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Laying the Groundwork

Learn the basic steps involved in the process of establishing a food bank and how to start framing your planning process.

The **Global FoodBanking** Network

In this Toolkit Series

This is the second in a sequence of six toolkits that make up the **Starting a Food Bank** *series. These toolkits were created as a resource for anyone seriously considering establishing a food bank in their community. They'll guide you through the steps for shaping a strong operating plan and financial foundation, setting you up for success in the fight against hunger.*

For more information or to access the full series, visit:
www.foodbanking.org/new-food-bank-dev

TOOLKIT 1

Understanding Food Banking

Learn how food banks help communities, some common operating models, and the role of The Global FoodBanking Network.

TOOLKIT 2

Laying the Groundwork

Learn the basic steps involved in the process of establishing a food bank and how to start framing your planning process.

TOOLKIT 3

Assessing Feasibility

Learn how to evaluate your community's needs, current services, and available resources to determine if a new food bank is a good fit.

TOOLKIT 4

Building a Business Plan

Learn how to create a roadmap for your food bank, and articulate your mission, planned services, required resources, and financial projections.

TOOLKIT 5

Generating Support

Learn how to raise starting capital for your food bank and implement strategies for developing a reliable donor pipeline.

TOOLKIT 6

Launching & Beyond

Learn how to plan for a smooth public launch, evaluate your food bank's performance, and make needed adjustments in the first year.

With Thanks
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Laying the Groundwork

Establishing a food bank requires an open process with strong leadership, broad community engagement, and serious commitment. Understanding and planning carefully for every phase is key for success.

What are the steps in starting a food bank?

FOOD BANKS CHANGE lives and help uplift communities by reducing hunger and malnutrition. Since 2006, The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN) has partnered with local leaders to launch food banking operations in countries where they had not previously existed—making it possible for people in need to access food, and empowering communities served by food banks to support those who suffer from hunger and lack of nutrition.

Establishing a food banking system involves several phases, each with an accompanying toolkit in this series to help guide readers:

- ⊘ *Toolkit 1: Understanding Food Banking*
- ⊘ *Toolkit 2: Laying the Groundwork*
- ⊘ *Toolkit 3: Assessing Feasibility*
- ⊘ *Toolkit 4: Building a Business Plan*
- ⊘ *Toolkit 5: Generating Support*
- ⊘ *Toolkit 6: Launching & Beyond*

In most situations, the process could take from three to six months before the project has advanced to the point that GFN can add value.

It will likely take an additional six to eight months, or more, for a food bank to become operational.

An effective planning process for the establishment of a food banking system requires that all potential stakeholders in the system have a voice regarding the design of the system. To ensure that the process is as efficient as possible while remaining open and comprehensive, each participant must have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

> **It takes an average of 18-24 months for a new food bank to go from concept to reality.**
> THE GLOBAL FOODBANKING NETWORK

This toolkit provides an overview of the entire process of moving from concept to operational launch and stabilization of the food bank operations. Accordingly, it defines the leadership of the planning process (the core team) and also discusses the role of the recommended planning forum, a larger group of interested people who will assist with development of the business and capitalization plans under the direction of the core team.

Who should lead the work?

THE WORK OF planning for the launch of the food bank system should be guided by a core team comprised of three to seven individuals who are highly committed and strongly motivated to seeing through the establishment of the food bank system. These individuals must be willing to undertake the responsibility for moving the project forward in a timely and effective manner.

The Global FoodBanking Network can engage with the core team in a consulting capacity to help ensure that the process appropriately considers all issues relevant to the feasibility assessment, business plan development, and capitalization planning. If necessary, in the earlier stages of the process, GFN may provide more direct facilitation services, helping to build the core team and the planning forum, with the understanding that its role will revert more to subject matter consultancy as the core team assumes greater "local" management and ownership.

The core team is responsible for shepherding the entire process of evaluating the feasibility of a food bank system in the community, setting the tone for the culture and focus of the food bank system, convening the planning forum that will design the various administrative, operational, and programmatic parameters of the food bank system, developing the business and capitalization plans, and launching the operations.

> **"Having a very strong team is what will make you sustainable as a food bank."**
>
> MICHAEL SUNBOLA
> PRESIDENT, LAGOS FOOD BANK INITIATIVE
> NIGERIA

The core team should articulate the nature and purpose of the organization as it will eventually be described to the planning forum, the media/public, government, and relevant stakeholders in the private sector and throughout civil society. At this stage, it is important to ensure that all involved with the planning forum are operating from the same perspective and with the same information. This alignment will then be helpful for securing public support and any necessary

Food Bank Start-up Process

Establishing a food banking system involves five distinct phases. All together, the process can take from 18–24 months to move from concept to operation.

