

# HOW TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN A COMMUNITY FRIDGE



A Community Handbook by The Hatch







*The Hatch is a mutual aid group that promotes collective action and community collaboration. We believe everyone deserves access to basic needs and services. We create projects that build community solidarity, while addressing issues like food insecurity, income inequality, and other accessibility related challenges.*

We acknowledge The Hatch, and our community fridge, are situated on the traditional territory of the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Îyâxe Nakoda and Tsuut'ina nations. We also recognize this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. As racialized settlers and uninvited guests in Moh'kinsstis, we are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this land.

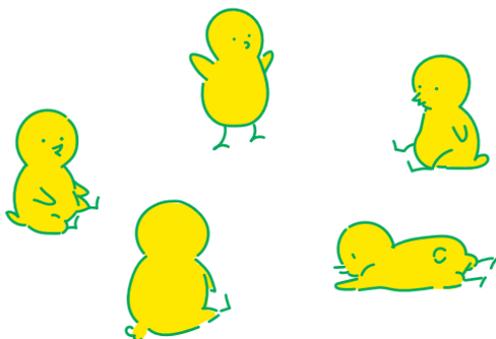
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# HELLO, AND WELCOME!



When we built the community fridge in Rosscarrock, we were able to get guidance and support from the Calgary Community Fridge folks in Crescent Heights, and other mutual aid groups in the city. Even with this guidance, taking on the build and maintaining the fridge was and continues to be a learning experience. We encountered challenges that required problem-solving, community building, and resourcefulness, but it was all worth it once the fridge was open and people began to access the space.

We are not experts by any means, but we have developed a deeper understanding of what it takes to get a community fridge up and running, and we want to share this knowledge so you can avoid some of the mistakes we made. Our hope is that this project will give you the tools you need to take the lead when it comes to starting a community fridge, and foster a space for inclusive belonging for everyone in your community.

# WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FRIDGE?



A community fridge is a fridge and/or pantry that is located in an open space within a community, typically somewhere outdoors and easily accessible. They may be located on public city property or private property. They are free spaces for anyone to access food and personal care items without having to prove any need.

Community fridges are owned by no one, as they are meant to be a shared resource for the community. They address the issue of food insecurity in a collective, communal way, where neighbours are empowered to uplift and look out for one another.

Community fridges are a space where you “take what you need, leave what you can.” This is different from the charity model, where the person in need is assessed to determine if they’re allowed to access resources, which often results in many barriers. The charity model creates a hierarchy and a fabricated scarcity of resources.

## **COMMUNITY FRIDGES ARE MORE THAN JUST A SPACE**

Community fridges can do a lot to support an area beyond addressing food insecurity. It is important to note that community fridges will not solve food insecurity as this issue is tied heavily to income inequity. However, a community fridge is a more accessible alternative, and provides a point of connection for people in the community. It engages folks in community care and resource sharing.

### ***Preventing food waste***

Did you know that [58% of food produced in Canada goes to waste?](#) This not only accounts for the extra veggies in your fridge that go bad, but also food from farms, distributors, and grocery stores that get thrown out for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the food is close to being past-date, sometimes grocers stock too much, and whatever does not sell gets thrown out. In all these instances, community fridges are a perfect space to redirect food to reduce food waste.

### ***A great volunteer & learning opportunity***

A community fridge/pantry also presents opportunities for people to become involved by volunteering; it's a space where anyone and everyone can help! Volunteering can be a rewarding and empowering activity for children, adults, families, and seniors alike. Schools in the area can find engaging educational opportunities for students through a community fridge as well. Ultimately, a community fridge can act as a hub of connection, education, and service.

## A FOOD BANK VS A COMMUNITY FRIDGE

<b>Food Banks...</b>	<b>Community Fridges...</b>
Are often located in inaccessible areas	Are typically outdoors in highly accessible locations
Need to fill out paperwork and be accepted to access food	No questions asked
Items available may not be culturally relevant	Any type of (safe) foods are allowed and the community can provide a wide variety/ many different food options
May only allow people to take food a certain number of times	No limitations on how many times it can be accessed

# CREATING YOUR TEAM

## GATHER YOUR TEAM MEMBERS

Mutual aid projects like a community fridge can be done successfully with a small, but mighty team. The Hatch team is made up of six members total, and we find having a smaller team makes it easier to stay in contact, manage tasks, and make group decisions.

We know each other outside of The Hatch group, and this familiarity helps us maintain good communication and a friendly vibe. Of course, your group can consist of perfect strangers, but our suggestion is to keep the core group small to help ensure everyone's voice is heard and decisions can be made fairly and quickly.

**TIP: Not sure how to find group members?**

- Ask community association members if they'd like to join
- Reach out to friends or family who might be interested in starting a community project
- Connect with neighbours/people you've met at past community events
- Put out a call on community boards or on social media

### **Create a team name**

Our team name, *The Hatch*, emerged from searching for a word that represents a pantry or fridge that could also relate to an open, accessible space. We also wanted a team name that could be applied to future projects beyond the community fridge.

