



## Rural Remote Food Bank Module 6: Building Community Partnerships & Effective Messaging

### Building Community Partnerships & Effective Messaging P1-3 Advocacy Issues P3

#### Building Community Partnerships & Effective Messaging

Type of activities to effectively message to donors, volunteers, clients, and community members include: media, presentations, print materials, electronic media, community activities, advocacy, and direct outreach/education

##### Building Partnerships:

Key partnerships for RRFB may include: media, other non-profits/agencies, government entities, local associations and community groups (Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau, service clubs, etc.), *the faith community, the academic community, local business that can donate goods and services (e.g. agricultural, labor, legal, mechanics), medical community.*

**Key Audiences for Messaging:** Existing and potential donors, volunteers, clients, community partners, and advocacy partners.

##### Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

- Media issues (Print, radio): Many rural communities have limited, locally-based media outlets (TV, radio, print, social media). The quality may not be as high as in larger venues. For locally-owned media, the coverage may be very easy to get for both newspaper and radio, if a good connection is forged. If the area is serviced by a regional media entity, it can prove difficult to highlight local activities in a meaningful way.
- Client outreach issues: Word of mouth is the most powerful client outreach. However, managing that messaging (for truth/accuracy) can be a difficult challenge. Ensure that all staff are providing accurate and consistent information to clients.
- Partnership Issues: For many RRFBs, partnerships are a strong asset. However, in very remote areas, partnership opportunities are limited or there can be multiple nonprofits competing for the same, limited resources such as food donations.
- Online messaging issues: Many RRFBs have little or no budget for IT support or technology upgrades. Website development is hindered by capacity in terms of both cost and expertise. This issue is also shared by partner agencies. Many contract with outside firms for servers, maintenance, or website hosting and development. It is difficult to find funds for technology.
- Messaging issues: Media has to be fresh, new, and engaging to be effective. This requires resources and staffing and these are in short supply in RRFBs.

## **Suggested Standards and Best Practices:**

- Build relationships with community members:
  - Look for opportunities to speak with any potential partners, volunteers, or donors about the Food Bank.
    - Ask to be a guest speaker at Rotary, Kiwanis, and other service clubs.
    - Look for opportunities to speak to the faith communities (e.g. social concerns committees).
    - Attend Chamber of Commerce mixers and political events open to the public to build personal connections with business owners and elected officials.
    - Joining the local Farm Bureau can be beneficial as it provides access to the local Ag community including their members for financial and crop donations.
- Build and nurture partnerships and advocates:
  - Create formal or informal agreements with partners in regards to shared food solicitation/gleaning, or joint projects. Ensure that new leadership is informed of past successful practices and partnership agreements. Even if a single shared project is not successful, maintain communication with that partner to nurture the possibility of future projects.
  - For partnerships to be successful, they have to be mutually beneficial.
    - Do research about the agency's mission, vision, and objectives to find common ground.
    - Meet personally with leadership to formulate a plan to go forward.
    - Ensure that partners are recognized for their contributions.
    - Maintain ongoing connections through leadership changes.
  - Important advocacy partners: local elected officials, local Farm Bureau, entity that regulates water, Border Patrol (if applicable). Forge relationships and invite them to the Food Bank site.
  - Be cognizant of which constituencies are represented on advisory boards.
  - Make connections, where possible, with state and federal program people, so that practical suggestions can be heard effectively. Where possible, initiate advocacy conversations versus reacting to issues. Support advocacy work where it is occurring.
- Develop a good website and strong social media presence:
  - Keep websites and Facebook updated, easy to navigate, and mobile-friendly.
  - California Association of Food Banks Everyone to the Table Campaign provides social media resources, easy-to-use templates. Go to the website [Everyonetothetable.org/member](http://Everyonetothetable.org/member) (Password: "Food4all!")
- Develop good print materials:
  - Older adults often prefer hard copy media to electronic media. Use a combination of email letters and print materials.
  - Try to do printing in-house, small batches, so that it can be changed frequently.
  - Develop multiple brochures because messaging is different for different approaches and different languages.

- Use messages that are engaging, well-defined, and consistent:
  - In working with media representatives, have the message well defined, be ready to take control of the interview and make it go where you want it to go.
  - Target messages to recipients based on who they are (clients, donors, health providers) as well as the type of media used (radio, newspaper, electronic, brochure). Be politically and culturally sensitive in messaging to all audiences. Be aware of gender differences in how messages are received.
  - Strive to make print, website, and social media materials accessible for various literacy levels and for people with disabilities.
  - Make messages short and direct and keep the message fresh.
  - Use images that are effective and engaging and that capture people's interest.

### **Resources and Contacts:**

- California Association of Food Banks Everyone to the Table Hunger Awareness Campaign offers free, downloadable media resources and templates. Visit the [member access portal](#) (password: Food4all!).
- [Berkeley Media Studies Group](#) provides training and outreach on effective media (Lori Dorfman).
- [California Center for Rural Policy](#) (CCRP) located at Humboldt State University does advocacy work and other projects for rural counties in northern CA.
- [TechImpact – Nonprofit Technology Learning Center](#) offers a variety of online training useful for nonprofit technology needs, including how to improve accessibility.
- Imperial Food Bank has sample brochures in Spanish and English. Contact [Sara Griffen](#), Executive Director Imperial Valley Food Bank
- Food For People (Humboldt) has a [CalFresh webpage](#) which is a helpful resource.
- California Association of Food Banks is engaged in political advocacy for broader issues as well, for example emerging non-profit legislation. Information can be found on the [CAFB website](#).
- [Nourish CA](#) works directly on advocacy issues in California.

## **Advocacy Issues for RRFB Board Development**

- For food banks that are part of a government entity, advocacy efforts may not be allowed or encouraged.
- Staffing or budget for advocacy activities.