Laying the Groundwork	**Assessing Feasibility**	**Building a Business Plan**	**Generating Support**	**Launching & Beyond**
4-6 months	**4-5 months**	**5-7 months**	**5-6 months**	**12 months**
Assemble a core team to lead the work and a planning forum to provide additional resources and expertise.	Conduct in-depth research to identify and understand the community's needs, available resources, and existing services.	Create a detailed roadmap to guide all aspects of the administration and operations of the food bank.	Make a capitalization plan to finance the food bank and begin to develop a pipeline of dedicated donors and volunteers.	Put your plan into action and prepare to assess and adjust the food bank's operation and impact as it grows.

A staff member for FoodForward South Africa reviews inventory information. A strong team both before and after launch is vital for a food bank's success.

funding to underwrite the costs of the planning initiative. And, of course, doing so will set the tone for the entire project and define the desired organizational culture. It will be necessary that the core team define each of the following:

Purpose and Culture

- *Vision:* An aspirational statement defining what the food banks envisions as the ideal outcome of its work.

- *Mission:* A concise definition of the food bank's purpose. The mission statement supports the vision and communicates what the food bank will do, for whom it will do it, and what it will achieve.

- *Values:* A statement that lists the core principles that drive the food bank's decisionmaking and programming.

Organizational Commitment to the Community

- *Key service components:* (urban, rural, service to NGOs or direct service to families and individuals, scope of service) A description of the general focus of service that the food bank plans to deliver to the community (i.e., whom it will serve, where it will serve, how it will serve).

- *Overall infrastructure framework:* What type of infrastructure the food bank will need to be effective (e.g., warehouse, vehicles, equipment).

- *Legal structure:* What type of entity will the food bank be? Some countries have various nonprofit types, such as foundations, nonprofit corporations, trusts. Which will the food bank be and why?

- *Governance structure:* How will the governance structure be defined? Who will be appointed to the structure, and how will they be selected?

- *Management structure:* How will the management and staff be structured (e.g., paid versus volunteer, accountability and oversight structure).

Who else will be involved?

WITH THE WORKPLAN on page 7 in mind, the core team is responsible for selecting appropriate members to serve on a planning forum. This group is typically comprised of individuals with relevant knowledge or connections, and to whom the core team feel confident delegating specific planning responsibilities. The forum should have enough participants to allow it to create effective sub-committees to focus on different key components of the business plan.

Typically, it is essential that the forum has the engagement of committed representatives from government, the private sector, and civil society. This is key to ensuring both the diversity of perspective and the connection to resources that will be needed for a fully transparent and responsive food bank operation. The following page outlines where you might begin to reach out to individuals to provide these important perspectives.

There will likely be costs associated with gathering the core team and the planning forum, such as meeting rooms and meals, alongside additional costs for collecting and mining data required for feasibility assessment and planning. In most countries, fees are imposed to register a business, create a name, and acquire appropriate licensing. A budget for in-country expenses and a funding plan for those expenses should be established by the core team.

> **Approximately 768 million people worldwide faced hunger in 2020—an increase of 118 million people over 2019.**
>
> FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

It will be important to identify one or several lead sponsors to finance this initial phase, as well as potential pro bono resources such as a university research department to assist with the feasibility assessment phase and a law firm to advise on statutory and regulatory matters.

Planning Team Structure

Comprised of highly committed individuals willing to lead the work.

Core Team

3-7 PEOPLE

Responsible for defining the nature and purpose of the organization, assembling the planning forum, and advancing the process.

Comprised of individuals from a wide range of relevant sectors and industries willing to share specialized knowledge and connections.

Planning Forum

10+ PEOPLE

Responsible for shaping the details of the organization's planned operation and administration, and engaging relevant partners.

Planning Forum Perspectives

The planning forum requires engagement from across multiple sectors to ensure a diverse range of expertise as well as connections to necessary resources.

Government

Valuable perspective can be added by public sector representatives who are familiar with and can advise on existing public policy.

Typical candidates include:

- **Ministry of Social Development**
- **Ministry of Education**
- **Ministry of Health**
- **Ministry of Agriculture** (and food industries)
- **Ministry of Finance**
- **Food Safety regulatory authority**

Business & Industry

It is essential to engage private sector representatives and business leaders from the broader sector, not just the food industry.