**TIP: Go with a more straightforward name, like [Community name] fridge to get started. Or, brainstorm as a group to come up with a creative name you're all excited about.**

## ESTABLISH A TEAM AGREEMENT

A team agreement document can help the group feel safe, welcomed, and prepared to engage in a respectful way. The team agreement is a living document, which means it can be adjusted or changed based on group consensus, as needed.

Our team agreement document consists of several key sections:

### Team mission statement

The mission statement will act as a map for the group to return to as you work on the project together. For reference, here's The Hatch's mission statement:

*Our mission is to promote collective action and community collaboration by providing free, immediate access to food and essential items. Our goals are to destigmatize food insecurity, reduce food waste, and address the root causes of food inequity in our communities by empowering members to take action.*

### Team roles and responsibilities

We created roles associated with maintaining the community fridge, some of which the core group completes and some of which is covered by our volunteer pool. The roles rotate and members can contribute to more than one role.

#### **Communication**

- Posts to social media and responds to messages/comments
- Checks email, forwards to appropriate member or whole group
- Responds to media requests or collaborations
- Advertises surveys, information, initiatives
- Thanks donors, partners, collaborators

#### **Volunteer coordination**

- Organizes schedule of other members working on smaller pieces of projects
- E.g.: Makes sure maintenance, stocking & donation team know what to do, where to be and when

### **External content creation**

- Creates infographic posts for social media
- Updates graphics/posters/info/messages at physical space
- Creates surveys, outreach documents

### **Space maintenance**

- General checks of space and fridge temperatures
- Ensure items follow donation guidelines
- Clean fridge and surfaces

### **Stocking and donation pick up**

- Pick up ordered or donated food and/or essentials, checks food is following guidelines
- Takes photo of inventory to post to social media to encourage donations

### **Group standards and language preferences**

This section includes a statement on inclusion of all races, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities in the group. It also highlights the need for accommodations, such as breaks from membership, or the option to step away as needed.

*Here's an example of the language preferences chart we use:*

<b>Instead of saying...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
Poverty-stricken/poor/needy/the hungry	People in need of support/assistance, individuals who seek access, people at risk, marginalized
Deaf person, blind person	Person who is deaf, people who are blind
Retarded, ADHD, depression	Avoid stigmatizing language around mental health
Marginalized/minority communities	Racialized communities, specific x race/ethnicity communities

## TEAM MEETINGS

Meeting once a month helps keep track of important parts of the project. We make bigger decisions that require round table discussion in these meetings, so ideally all team members are present. Schedule team meetings one to two weeks in advance so everyone can make it.

**TIP:** We use Doodle, a free online voting tool, to find a time when everyone is available to meet. We typically do video meetings via Zoom, as some of our members are not in the same cities, but in person is great too, if possible.

Meetings use a “go-around” structure to ensure everyone is heard. There are three key meeting roles: facilitator, note taker, and time keeper. These roles alternate each meeting.

### ***Facilitator***

Sends out agenda and makes additions/changes, reaches out to members with information to share to determine how much time they need to present, reminds members to review previous meeting notes, hosts meeting

### ***Note Taker***

Takes meeting notes, shares them with members, includes action items/future items and who agreed to do what in notes

### ***Time Keeper***

Ensures we stay on time, notifies if an agenda item is over time

**TIP:** We save all agendas and meeting notes on a shared Google drive for our records/in the event we forget about an action item or agenda item after the meeting.

### Sample agenda template:

Date:	Facilitator:	Note Taker:	Time Keeper:	Attendees:
Topic	Time	Presenter		
Intro/Check-in	7 min	Facilitator		
Agenda Review	3 min	Facilitator		
Topic 1 - Finding fridge volunteers	18 min	Member 1		
Topic 2 - Social media posts	25 min	Everyone		
Closing remarks	7 min	Everyone		

### Sample meeting notes template:

Date:	Facilitator:	Note Taker:	Time Keeper:	Attendees:
Topic	Notes	Action items		
Topic 1 - Finding fridge volunteers	[Brief details about the decisions made on the topic]	[Team member name] [Action item]		
Topic 2 - Social media posts				
Topic 3				

To manage daily communications, we created a WhatsApp group chat. WhatsApp is a free messaging service application that works well on any smartphone, and is easy to join with an email or phone number.

We send images, photos, and regular messages in this group, as well as action items from our monthly meetings. It's a great space for making quick decisions, sharing updates, and celebrating all the positive moments of a community project.

