



# Storytelling Process



## Resource for Hunger-Relief Partners

Feeding America West Michigan's communication team works to proactively capture and elevate neighbors' stories. While the stories we gather primarily consist of the people we serve, we also gather stories of our volunteers and partners. In order to accomplish this, a communication team member may contact a partner food pantry or meal program to arrange a visit.

**Once a visit has been arranged, that team member will:**

- Arrive an hour before a Mobile Pantry starts, and when visiting other programs, arrive at an agreed time.
- Take photos of and/or film the process, volunteers, coordinators and clients—whoever is willing.
- Interview coordinators as well as any willing clients or volunteers.
- Ask before interviewing, photographing or filming anyone, and make it clear that no one is required to participate.
- Ask participants to sign a release form. They may also ask program coordinators to have all willing volunteers sign release forms in advance.
- Give clients an informational handout and a \$15 gift card. Please keep in mind that the food bank does not advertise to clients that they will receive gift cards for participating, as the intent is not to incentivize but rather compensate participants for their time.

### HOW CAN MY ORGANIZATION HELP?

**If you coordinate a Mobile Pantry,** it's helpful if you point us in the direction of a client willing to share their story. You could even get us connected with someone (a volunteer or client) in advance of our visit.

**If you run a traditional food pantry or meal program,** you can help by reaching out to clients and asking if any would be willing to share their stories. We can then schedule a visit at a time that works for that client. Or, we can visit and you can introduce us to clients who happen to come in that day.

**If your organization is in the Upper Peninsula,** a member of the communication team may ask if you or one of your volunteers could gather client contact info—and possibly photos—in their place. This could be as simple as getting a phone number or two from clients you serve.

**Stories of veterans, families with children or people in unique situations—especially neighbors who once received help but no longer do—are particularly sought after, since these stories can be less common, depending on region and program.**

You don't need to wait for us to reach out to you! If you have a story to share (maybe you want to praise a volunteer, talk about a situation that warmed your heart or help a client submit their story), you can do so at [FeedWM.org/shareyourstory](https://FeedWM.org/shareyourstory). While we appreciate you considering participating in Feeding America West Michigan's storytelling process, it's completely optional. If a member of the communication team does reach out to you, you may decline their request to schedule a visit.

## WHERE ARE THESE STORIES SHARED?

Once gathered, neighbor stories are used for a variety of purposes by multiple teams at Feeding America West Michigan. They may also be used by the Feeding America national organization and its network, if the participant allows. Below are some places these stories may be shared, divided by category:

- **Online** (e.g. social media, email marketing, website, newsletters, third-party online content)
- **In print** (e.g. brochures, newsletters, impact reports, direct mail, annual reports)
- **Other** (e.g. corporate/grant relationship management: grant reports, corporate engagement content. On billboards or in the news, if the participant specifically allows)

## CAN MY ORGANIZATION SHARE THESE STORIES?

Yes. Hunger-relief partners may use food bank-generated stories or photos that were gathered at a visit to their organization as much as they like, as long as the integrity of the story is maintained. If they wish to modify the story, they must first consult with the food bank's communication team. Credit for stories and photos must be given to the food bank.

Client content may only be used for three years after it was gathered. If you're unsure if a story is too old, please ask the food bank's communication team. Client photos may never be used in a prominent semi-permanent or permanent place (e.g. a billboard or truck wrap) unless allowed by the client and Feeding America West Michigan's communication team.

## GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING STORIES ON YOUR OWN

Feeding America West Michigan follows strict ethical storytelling guidelines (see **Telling Stories with Respect** info sheet) and encourages all partners to follow these guidelines when gathering stories on their own.

We understand that client compensation may be one guideline that is hard to follow, and we understand this practice is not yet widespread. However, we suggest implementing client compensation when at all possible.

If you wish to take photos or video, please ensure all clients photographed and/or filmed have signed a release form. We use Feeding America national's release form. If you don't have your own release form, you may want to consider working with a lawyer to develop one.

At times, our partners wish to go live on social media to raise awareness that a hunger-relief event is happening. This is allowed as long as it's clear to program participants that they aren't being filmed—e.g. ask a volunteer to show the food and volunteers instead of setting up a phone and tripod to film a line of cars.

By signing this document, partner food pantries and meal programs agree to abide by our story sharing and gathering guidelines to the best of their ability.

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Organization

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Signature

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Date

### Communication Contacts

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**Feeding America West Michigan is an equal opportunity provider.**