Typical candidates include:

- **Food and agribusiness companies from all segments of the supply chain** (farms, retail, food service, etc.)
- **Food and agribusiness industry trade associations**
- **Chambers of Commerce**
- **Logistics industry**
- **Cold chain industry**
- **Marketing and public relations industries**
- **IT management industry**
- **Health care industry**
- **Human resources management industry**
- **Business consulting industry**
- **Banking industry**
- **Insurance industry**
- **Accounting industry**
- **Legal industry**

NGO & Civil Society

There are many perspectives throughout NGOs and civil society that can be critical to the design of the food banking system.

Typical candidates include:

- **Feeding organizations**
- **Self-help groups**
- **Residential service providers** (shelters, orphanages, senior care facilities, etc.)
- **Academia**
- **Health care industry**
- **Service organizations (Rotary, Lions Clubs, etc.)**
- **Nonprofit management organizations**
- **Anti-hunger advocacy organizations**
- **Food waste and loss advocacy organizations**
- **Relevant associations of nonprofit organizations**
- **Faith-based organizations**
- **Volunteer management organizations**

Planning Forum Workplan

The planning forum workplan focuses on the design of the operations and administration of the food bank. This is essential to the creation of a business plan. Here are some of the key questions the planning forum should consider.

Location & Reach

☐ Where will the food bank be located?

☐ What service area will the food bank be responsible for? (city-wide, state/province-wide, or national)

Asset Requirements

☐ What are the hard asset requirements?

- Facilities: warehouse and office size and layout

- Warehouse equipment: forklifts, pallet jacks, racking, cold chain, etc.

- Office furniture and equipment

- Vehicles: trucks, vans, cars, cold chain

☐ What are the soft asset requirements?

- Staffing: paid and volunteer (See *Sample Food Bank Organizational Chart* in Resources for guidance regarding recommended staffing needs.)

- Program needs: supplies, collateral, etc.

- Software and data management tools: accounting, Microsoft Office, inventory control, operating metrics, etc.

Operations

☐ What is the community outreach plan? (community service organizations and/or direct client service)

☐ What are the distribution logistics?

☐ What are the economics of the system, including fundraising?

- Fundraising goals, strategies, and execution plan

- Product sourcing plan

☐ How will you define food safety and operating standards? (Standard Operating Procedures)

Administration

☐ How will you define administrative standards? (SOPs)

☐ How will you define administrative policies and recommendations for:

- Board membership

- Key organizational partnerships

- Management parameters

☐ How will you plan for defining and managing programs related to:

- Urban service

- Rural service

- Special target populations (e.g., child feeding programs, senior care programs)

What happens at each step in the planning process?

Assessing Feasibility

The first task is to determine whether a food bank system is even feasible in the context of the regulatory environment, the extent of hunger and malnutrition in the community, the structure of the food and agribusiness industries, the challenges of civil infrastructure, and the status of philanthropy in the community. See *Toolkit 3: Assessing Feasibility*, to assist in this process.

This phase involves a serious review and understanding of the environment within the community—including who is hungry and why, where people facing hunger are located within the community, what special considerations may affect service, and more. It also involves an in-depth study of all existing feeding programs, whether operated by government agencies, the private sector, or civil society. These comprehensive reviews will ultimately contribute to the successful establishment and ongoing operation of the food bank system.

Evaluating the results of the need analysis against the current services analysis will provide valuable guidance on service gaps and will help determine the priorities for the potential food bank's program base.

> **HUNGER**
>
> Hunger is commonly used to refer to the condition of not having enough food, not having access to a nutritious range of foods, or having trouble accessing food regularly.

There must also be an assessment of the resource base: food, funds, and volunteers. Finally, the assessment must analyze the statutory and regulatory environment in which the food bank will operate. This would include a review of the existing laws and regulations relative to food safety matters, transportation issues, solicitation and distribution of in-kind resources, liability protection for companies making good-faith product donations, and tax incentives or disincentives.

At the end of the assessment phase, there will be sufficient information to make a decision on whether to proceed.

Building a Business Plan

Assuming that the assessment phase leads to a decision to move forward with establishing a food bank system, it is critical to develop a business plan which—along with a capitalization (resource development) plan—is one of two products resulting from the planning phase. See *Toolkit 5: Generating Support*, to assist in this process.

The planning forum may choose to establish sub-committees to help work through their responsibilities with regard to drafting the business and capitalization plans. These committees would be responsible to the forum and would be expected to progress through their charges in a timely manner, keeping the forum appraised of their activity and any concerns.

