



**Lowcountry Food Bank's
BackPack Buddies Program
Policies and Procedures
Manual**



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1. What is LCFB's BackPack Buddies Program?

A. BackPack Buddies

Lowcountry Food Bank's (LCFB) BackPack Buddies Program provides children nutritious and easy-to-prepare food to take home on weekends and school vacations when they do not have access to free and reduced-price school meals. Created by Feeding America, the nation's food bank network, LCFB's BackPack Buddies Program is known nationally as the BackPack Program.

The Need

Child food insecurity rates in the counties served by LCFB range from just under 14% to over 28%. Chronic food insecurity can present many adverse consequences for children, including impaired cognitive function, compromised ability to resist illness, and higher levels of aggression, hyperactivity, and anxiety. For children in public schools, this problem is mitigated by the National School Lunch Program, which offers free or reduced priced breakfast and lunch on school days. However, this assistance is not available on weekends, leaving many children facing weekend hunger and compromising their ability to learn when they return to class on Monday.

Program History

LCFB's BackPack Buddies Program follows a program model created and standardized by Feeding America. LCFB adopted the program in 2006 to address the specific problem of weekend hunger among children in the ten coastal counties of South Carolina. Partnerships with civic, business, faith-based, academic, and community organizations help to sustain the program. The program currently serves around 50 sites across the ten counties within our service area and distributes food to approximately 2,000 children each week. LCFB continuously strives to evolve the BackPack Buddies Program to best suit the needs of its community.

B. *Program Model*

BackPack Buddies Program	•LCFB's BackPack Buddies program partner sites and schools apply for participation via an annual application process and are approved based on their administrative capacity, degree of need, historical performance (if they are a returning partner), and a review of other food resources accessible to families through the school or the surrounding community.
Funding	•LCFB fundraises and seeks community partners, grantors, and donors to help financially support the costs associated with School Food Center programs. Then utilizing its purchasing power and network resources, LCFB procures a selection of nutritious, easy-to-prepare, and kid-friendly food for the BackPack Buddies Program.
Packing	•LCFB recruits volunteers to assist in the assembly of BackPack Buddies program bags at LCFB. Maintaining the highest level of packing quality control and volunteer safety is a top priority of LCFB. Bags are packed in Charleston and distributed across the service area.
Delivery	•LCFB directly oversees and manages BackPack Buddies program deliveries to participating schools on a monthly basis. Several Community Partners who agreed to sponsor also supplement LCFB logistical efforts by making deliveries to specific schools.
School Partners	•Once a month, partners receive a four-week issuance of pre-packed bags. The children who may be experiencing food insecurity are identified and enrolled into the program by school staff. Children discreetly receive bags each Friday for the weekend and extended school breaks.
Data & Impact	•Each School Partner is required to report distribution data monthly back to LCFB. This information is utilized for LCFB distribution metrics, and fulfill funding reports. Additionally, LCFB will conduct program participant impact surveys to support program success and improvement.

C. *LCFB's Role and Responsibilities*

LCFB is a qualified Feeding America agency and administrator of the child weekend hunger program entitled "LCFB's BackPack Buddies Program" within the ten coastal counties of South Carolina. LCFB, therefore, will act as sole administrator and manager of the BackPack Buddies Program. In addition to the responsibilities listed below, LCFB reserves the right to take corrective action against an individual or organization in the event of single or repeated noncompliance with the terms and conditions set forth by the MOU or the policies and procedures set forth by this manual.

As manager and administrator of LCFB's BackPack Buddies Program, LCFB will:

- Maintain relationship and act as liaison between LCFB, Community Partners, and School Food Center partners.
- Complete a site visit with all new partner sites prior to establishing the Program.
- Conduct BackPack Buddies program training for all new partners and their site contacts, and for all returning partners.
- Create menus and procure high-quality, nutritionally balanced food items for the Program.
- Designate the allocation of Program resources at each participating school with input from the

School Coordinator (including any modifications throughout the year), based on distribution targets set forth by LCFB.

- Collect reporting and distribution data from participating partners.
- Communicate any modifications to all pertinent partners and resolve issues affecting Program integrity in a professional and timely manner.
- Conduct a minimum of one site visit every two years.