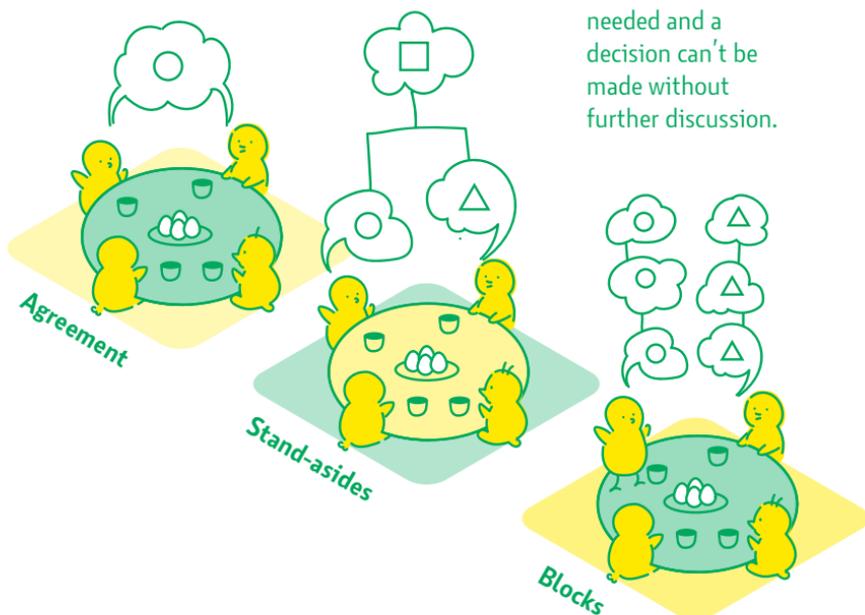
## TEAM DECISION MAKING

To reach consensus, we discuss and modify decisions before we finalize an action. We use this guide to make decisions:

100% behind idea/  
proposal/decision,  
no changes  
recommended

Expresses level of  
disagreement but  
recognizes it is  
best for the group,  
given discussion  
and efforts to  
address concerns

Significant  
disagreement  
in which decision  
can't yet go forward.  
Blocks or lots of  
stand-asides  
means more work is  
needed and a  
decision can't be  
made without  
further discussion.



To propose a new idea or initiative, we encourage team members to create a mini proposal. The proposal can be short and include problem(s) addressed, solution(s), who's involved, and what is the research (if any). Any team member can present a new idea or initiative. When we discuss the proposal as a team, we review the proposal, suggest modifications if needed, and then reach a consensus to move forward with it.

# IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY INTEREST & NEED

## DOES YOUR AREA NEED A FRIDGE?

Before you dive into this project, it's important to consult with the community and make sure a community fridge will reflect their wants and needs. Engaging the community from the very beginning gets people talking and learning about the fridge, and eventually supporting it by volunteering and using it. This is also an educational opportunity for people to learn about food justice and food insecurity.

### ***Conduct a community survey***

This is a great first step to gather community feedback and perspective. Here are a few things to consider as you put together the community survey:

#### ***Create survey questions***

- How will the survey help support the project?
- How will you keep this information anonymous?
- Have you provided a definition of food insecurity? It's important that respondents are clear on what level of need(s) they are reporting.
- What specific community do respondents live in? What demographic(s) might you be interested in collecting along with the previous information? We recommend that the latter should be self-reported optionally.
- Have you asked respondents what level of support they'd offer? This is a good way to get an idea of how people feel about a community fridge, and if anyone would be available to volunteer.

Here are a few examples from our survey:

In your opinion, are there individuals within your community who would identify as food insecure?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Have you, or anyone you know, ever experienced any of the following? (check all that apply)

- Worried about food running out before getting paid
- Relied on inexpensive food to avoid running out of money
- Engaged in unorthodox ways of getting food (e.g. dumpster diving, stealing...)
- Skipped a meal(s) because you did not have enough money to buy food
- Thought about using a food bank, but were too embarrassed or uncomfortable to go or faced accessibility issues
- Depended on help from family/friends to avoid running out of money for food
- Engaged in unconventional ways of making money for food
- Had to choose between spending money on essentials (eg. rent, food, clothing)
- Had to choose between providing food for yourself or other household members
- Used a food assistance program like the Calgary Food Bank, Bagging for Kids, Calgary Community Fridge, Drop In Centre, Inn From the Cold, Mustard Seed, Community Kitchen etc.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Would you support this type of initiative in your community?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

## Distribute the survey

There are various ways to distribute surveys. We considered the following options:

**Digital:** An easy way to canvas an area and collect information from a large span of people.

E.g. Our team sent out survey links on the community association's webpage and facebook group

**Physical:** An accessible option for those who have no access to an electronic device with internet or may not be part of online forums or groups

E.g. Our team distributed paper surveys to peoples' mailboxes, put up flyers, and advertised our survey link in neighbourhood newsletters.

Make sure your team covers a few communities within an area, and that everyone has an option to answer digitally or on paper. We walked thousands of steps around Rosscarrock and the surrounding area putting up flyers and handing out surveys to get as many responses as possible. In doing so, we managed to collect 198 responses.

**TIP:** Place flyers around neighbourhoods of interest to let people know the survey is available. Our flyers included a QR code, which people could scan with their phones to complete the survey online.

*Our flyer, as an example:*



## **START BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

The sustainability of a community fridge relies heavily on partnerships with community members (e.g., donors and volunteers) and associations, non-profit organizations, and/or businesses.

Community partnerships can form at various stages when building your community fridge. We recommend creating these connections during the early stages of the fridge to create long term relationships.

### ***Find a Partner to Help Host Your Fridge***

Identify supportive community partners that are willing to host a community fridge. Potential partners may include community associations, local businesses, and/or organizations. To determine who could be good partners for hosting your fridge, consider a few details:

1. Gauge their level of interest
  - Are they willing to commit to the project long term?
  - What type of assistance or support can they offer?
2. Discuss each of your group's values and determine if these values align with one another
  - Are they equally interested in targeting food insecurity in the community?
  - Are they comfortable with a mutual aid project?
3. Determine the community partners' access to space to host the fridge
  - Do they have the physical space for a fridge/pantry?
  - Are they able to supply heat and electricity?
  - Are staff able to check up on the space if needed?