The business plan will define the structure, governance, management, operations, and administration of the food bank. It will include the necessary assumptions and decisions regarding staffing requirements, facility and fleet requirements, operating procedures, logistics demands, service delivery procedures, communications and media relations plans, and community outreach and partnership development plans. It will also include ongoing fundraising plans to ensure appropriate, sustainable growth and expansion of services.

Most importantly, the plan should define the goals and objectives of the food bank's scope and scale of service:

- *Will it serve people facing hunger directly or through other NGOs (or both)?*

- *Will it attempt to provide 100 percent of a community service organization's food needs or a smaller amount?*

- *Will it aim to reach all people in the community experiencing hunger, or will it target certain segments of the vulnerable population?*

- *Will it provide only non-perishable, packaged foods or will it also provide refrigerated and frozen foods and fresh products (dairy, fruits and vegetables, baked goods, etc.)?*

A man picks greens from a farm in Bogotá, Colombia to share with people facing hunger. Local farms can be a valuable source of donations for food banks.

- *Will it provide only food, or will it also handle non-food grocery products (cleaning supplies, diapers, personal care items, food service items, pet food, etc.)?*

- *Will it handle only food and grocery products, or will it also handle other items such as clothing, furniture, and household goods?*

- *How will it define its target distribution activity and measure against those targets?*

Generating Support

Once the planning is complete and the food bank is ready to move from concept to reality, the project moves into the capitalization phase. In this phase, the appropriate representatives of the project solicit identified funding sources to generate the financial resources necessary to capitalize the start-up of the food bank system.

The target funding levels should be defined to include:

- All capital costs (facility, equipment, fleet, office furniture and equipment, etc.).

- First year operating costs (occupancy, staff costs, logistics costs, insurance, administrative costs. See Resources for **Sample Food Bank Start-up Budget**).

- Potential food purchases (A newly established food bank may need to supplement its inventory to be fully ready to serve its community).

Many factors influence the decision regarding when it's the right time to launch the operation: should it be delayed until 100 percent of the funding identified in the capitalization plan is raised? Or should operations be initiated when 50 percent is raised? The core team and planning forum must make this decision.

Launching & Beyond

Having built a viable business plan and secured the necessary capitalization, it is time to launch operations.

It is important that careful consideration be given to the selection of staff to ensure successful implementation and stability of the food bank. Presuming that the characteristics and skill

sets of key management positions (e.g., CEO/ Managing Director, Operations Directors, Development Directors, etc.) were defined in the planning phase, care must now be exercised to ensure that there is due diligence in the hiring process to select the best candidates for these positions.

It is also important that the Board of Directors is constructed with similar due diligence. Specific knowledge and skillsets are essential to the efficient and effective work of the Board, and Directors should be chosen based on these criteria rather than simply on perceived name recognition or networking capability.

It is critical that all operations are subjected to frequent evaluation to identify problems and concerns that evolve so they can be resolved expediently. It should be expected that various aspects of the plan will not perform as anticipated and will require attention. For example, the procedures for community service organizations to order and pick up product may not work as planned due to unforeseen traffic flow issues with the facility. Similarly, the volume of donated product requiring special handling by a volunteer labor force may exceed expectations, creating a problem with product getting backed up in the facility. Issues like these are not uncommon and may not be very complex. But they can become critical matters if they are not identified, analyzed, and dealt with in a timely manner.

> **COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION (CSO)**
>
> Any organization (not family or individual) that receives product from a food bank and redistributes it to people in need. These groups may also be referred to as feeding sites, partner agencies, or beneficiary organizations.

Plans should be made to conduct full operational assessments at the three-month, six-month, and one-year anniversaries of the launch of operations. These formal assessments will ensure that unforeseen issues are appropriately dealt with in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner, ensuring that the resolution of one issue will not create new concerns around another. Each issue must be dealt with in a way that ensures that the overall operation continues to run as smoothly and effectively as possible.

This phase should include the outside perspective of appropriate entities such as GFN, a public accounting firm to conduct a certified audit of the fiscal procedures and financial statements (after one full year), and local food safety regulatory authorities. At the time of the food bank's formation, the Board members should commit to remain on the Board and remain actively engaged for at least two years following the launch of operations in order to ensure continuity and faithfulness to the initial vision, mission, and values of the organization.

As the food bank(s) progress in the delivery of services, GFN is willing to assist in assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, to help with course correction as needed, and to provide ongoing training and technical assistance to facilitate continuous improvement and impact in the community.