2. What is expected of a Partner?

A. Roles and Responsibilities

A Partner is defined as a non-profit, for-profit, educational, or other organization that actively participates in LCFB's BackPack Buddies Program. Eligible Partners must be located within the ten coastal counties of South Carolina and have been identified as serving families experiencing food insecurity. Partner sites and schools apply for participation via an annual application process and are approved based on their administrative capacity, degree of need, historical performance (if they are a returning partner), and a review of other food resources accessible to families through the school or the surrounding community. All Partners must complete any required application processes and formalize their participation in the program through LCFB's *BackPack Buddies Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU). It is expected that all Partners' goals for the program coincide with those set forth by LCFB. Once a month, in accordance with the delivery schedule established by LCFB, sites receive a 4-week issuance of pre-packed bags. As set forth in the BackPack Buddies MOU, all sites must:

- Designate one individual on staff as the Site Coordinator; identify secondary contact as backup. Notify LCFB immediately if designated Site Coordinator information changes.
- Participate in all mandatory Program training upon program initiation, or the occurrence of staff changes in either the primary or secondary coordinator role. If staff changes occur, required training must be completed within 60 days.
- Complete the LCFB approved food safety training OR an equivalent training and accept full responsibility for the purity and fitness for human consumption of all items accepted.
- Designate one representative on staff (with backup identified) to be responsible for receiving monthly deliveries from LCFB staff; school staff is responsible for bringing boxes to its storage location within the building.
- Maintain a complete copy of the *BackPack Buddies Program Memorandum of Understanding* on file and adhere to the program requirements defined in the Policies and Procedures Manual.
- Not engage in sub-distribution of food without a signed agreement from LCFB.
- Ensure all employees or volunteers involved in the program are sufficiently trained.
- Place monthly orders for the program through the program ordering process, ensuring orders are submitted by required deadlines.
- Maintain safety and security of the food storage area. Store food a minimum of six inches off of the floor, and four inches away from any walls. The designated storage area must adhere to all South Carolina DHEC food and safety regulations.

- Maintain a procedure for determining that the final recipient of the program food is ill, needy, or an infant, such as using self-declarations of need or other intake process and comply with Section 170(e)(3) of the IRS and other requirements for use and distribution of donated product.
- Refer families to other resources for food access, including food pantries, SNAP and WIC benefits, and produce prescription programs (if applicable).
- Ensure all children and/or families are given access to, or delivered their program food to, on school property in a discreet and comfortable environment and site does not engage in discrimination in the provision of service against any person because of race, color, citizenship, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation including gender identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran, or as otherwise prohibited under current USDA nondiscrimination statement.
- Retain complete records of received program food and distribution to children or families in a secure location for a minimum of one year from date of receipt.
- Distribute to children and families free of charge; no product can be sold, used for other school programs, used for fundraisers or meetings, stored over the summer months, or used for any purpose other than to provide food to chronically food insecure children and their families experiencing food insecurity.
- Submit monthly reports utilizing format provided by LCFB by the 5th of each month and submit orders for the upcoming month by deadline indicated. Failure to submit reports will result in the suspension of further deliveries and failure to complete order form by deadline will result in not receiving program food for the upcoming month.
- Provide stories, testimonials, and/or photographs in a timely manner upon request by LCFB.
- Agree to and allow regular site monitoring visits by LCFB, including unannounced site visits. Failure to respond will result in the suspension of future deliveries until the visit can be completed. A minimum of one site visit every two years per Feeding America guidelines.
- Include "in partnership with Lowcountry Food Bank" in any communications regarding the BackPack Buddies Program.

B. Food Safety

Food storage areas need to be:

- Secure: Food is to be stored in a secure location with limited access. This helps prevent theft, tampering, or other loss of product.
- Clean: The storage area should be clean. Make sure the storage space is included in your school's regular cleaning schedule. Floors and shelves should be cleaned regularly in a manner that does not contaminate the food.
- Dry: Food must be kept away from any steam, hot water pipes, or other heat sources to help prevent mold and other damage to the food. Also, keep food 6" off the ground, 4" away from the wall, and 2' from the ceiling to allow for proper air flow.
- Pest-free: Food must be stored at least 6" off the ground for pest control purposes. The food can be stored in a cabinet, on shelving, on a table, or on a pallet. You can request a pallet for your food by contacting LCFB staff. In addition, you should make sure the pest control service that monitors your facility also monitors the food storage area.

- **Fresh:** Food should be stored in a way that makes it easy to use the oldest food first (First In, First Out).
- **Chemical-free:** Cleaning products should be stored away from food entirely. This helps prevent potential leaks from damaging stored food. If any food is contaminated by chemicals, please dispose of the food immediately.
- **Appropriate storage space:** You will need to have space in which boxes/food/equipment can be safely and securely stored (at least 6 inches off the floor and 4 inches away from the walls). For BackPack Buddies, space is defined by the number of boxes. For example, if you plan to serve 25 students, you will have 17 boxes per cycle to store (25 students x 4 bags, 6 bags per box).