***Depending on the partnership, they may have staff/volunteers that can assist with fridge checkups and may be willing to pay for utilities too.***

Make sure your team has a clear idea of what type of support you will need from the partnership so that it won't compromise your idea for the fridge. Once you've considered these details, gather a list of partners in your area and prepare a proposal to send to them.

## **Build a proposal for potential partners**

Our proposal to the Rosscarrock Community Association included several key details to encourage them to partner with us. Here are some tips based on our proposal:

- Clearly describe who you are, including your group name and mission statement
- Explain what your project is about, and why your project is important (e.g., what community challenges will it address? How will it be a positive contribution to the community?)
- Explain how this project will be beneficial for the community
  - ~ Include data from the community if surveys were utilized by your group to collect information
  - ~ Source secondary information from reliable sources (e.g., recent census reports)
- Describe how the partnership will work, how it will be mutually beneficial, and how you will support one another throughout the project
- Include a mock up of the fridge space, if possible, to provide a visual representation of the project

**TIP: Once you establish a partnership, create a written agreement detailing who is liable for all costs and upkeep of the fridge. It's important to communicate clearly and openly about everyone's responsibilities within this agreement to foster a supportive partnership.**

## **CONNECT WITH OTHER COMMUNITY LEADERS/GROUPS**

It's a great idea to network with other community leaders/groups that are working on similar projects, as they can offer advice, and connect you with other folks who can assist your team.

For example, The Hatch had a lot of guidance from the team behind the Calgary Community Fridge in Crescent Heights, Calgary's first community fridge. "Freedge" is an example of an great online resource that can help you find community fridges in your area, and is a good place to start when searching for other groups. Don't be

afraid to reach out and connect to these groups, even if they aren't based in your location. In our experience, these groups are excited and supportive of more mutual aid projects popping up in different places.

**TIP:** Typically there will be a social media page, a hashtag, or even an article about people working on mutual aid projects. Search for topics like “mutual aid,” “community group,” and “food insecurity,” to find other groups online.

### ***Foster and maintain long-term partnerships***

Creating a community fridge requires time, labour, and dedication, and having long term partnerships outside of your team can help to keep the project going and ensure your team members don't get burnt out. It is important to involve community members wherever and whenever you can to build solidarity and promote community collaboration. Examples of long-term partnerships include your host location, volunteers who maintain the space and pick up donations, businesses that donate items to the fridge, and other mutual aid groups and organizations.

Build rapport with the people you meet along your journey, maintain consistent communication, show appreciation to those who have helped you, accept feedback, and know how and who to reach out to if need be. Regularly evaluate your partnerships and offer mutual support, especially to groups working on similar community projects.

## BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### 1. Define your goals for your desired outcomes

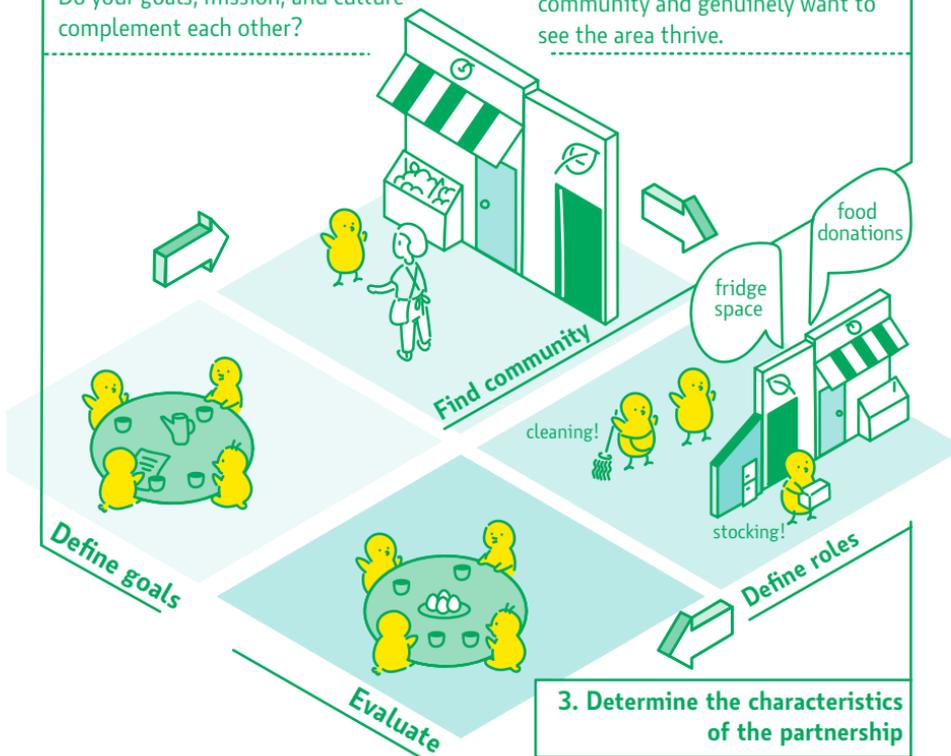
What are you looking for from each partnership? (e.g., food, essential items, increased social visibility and reach, volunteers, and/or donors)

Do your goals, mission, and culture complement each other?