Next steps & how we can help

OUR MISSION AT The Global FoodBanking Network is to nourish the world's hungry through uniting and advancing food banks. Since 2006, we have supported the launch of food banking organizations in 15 countries, making it possible for people in need to have access to food, and empowering communities to support those who suffer from hunger and lack of nutrition.

In our extensive experience, a viable food banking system requires the commitment of local ownership throughout the process of its development and establishment. Accordingly, our role throughout this process will not be that of a researcher, plan author, or funding resource. GFN will function as a consultant and coach to advise the local planning team to ensure that the best critical thinking is applied to each aspect of the process. Additionally, we will use our connections with global corporate, NGO, and multilateral partners to help open doors and solicit the engagement of local representatives of those partners.

Next Steps

To move forward with the establishment of a food bank, follow these next steps:

1. Create a list of people and organizations that you would like to approach to solicit their engagement, focusing on government, the private sector, and civil society.

2. Assemble your core team and planning forum, and determine how you will manage the planning process. Share *Toolkit 1: Understanding Food Banking* and *Toolkit 2: Laying the Groundwork* with everyone who agrees to participate and ask that they read the toolkits to prepare for the work expected of them.

3. Request *Toolkit 3: Assessing Feasibility* at www.foodbanking.org/new-food-bank-dev. Based on the steps outlined, scope out the feasibility assessment process, conduct the research, and publish the report.

4. Don't hesitate to contact GFN with any questions as you proceed by emailing our team at newfoodbankteam@foodbanking.org.

Good luck in your endeavor and we look forward to hearing from you.

Resources

Learn more with practical examples and templates to help you take the next step toward starting a food bank.

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12   **Sample Food Bank Organizational Chart** ↗

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13   **Sample Food Bank Start-up Budget** ↗

Photo Credits

Cover: *Quito, Ecuador, March 1, 2021: Donated eggs awaiting classification at Banco de Alimentos Quito. (Photo: The Global FoodBanking Network/Ana María Buitron)*

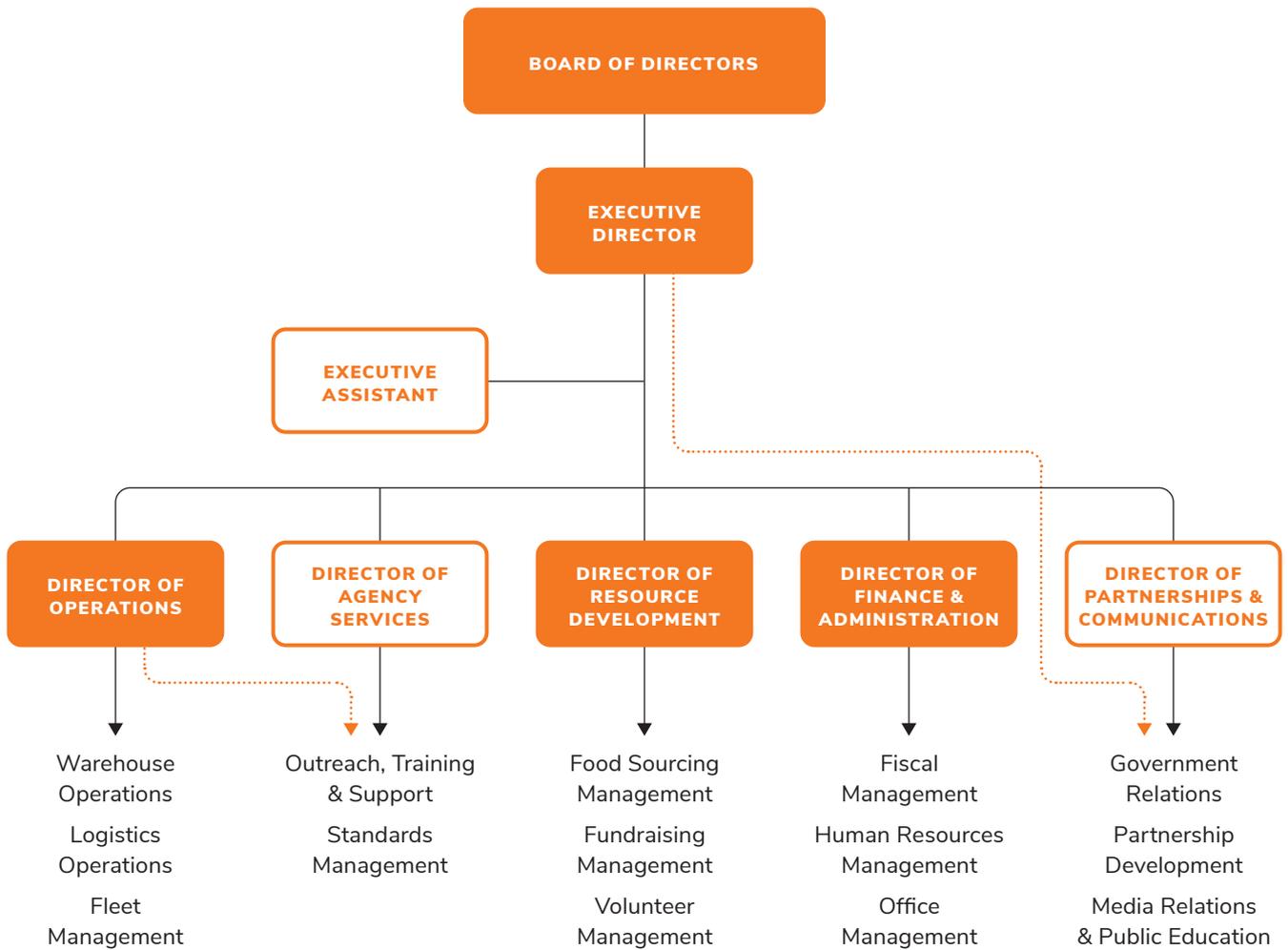**Page 3:** *Cape Town, South Africa, August 2019: A food bank staff member reviews inventory information. FoodForward South Africa's mission is powered by staff and volunteers who work hard in the food bank's warehouse to help feed their community. (Photo: Ken Jones Photography)*

