **6 inches** off the ground. HFB recommends using **tables**, but **pallets** are also acceptable to use.
    
    - Must have an adequate parking lot for staging the mobile pantry (parking lot must be concrete and conducive to HFB heavy truck & equipment), no shopping or strip centers allowed. No apartment complexes
• Partners may sponsor a mobile but are required to adhere to the **Mobile Sponsorship Guide** found on the website.

![Image of a mobile food bank](image-url)

## Membership Terminology

While HFB has tried to make this website and our program materials as accessible as possible, we understand that the nature of foodbanking often requires the use of field-specific terminology. We invite you to search for further clarification about program definitions and frequently used terms.

### 501(c)(3)

The U.S. Internal Revenue Code Section which defines a private non-profit corporation with charitable intent. Section 501(c) has several dozen subsections, but Section 170(e)(3) restricts the distribution of donated goods by affiliates to only those described under subsection 501(c)(3). Organizations must, by law, provide a copy of their 501(c)(3) letter when requested. Copies of your 501(c)(3) letter can be obtained by calling 1-877-829-5500.

### Account Number

Unique number assigned to each partner. Some partners may have more than one type of program offering food assistance, and therefore may have multiple account numbers. Often called a partner number.
Affiliate: An Organization that operates as a Foodbank that is deemed by Feeding America to have met all standards of admission into the Network, and which has executed an Affiliate Contract (that has not been terminated) with Feeding America.

Agency Express: (AE3), the web-based program that allows approved partners to order product from HFB’s warehouse. Pantries, meal sites, and transitional programs may order from AE3.

Annual Fee: the yearly fee HFB partner’s pay to cover handling fees, delivery fees, mobile fees, food fair fees. Annual fees begin at $3000.00 for new partners.

Application: Initial documentation and contract submitted by potential partners to become a partner of the Foodbank network. HFB’s application is sent to potential partners after passing the prescreen process.

Commodities: Shorthand for “USDA Commodities,” which are distributed to people in need through programs such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

Community Partner Liaison: (CPL) HFB staff in the Partner Services Department. CPL’s are assigned to each HFB partner. They will meet with you on a yearly basis to do your annual monitoring visit/site visit. CPL’s are the liaison between HFB and the partners.

FDA: Food and Drug Administration. A partner of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that is responsible for regulating and supervising the safety of foods.

FIFO: Acronym for “First In – First Out.” A practice of stock rotation where the oldest stock is distributed first.

Food Insecurity: The USDA’s Economic Research Service’s technical definition of hunger or not having access to enough food for active, healthy lives for all household members; hunger or risk of hunger.

Food Pantry: A partner that distributes groceries and other basic supplies for off-site use, usually for preparation in the client’s residence, to all income-eligible individuals within a certain geographic location. Food Pantry programs are classified as emergency-feeding programs and are eligible for federal and state funded products.

Food Safety: A one-hour basic course in food safety. Approved partner food safety classes are linked in the Partner Guidebook or on our website.

Good Samaritan Law: In 1996, the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was signed as public law 104-210. The law protects good-faith food donors from civil and criminal liability should the product later cause harm to the recipient. While exceptions are made for gross negligence, the law protects nonprofit agencies, foodbanks, individuals, corporations,
wholealers, retailers, governmental entities, restaurants, caterers, farmers and more. The Good Samaritan Law provides protection for food and grocery products that meet all quality and labeling standards imposed by federal, state and local laws and regulations even though the food may not be “readily marketable due to appearance, age, freshness, grade, size, surplus or other conditions."

**Hunger:** The government’s definition states: A situation in which an individual involuntarily goes without food for an intermittent or extended period. This situation can be caused by external forces that limit the individual’s resources or ability to obtain enough food and may result in detrimental physical and psychological consequences.

**Invoice:** Itemized list of products for each order. Emailed to partners.

**Meal Site:** A partner whose primary mission is to provide food to clients in the form of meals or snacks at the partner’s facility. Meal Site programs are classified as emergency-feeding programs and are eligible for federal and state funded products.

**Menu:** An itemized listing of goods or materials on hand at any given time.

**Monitoring:** Also referred to as a Site Visit. A formal inspection of a partner by a Community Partner Liaison staff to ensure that record keeping, sanitation, distribution, and other compliance requirements are being met. Feeding America requires its affiliates to monitor partner agencies at least every two years. HFB conducts inspections every year.

**Monthly Report:** Summary of individuals served, etc. (pantry programs report slightly different information) for the calendar month. Submitted to the Foodbank by the 10th of the following month. Used for raising and distributing funds, influencing public policy, educating the public, tracking the success of the TEFAP program, and assessing the efficacy of HFB’s mission.

**Municipality:** An entity operated directly by a branch of government at any level (local, state or federal). Feeding America disallows municipalities such as jails, prisons, hospitals, schools, etc. from partnering with its affiliates.

**Needy:** A person who lacks necessities of life, involving physical, mental or emotional wellbeing, because of poverty or temporary distress.

**Partner:** A non-profit organization providing food assistance in the form of free meals, snacks or groceries to predominantly low-income individuals or individuals in crisis.

**Partner Number:** See Account Number

**Partner Onboarding:** An all-day introduction to what HFB is and how to utilize the Foodbank as a resource. Onboarding is required for new partners and any new staff additions before beginning partnership.

**Partner:** See “Partner Number”
**Poverty Guideline**: A measurement tool used to determine financial eligibility for certain federal and other programs. The guideline identifies maximum gross income limits by household size for 48 contiguous States, the District of Columbia and all Territories, including Guam, and is issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Poverty Guideline is updated annually.

**Program Number**: See Account Number

**Purchase Program**: Purchase of food by a Foodbank to supplement product available through donations. Purchased items will have a fee in AE3, check the Unit Price amount before committing to select the item.

**Site Visit**: See Monitoring

**SNAP**: Acronym for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as the Food Stamp Program. In the State of Ohio, this federal program enables low-income people to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Recipients spend their benefits to

**Suspension**: Disciplinary action taken by the Foodbank toward a partner because of the partner’s failure to comply with stated policies or procedures such as submitting statistics on time. Partner agencies on Suspension may not shop at, place orders or pick up orders from the Foodbank or in any other way receive products from the Foodbank.

**Statement**: Summary what partners owe and payment history to the HFB for a calendar month. Statements are emailed to partners.

**TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)**: Aids and work opportunities to needy families by granting states the federal funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs. TANF is overseen by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) located in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs in 1997.

**TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program)**: A federal program that provides food commodities at no cost to low-income individuals in need of short-term hunger relief. TEFAP serves the agricultural community by distributing surplus commodities purchased by the USDA from farmers and other producers. In Texas, TEFAP is overseen by the Texas Department of Agriculture. TEFAP was created in 1981 with the name “Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program.”

**Transitional Program**: A partner/program whose main mission is not food assistance, but still serves meals on its premises as an additional part of its services. May include summer camps, senior meal sites, day care centers, group homes, etc. These programs are classified as non-emergency assistance programs and are not eligible for federal or state funded products.
**USDA (United States Department of Agriculture):** The United States federal executive department responsible for developing and executing federal government policy on farming, agriculture and food.