### 2. Seek within your own community to build partnerships

The strongest and most loyal partnerships are often the ones that already exist in the community where the fridge/pantry will be built.

Existing community members living in the community often have a personal connection with the community and genuinely want to see the area thrive.



### 4. Regularly evaluate the partnership

Define your key objectives

Does the partnership help you achieve your desired outcomes?

### 3. Determine the characteristics of the partnership

Define your partnership. This may occur more formally with community associations, businesses, and volunteers

Outline specific roles and responsibilities

Meet regularly to discuss and resolve challenges. (May prevent or lessen conflicts)

## **Benefits of long-term community partnerships**

### **Funding opportunities**

- Increased monetary donations
- Grant funding through community associations

### **Increased marketing**

- Exposure to community members within and beyond the area where the fridge is located
- Amplify visibility, events, and programs to broader audiences

### **Expanded capabilities and resources**

- Spaces to host and participate in events
  - ~ Community halls
  - ~ Company buildings
  - ~ Markets and events
- Skills and knowledge such as
  - ~ Carpentry
  - ~ Electrical skills
  - ~ Writing/marketing
- Connections to key individuals, businesses or organizations that donate excess food, essential items, and other supplies.



# BUILDING THE FRIDGE SPACE

## FIND A LOCATION

Now that you have established a strong team, long-term partners, and support from the community, it's time to build the space. The fridge should be somewhere easily accessible, that has folks from mixed income levels so that items can be both taken and donated to the fridge. Demand will be higher than donations, but this is still something to consider. Take into account feedback received through surveys and discussions with your community partners.

*The fridge should be somewhere:*

- With street facing signage and visible from multiple angles
- High traffic but not too close to a main highway/road
- Accessible by car, transit, bike, foot, or chair
- Public and well known to the members of your community
- Near or attached to a building with electricity and wiring capacity

**TIP: Fridges can be outside or inside. We recommend outside to provide 24/7 access. A fridge can be located by businesses, libraries, community centres, cafes, and apartment or condo complexes.**

For the purposes of this guide, the focus is on building a fridge at a community association building or other City run community centre in Calgary, AB. This does not mean a fridge cannot be built at another location.

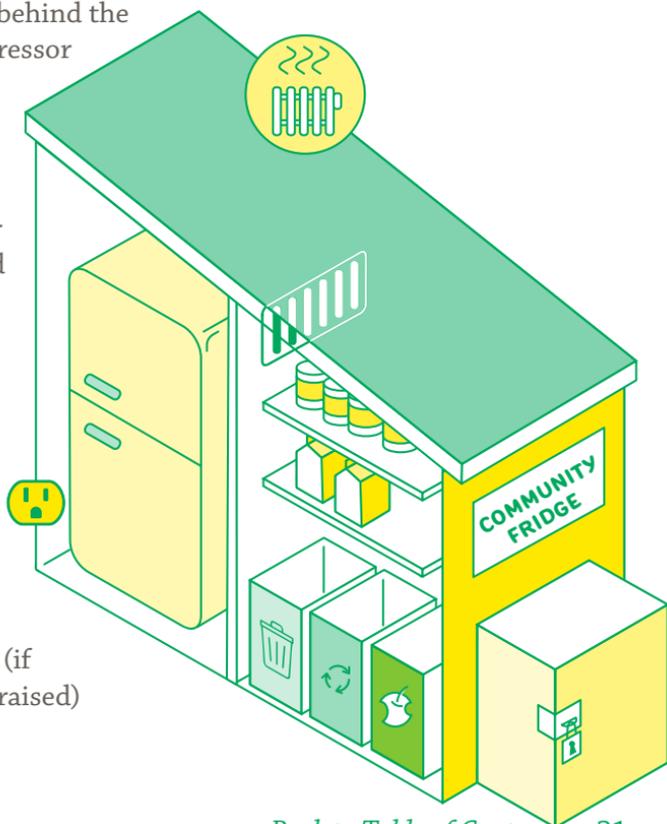
**TIP: The space should be under 100 sq feet and the fridge should fit snugly within the structure. Little space between the walls and fridge will keep heat in during the winter, and reduce garbage around and behind the fridge.**

## CREATE A BUILD MOCK UP

A strong structure that is well sealed and insulated will keep the fridge running and the space clean throughout the seasons. Approach the host location and tradespeople with an idea of how the space could look.

### **Key elements:**

- Walls to cover all sides of the fridge and pantry
- Wall in between the fridge and pantry side
- Ventilation holes between the pantry and fridge side
- Well sealed doors that open and close easily
- Slanted roof for water/snow run-off
- Pantry shelves at various heights
- Insulated walls
- Electrical outlet
- Wall heater behind the fridge compressor to keep it running in winter months
- Lock box for cleaning and volunteer supplies
- Area for trash/ recycling/ compost bins (outside or inside)
- Ramp for accessibility (if structure is raised)
- Signage



## Cit of Calgary building requirements

In Calgary, building and development permits are typically required to build on City owned property such as a community centre. However, great news: after talking with the City Planning Department, they concluded that due to the size and nature of a community fridge, **permits are not required for residents volunteering to build a fridge space at a community centre.** This decision should be in place indefinitely.