Page 9: *Bogota, Colombia, April 23, 2020: A man picks greens at a farm to share with people facing hunger. (Photo: Asociación de Banco de Alimentos de Colombia)*

Sample Food Bank Organizational Chart

This chart identifies the key management positions that are common in food banks and the functional areas that should report to each manager. Critical positions for the launch are indicated, as well as those that may be filled later as financial resources become available.

● Key Positions Pre-launch
○ Can Be Added Post-launch
— Direct Report
···· Interim Report

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

DIRECTOR OF AGENCY SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNICATIONS

Warehouse Operations

Logistics Operations

Fleet Management

Outreach, Training & Support

Standards Management

Food Sourcing Management

Fundraising Management

Volunteer Management

Fiscal Management

Human Resources Management

Office Management

Government Relations

Partnership Development

Media Relations & Public Education

Sample Food Bank Start-up Budget

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	3-YEAR TOTAL
PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUE				
Corporate Grants				0.00
Foundation Grants				0.00
Government Grants				0.00
Donations from Individuals				0.00
Total Public Support	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Fees from Beneficiaries				0.00
Earned Income from Sale of Promotional Materials				0.00
Earned Income from Sale of Purchased Foods				0.00
Interest/Miscellaneous				0.00
Total Revenue	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUE	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
EXPENSES				
Employee Costs	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Salaries & Wages				0.00
Employer Payroll Taxes				0.00
Employee Benefits				0.00
Volunteer Recruitment & Recognition Expenses				0.00
Professional Development				0.00
Professional Fees	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Consultant Fees				0.00
Legal Fees				0.00
Accounting & Audit Fees				0.00
Bank Fees				0.00
Occupancy Costs	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Rent/Mortgage				0.00
Electricity				0.00
Natural Gas				0.00
Warehouse Equipment Purchase/Rental/Lease				0.00
Warehouse Supplies				0.00
Pest Control Service				0.00
Signage				0.00
Administrative Costs	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Telephone & Fax Lines				0.00
Mobile Phones				0.00
Internet Access				0.00
Office Equipment Purchase/Rental/Lease				0.00
Office Supplies				0.00
Membership Fees				0.00
Postage & Shipping				0.00
Software Purchase & Licenses				0.00
Website & Social Media Platform Hosting				0.00
Printing & Design				0.00
Volunteer Recruitment & Recognition				0.00
Depreciation				0.00
Travel Costs	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Staff Travel				0.00
Board Travel				0.00
Meeting/Conference Expenses				0.00
Professional Education				0.00
Insurance Costs	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
General Liability Coverage				0.00
Product Liability Coverage				0.00
Vehicle Insurance				0.00
Fleet Management Costs	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Vehicle Purchase/Lease				0.00
Maintenance				0.00
Fuel				0.00
Third-party Freight Costs				0.00
Other Operating Expenses	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
Other				0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00**