C. Deliveries

The Partner must provide the following information to LCFB:

- I. School address
- II. Product drop-off locations
- III. Contact information for individual(s) who must be available to receive product on the agreed delivery date

Any changes in delivery information must be communicated to the School Food Centers Manager or School Food Centers Coordinator at least one week in advance of the next delivery. The school will be given a date for delivery in consideration of the BackPack Buddies distribution dates and school calendar.

An LCFB driver will unload the product at the drop-off location designated by the school and agreed up by LCFB. School staff are responsible for storing all inventory in a secure location. For liability reasons, LCFB drivers are prohibited from bringing product into school buildings. A school official must sign for the delivery and that person should compare the inventory with the submitted order request within 24 hours of receipt to ensure accuracy and food safety. If items are damaged or appear contaminated, take photos of the food and a photo of the delivery ticket/invoice and contact LCFB immediately.

D. Identifying Students and Families in Need

BackPack Buddies bags are available to any student in the school community and their household siblings. If a family requires more assistance than the BackPack Buddies program can provide, LCFB will equip you with information on local food pantries and food distributions in the area near your school.

E. Financial Support

LCFB does not require that Partners contribute financially to the BackPack Buddies Program. In the event that an organization or business directly affiliated with a Partner expresses specific interest in providing supplemental financial or food donations to the BackPack Buddies Program or LCFB, all inquiries should be directed to LCFB's School Food Centers staff. Should a Partner gain access to in-kind food or goods that they would like to include in the BackPack Buddies Program bags, all requests for inclusion must be approved by LCFB in advance.

F. *Distribution*

School Partners distribute a bag to each child in the program weekly, ideally on a Friday before the weekend. However, partners are encouraged to use discretion for distribution as they know the school calendar and the children the best. For example, on early release days or long weekends, it may be ideal to provide distribution a day or so early. During breaks, partners are encouraged to distribute before the break to allow the children to have the food supplies during this period.

G. *Compliance*

Maintaining accurate, up-to-date, and pertinent documentation is of the utmost importance to the Lowcountry Food Bank. Examples of all required LCFB's School Food Center paperwork can be found on our website. It is the responsibility of all partners to become familiar with required documentation and complete relevant paperwork. The Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to conduct, and encourages the participation in, voluntary bi-annual surveys regarding customer service, service delivery models, and/or community impact.

Annual Partner Memorandum of Understanding: All partners must annually formalize their participation in the program through a LCFB's *BackPack Buddies Memorandum of Understanding* signed by the Partner Site Coordinators and Principal (or other identified party). All partners must maintain a complete copy on file.

Monthly Distribution Reporting: All partners must electronically submit a monthly distribution report via a provided link to LCFB staff. Reports are due no later than the 5th of each month. Reporting information is essential for accurate tracking of surplus. Failure to truthfully complete monthly reports is considered by the Lowcountry Food Bank an offense qualified for corrective action.

Change of Information: All partners are required to contact LCFB School Food Center staff in the event that any contact, logistical, name, address, capacity, or capabilities are changed or adjusted. This may include, but is not limited to, leadership changes, movements, restructuring, adjustments, or temporary substitutes. Changes are to be sent within 30 days of change. If not submitted within given time frame, the Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to take corrective action against said Partner

Site Monitoring: All partners are subject to at least one site visit every other year by Lowcountry Food Bank staff. Maintaining the highest level of quality control and safety is a top priority of the Lowcountry Food Bank. Site monitors reserve the right to substantiate storage locations, distribution processes, and/or persons involved in any and all aspects of roles and responsibilities outlined within this manual or the Partner Memorandum of Understanding. Site Monitors will adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Lowcountry Food Bank's *Partner SFC Site Visit Monitoring Form* during all official site visits. Issues of noncompliance must be corrected prior to the next LCFB's Program monthly delivery. The Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to annul the Partner Contract at any time should it deem necessary.

Corrective Action: In the event that there is an issue of noncompliance, as identified by the contents of this manual, LCFB reserves the right to document the deficiency(ies) and follow

official procedures regarding corrective action. Partners that do not meet the training, storage, reporting, or participation guidelines, and/or have been cited as non-compliant during any site monitoring must be placed on corrective action. The corrective action will allow the partner up to 30 days to fully and permanently correct the deficiency(ies).