An electrical permit and inspection are required if a new outlet needs to be installed. This can be arranged through the City of Calgary website. The electrician may be able to obtain and file this for you.

**TIP:** To ensure you are following current building rules, connect with the community's neighbourhood liaison or social worker. You can reference this guide and our fridge build process. Perform an electrical inspection prior to plugging in your fridge at the space in case any adjustments need to be made.

## CONNECT WITH TRADESPEOPLE

We recommend a carpenter or contractor, and an electrician for the build. It is best to present a build mock up or idea to builders so they know what you are looking for. Find an artist to paint the space and signage or do it yourself! To find tradespeople use:

- ~ Social media
- ~ Ads in local community newsletters
- ~ Connections through other community members and organizations

**TIP:** First, have the electrician survey the space for accessible power first. Having an already established outdoor source will make it easier to pull power from and reduce additional construction.

## CREATE THE BUILD BUDGET

Your build budget should include:

- All construction materials
- Electrical permit and supplies
- Paint
- Cleaning supplies and lock box
- Garbage, recycling, compost containers
- Wall heater
- Fridge
- Honorariums for tradespeople (optional)

To keep your build budget as accurate as possible, obtain a pre-build quote from a hardware store for all the construction materials, this will be the biggest start-up cost. Ask your carpenter/contractor if they get a discount at certain stores.

**TIP: Make a table or spreadsheet to keep track of expected and actual costs, and income. This will assist with grant applications and tracking of financial donations.**

*Sample budget template:*

<b>Income</b>			
<b>Type</b>	<b>Expected</b>	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Example grant	\$1,000	\$1,000	Post grant reporting due, matching funds, etc
Donation from GoFundMe	\$100	\$100	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>			
Build supplies	\$1,000	\$1,200	Lumber, doors, insulation, hardware, etc
Permits	\$165	\$120	Electrical
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,165</b>	<b>\$1,320</b>	

## GET SUPPLIES AND FRIDGE

Construction supplies can be obtained by your carpenter/contractor or anyone else with access to the site. Delivery is an option as well. Have a place to store the items if they are picked up before the build or if the build will take more than one day.

### **Steps:**

1. Complete the build - this could take a few days or a few weeks
2. Wire the electricity in and complete the electrical inspection
3. Paint the space and signage
4. Install the fridge and plug it in
5. Add your lock box, cleaning supplies, and waste bins

### **An indoor vs outdoor fridge**

We recommend having a fridge/freezer combo, especially for breads and prepared meals. It is up to your team on what kind of fridge you would like to use based on cost and size.

Indoor Fridge	Outdoor Fridge
Cheaper, standard size, usually comes with a freezer	Built to be outside, more durable and less likely to need replacing
Prone to fluctuating temperatures in extreme heat or cold, may need to be replaced sooner	Comes in various sizes, most do not have freezers attached, expensive and harder to find used

**TIP:** Purchasing a fridge before or after the space is built is up to your team and storage considerations. Look for used fridges through Kijiji, Facebook Marketplace and/or use social media to make a call out.

# FUNDING THE FRIDGE SPACE

The longevity of a community fridge relies on a sustainable funding model that factors in recurring costs and contingency for unexpected events. While the goal is to secure monetary donations, a good model will provide enough funding to keep the fridge stocked, perform regular maintenance, and give back to the community whenever possible.

## ACCESS FUNDING FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

Aim to acquire funding from multiple sources to allow for a constant influx of monetary donations or grants. There are many ways to secure funding, each with their own unique benefits and challenges. Check the chart on the following page for more information.

## CREATE A SYSTEM TO MANAGE FUNDING

Once you have set up different streams for funding, a series of checks and balances will ensure that monies are resourced responsibly and in the most impactful ways. We have found that the influx of donations (monetary or non-monetary) can be sporadic.

Designate a member(s) of the group to manage the bank account, subscriptions account, and any fundraising platform accounts to help maximize the longevity of donations. Keep track of expenses through a spreadsheet and ensure everyone in the group knows how much is being spent and how much is coming in.

## LEVERAGE PERSONAL NETWORKS & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Your biggest supporters are already in your network and across your community! Leverage social, familial, and professional connections by asking for donations from anyone who has the means. Do a social media fundraiser and share it with your network to get donations and put the project on people's radar.

# FUNDING SOURCES

## TYPE

## BENEFITS

### Community Grants

- Tend to be larger lump sums
- If you get a smaller amount the first time around, you have a better chance at being awarded a larger amount if/when you apply again
- You can often use the same grant application for different grants
- There are a lot of grant options, big and small. If you don't get approved the first time, keep trying!

