

## Choice & Hard to Move Items

### **Offering a Choice style pantry or distribution gives neighbors the dignity to choose the foods they want in regards to personal health and dietary needs.**

- When transitioning from a pre-packed style pantry to a choice pantry, remember to give it time and give it a chance. Change can be difficult for some and it may take time for volunteers and neighbors to get used to the new process. It doesn't have to be an overnight transition, it can be done in small gradual steps. Begin by offering a few choice items and each week add more choice items. This will help everyone acclimate to the changes. In most cases, volunteers and neighbors like the choice option because it gives them a chance to get to know one another. It's a much more personable experience for everyone.
- Offer pre-packed boxes with the choice of perishable items for those that don't want to shop or don't have time to wait.
- The Choice Model can be executed in a variety of ways. Try visiting some other choice pantries to see some of the different options and then choose a method or combination of methods that work best for your location and team. You can use the LCFB Pantry Locator to see if any pantries near you offer choice (<https://lowcountryfoodbank.org/find-food/pantry/>). Remember to consider things like parking, traffic, and pantry hours. You may need to adjust your hours to better suit a shopping style pantry, which does tend to take a little more time than grabbing a pre-packed bag.
- Some Choice options include: the table model, the list model, full market style shopping, and online ordering. Depending on your space and number of volunteers, one of these options may work better for your pantry. You could also consider offering more than one of these models. For example, if you are limited on volunteers during the week maybe a list model would work best, but on weekends when you have more volunteers you could offer market style shopping.
- Consider the volunteer time that will be saved by not having to pre-pack bags and boxes. There may be more time needed for volunteers to stock shelves, but this will also give you a good idea of what the more popular items are at your pantry. You can adjust your food bank orders to accommodate the more desirable items for your neighbors.
- To ensure that your pantry operates efficiently, be mindful of your volunteers strengths and weaknesses and be sure to utilize them where they can be most helpful.
- Remember, it doesn't have to be a free for all. You can limit the number of items your neighbors take, which will likely change depending on what and how much you have available.
- Be sure to work with the Agency Relations team and the Nutrition team to get the proper training, guidance, and resources for a seamless transition.

### **Some of the less desirable items that you receive may be harder to move than others, but with a little positive persuasion, it can be done. A few ideas to help are:**

- Offer recipe cards with items that neighbors may be less familiar with.
- Recipes can also be a good way to spark some interest in new cooking styles or cultures.
- Sampling is a great way to let your neighbors try something new. Providing a recipe and a quick explanation along with the sample is a great way to get them interested in the item. One of the biggest reasons why some items are so hard to move is due to the lack of knowledge about the item and how to cook it. If they like the way the sample tastes, reassure them that they can create the same thing at home with a few ingredients and a simple recipe.
- Recipe cards and other resources can be found on the LCFB website under the Nutrition section (<https://lowcountryfoodbank.org/recipes2022/>). Feel free to reach out to our Nutrition team if you need help finding a recipe for a specific item, or if you are interested in learning more about sampling.
- If you are a TEFAP/USDA agency you can share your hard to move USDA items with other USDA partner agencies, as long as they are located in the same county as you.