The Corrective Action Policy shall be invoked in the following situations, including but not limited to:

- I. Failure to treat program enrollees with the expected, appropriate amount of respect and care,
- II. Failure to submit the required reports by the deadline and in the appropriate formats,
- III. Failure to participate in requested site visits by LCFB,
- IV. Failure to communicate delivery needs and refusal of product at time of delivery,
- V. Failure to communicate when staffing changes occur that directly impact oversight of the program in the site,
- VI. Inappropriate use of program product including but not limited to:
 - Using program product for unintended purpose,
 - Handling product in an unsafe manner which could result in spoiled or damaged product,
 - Disregard for the agreed upon terms in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The procedure for all corrective action is as follows:

- VII. LCFB will notify the partner in writing of the deficiency(ies) and corrective action plan.
 - A Distribution Noncompliance Form must be filled out explaining the situation resulting in noncompliance with program regulations.
- VIII. On subsequent unannounced monitoring visits, the monitor must document follow-up to show corrective actions were implemented, maintained, and completely corrected:
 - If the partner completely corrects the deficiency(ies) within 30 days, LCFB will notify the organization and the responsible coordinators that LCFB has rescinded its deficiency determination. A 90-day probationary period will begin after corrective action has been taken to ensure that policies and procedures are being adhered to. The partner will continue to submit valid reports during this process.
 - If the responsible coordinators have not fully and permanently corrected their deficiency(ies), LCFB will continue its actions to disqualify the partner by issuing a notice of intent to terminate by the Lowcountry Food Bank.

H. *Communication*

The Lowcountry Food Bank believes that clear and effective communication is an absolute necessity for the success of LCFB's Program. In order to ensure the efficiency and reliability of the LCFB's Program logistics, it is mandatory that all Partners inform Lowcountry Food Bank Staff of any and all changes that may affect or coincide with

contractual obligations and/or responsibilities; this includes, but is not limited to, changes to drop-off locations within the site, and/or staff changes. All communication between Lowcountry Food Bank staff or volunteers and a partner should be conducted with the utmost degree of professionalism, clarity, and honesty. Lowcountry Food Bank reserves the right to take corrective action against the partner in the event of single or repeated noncompliance with the communication standards set forth by this manual.

I. *Public Relations*

The Lowcountry Food Bank is a qualified Feeding America agency and administrator of the BackPack Buddies Program within the ten coastal counties of South Carolina. It is of the utmost importance to the Lowcountry Food Bank that the promotion of the program and its relationship with Partners is always accurately represented.

Branding: LCFB grants Partners non-exclusive, non-transferable, revocable authorization to use the "LCFB BackPack Buddies Program" name in connection with the partner's participation in the Program, only during the contract year. The partner has access to use the "Lowcountry Food Bank" logo; this does not include any other logos affiliated with the LCFB. Additionally, this does not include the rights for the partner to share the LCFB logo with any other organization. Upon expiration or termination of the LCFB's BackPack Buddies MOU, the partner shall discontinue use of the LCFB's brand and logo. The partners cannot use any name, brand, or logo like the LCFB's brand or logo at any time.

LCFB recognizes the need to keep the public informed of the work of both organizations (LCFB and the school) through the media. While we realize that each school has unique policies and procedures that must be followed in order to protect your students, we expect the Site Coordinator to take responsibility for any decisions regarding media. LCFB requests that all schools and their official representatives respect the following media procedures regarding the BackPack Buddies program:

- Inform LCFB whenever LCFB's name is referenced in a media context prior to printing.
- Direct local media outlets to contact the VP of Communications & Marketing at 843-747-8146 x 167 with any questions for LCFB.
- Do not divulge any information that violates the privacy of participating children or families, including but not limited to, names or demographic information.
- Do not share details about the funding of your program to outside parties. In order to fundraise for this program, we need to be consistent with the information we communicate externally. The budget we allow for your food purchasing does not include significant overhead costs incurred by the program. You will help us sustain the program by keeping all financial information confidential.

J. *Use of Product*

BackPack Buddies bags and food product must be distributed to children and families

free of charge. No product can be sold, used for other school programs, used for fundraisers or school meetings, stored over the summer months (unless site designated to distribute during summer), or used for any purpose other than to provide food to students and their families experiencing food insecurity.

K. ***Appendix***

Included in this section are links to examples of documentation related to these procedures:

- [Site Visit Form](#)
- [BackPack Buddies Referral Form](#)
- [Parent Enrollment Opt In or Out](#)
- [BackPack Buddies Distribution Tracker](#) – for optional tracking purposes
- [BackPack Buddies Reporting Form](#)
- [BackPack Buddies Ordering Form](#)