### Donation Boxes & Food Drives

- Non-monetary support for the fridge
- Easy to set up at local businesses or in your community
- Can accumulate a stock of non-perishables to replenish the pantry when needed

### Online Fundraisers

- Simple and free to set up through online providers like Facebook/Instagram and GoFundMe
- Easy to share and promote through your social networks
- Gain exposure for your project and group

### Monetary Donations

- Flexibility to use funds when and how you see fit
- Requires very little overhead
- What you're given is what you get – no added fees or service charges

## CHALLENGES

- Takes time and skill to find, apply, and report on grants. Grant writing is a learned skill, you can always reach out to grant writers in your area for help!
- A lot of options are not designated for mutual aid groups, but you can partner with the Community Association or a non-profit/charitable organization to qualify for certain grants
- The type of grant can limit what the monies are used for, but you can discuss this with your grantor. When in doubt, contact the grantor and ask questions

- Planning is needed in advance to coordinate timing for food drives or locations for donation boxes
- Need a storage area to stockpile donations
- Cannot collect fresh food items

- Look out for processing fees or restrictions on the funds raised!
- Requires a bank account to receive and transfer funds

- Requires a bank account to receive/deposit funds
- It can be tempting to spend monetary donations quickly, so make sure members actively manage funds as they come in to stretch them as far as possible

## HOW

- Check your city's website for funding opportunities
- Connect with your community social worker about possible grants
- Do a search for non-profits or charitable foundations in your city or town to check if they have an open call for grant applications

- Set up a donation box or host a food drive event at a local business or place of employment

- Create a fundraising page on Facebook or GoFundMe

- Create a fundraising page through Facebook or GoFundMe
- Make a social media post on your group or personal account asking for support and provide an email for e-transfer donations

Continued on next pg...

# FUNDING SOURCES CONTINUED...

## TYPE

## BENEFITS

### Raffle Prizes

- Community engagement
- Raffles can be held at in-person events or online through your group's social media platform
- Can find unique, fun items to support the fridge (examples of past raffle prizes The Hatch has put together include a handmade quilt, a gift card to a local music museum/performance centre, a gift card to a local bakery/ice cream shop)
- Supporting and promoting local businesses for a good cause

### Markets & Events

- Can collect monetary and non-perishable food donations
- Good way to promote the fridge to a different audience
- A place to meet potential volunteers and partners face-to-face

### Paid Subscription Service

- Simple to set up through established providers
- Many people are comfortable with a subscription model
- Easier to accept smaller donations more regularly
- Recurring funds help a lot when it comes to recurring costs like food and fridge maintenance!

## CHALLENGES

- Finding raffle prizes can be a challenge, though many businesses are often happy to donate
- Coordination of getting the prize to winners takes time, and likely someone with a car

## HOW

- Engage with local small businesses to put together raffle prizes.
- If financially feasible, combine donated items with purchased goods from small businesses to bolster community support.
- Multiple items of the same theme can be raffled off as separate prize packs to maximize fundraising impact.

- Requires preparing table materials
- Some markets charge a small table fee
- Cannot collect fresh food items

- Host a table at markets or events to promote the fridge

- Weigh out the processing fees before you sign up. Many services will charge you every time you want a deposit
- Requires a bank account to receive and transfer funds
- Need to do a lot of promotion to secure subscribers

- Sign up for an app that enables subscribers to pay for content or donate on a regular basis. We have found that Patreon and With Friends have tiers that are accessible to mutual aid groups.

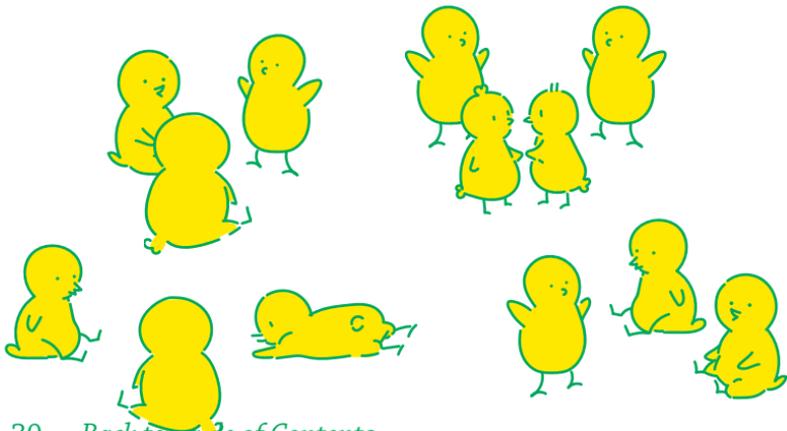
# MAINTAINING THE FRIDGE SPACE

## *Volunteers are key*

Volunteers play a vital role in creating and maintaining a community fridge! Depending on the needs of the space, they provide an extra set of hands to complete required tasks to maintain the safety and vibrance of the space. Volunteers also offer valuable ideas and specialized skills (e.g., carpentry, electrical skills, marketing, etc.) that your team may not possess to improve daily operations and resolve unexpected obstacles. As Sherry Anderson once said, “Volunteers don’t get paid, not because they’re worthless, but because they’re priceless.”

## BUILD A VOLUNTEER TEAM

We strongly recommend your team get out and connect with community members from surrounding neighbourhoods, community associations, businesses, and organizations. Networking will allow you to share your mission and project goals, and develop more personable partnerships with potential volunteers and donors.



## **Use social media to build your team**

Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are valuable tools to engage with your community by sharing intriguing and educational content. Your audience's response will help you evaluate the need and interest in implementing a community fridge when choosing a location as well.

*So, what kind of content will inspire your audience to get involved?*

- Multimedia: Use a mixture of photos and videos, and fun, colourful graphics
- Inspirational: Share successful local, national, and/or international stories
- Educational: Share research, resources, and events
- Ask your audience questions such as:
  - ~ Have you seen a community fridge in other communities or around the world?
  - ~ Do you know the difference between a food bank and a community fridge?
  - ~ What is the purpose of a community fridge?

*Examples of content you can share:*

- Share news: regularly share accomplishments, announcements, and events.
  - ~ This reminds your audience about the steps you are taking to reach your goal(s) and the important role you play in the community.
- Facts: Share empirical research and evidence. We suggest including references for further reading.
  - ~ This educates your audience about the problem(s) that exists, what is shown to help, how your project will help to mitigate the problem(s), and how they can get involved.
- Events: Host fundraisers and attend community events. Community projects rely heavily on the support of others (e.g., physical labour, food/essential items/monetary donations)
  - ~ Events help you to make more personable connections with the community.
  - ~ Recruit partners such as volunteers, donors, and organizations at events.

*Platforms to help you design and manage content:*

- **Canva:** An easy to use, free website where you can use engaging templates and graphics to create social media posts.
- **Adobe Illustrator:** This software does have a monthly or yearly cost and is higher level, but it's a great tool if someone on your team is interested in learning more about graphic design.
- **Figma:** This software has a free option and is a great way to collaborate on designs and content in one space. Ideal if you have a team member interested in learning about graphic design and online design.
- **Airtable:** This content management software has a great free version you can use to keep track of social media posts and content, assign it to certain team members, and manage content related tasks.

So far, you have engaged and educated community members and your social media followers. Hopefully, you're gaining support, gauging volunteer interest in your upcoming project, and creating connections with the community. Now you're ready to reach out to your audience to recruit them as volunteers!

## **RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS**

### **Step 1: Create a sign-up sheet**

There are various free online platforms that make it easy for you to create a volunteer sign-up sheet such as:

- Volunteer Signup
- SignUp Genius
- Create a custom signup sheet using Google forms

The sign-up sheet should ask a volunteer to provide:

- First and last name
- Contact information (e.g. email and/or phone number)
- Volunteer positions and description
- Options to select shift dates and times

### TIP: Structure of volunteer shifts

- We recommend having at least 2-3 volunteer shifts spread out across the day (e.g., 8 am, 2 pm, & 8 pm), 7 days/week for checking in and cleaning at the space
- Donation pick ups often fluctuate in schedule so it's best to ask people what days and times they are available
- Shifts should take a maximum of 30 mins if you are cleaning and checking the space. Donation pick-ups and stocking the fridge/pantry may take longer due to commuting around the city.

*Examples of sign-up sheets:*

### **Electronic: Google Forms**

For donation pick up & stocking: select a day of the week

- Monday
- Thursday
- Friday
- As needed

Your name \*

Your answer

Your email \*

Your answer

Your phone number \*

Your answer

Submit

Clear form

## Hard-copy sheet

NAME	EMAIL	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		◊ 8-9AM ◊ 2-3PM ◊ 8-9PM ◊ AN ◊ Donation P/U						
		◊ 8-9AM ◊ 2-3PM ◊ 8-9PM ◊ AN ◊ Donation P/U						
		◊ 8-9AM ◊ 2-3PM ◊ 8-9PM ◊ AN ◊ Donation P/U						

### Step 2: Share volunteer opportunities

- Tell your friends and family: Word of mouth works wonders! Those closest to you want to see you succeed and are often the first ones to sign-up to volunteer.
- Social Media: Share links to your volunteer opportunities on all social media platforms you use.
- Posters and flyers: Post hard-copy flyers in the area where your community fridge will be located, surrounding neighbourhoods, businesses, community halls, and any high-traffic area!

**TIP:** We recommend including the following on your poster:

- Brief mission and project statement
- a URL link and QR code to access the online volunteer sign-up sheet for those with and without an electronic device
- Contact information (email and social media handle)
- The poster should appeal to the eye to encourage people to stop and read (e.g., colour, graphics, photos)

## **ESTABLISH AND SUPPORT THE VOLUNTEER TEAM**

Once volunteer shifts and positions are confirmed and filled, you have officially established a team of mighty volunteers! Congratulations! So what's next?

### ***Send volunteers a Welcome Package***

*The Welcome Package* may include:

- A reminder of the volunteer's position and the day and time of their shift
- A one pager that provides information about the space, the community fridge and/or pantry, the mission, expectations, volunteer roles and responsibilities, contact information etc.
- Your contact and the volunteer group chat information
- The volunteer schedule (send updates when needed)
- The package can be hard-copy or digital, depending on the needs of your volunteers

### ***Add volunteers to a mass group chat***

The purpose of this is to provide volunteers with:

- A quick form of communication with your team and other volunteers to ask questions or share updates (e.g., need more cleaning supplies, weather damage etc.)
- Share photo updates of the community fridge for the team to evaluate the stock of food and essential items, and to post on social media (e.g., provide updates to your audience, Thank You posts and stories to donors, organizations, and/or businesses.)
- Group chat platforms you can use:
  - WhatsApp
  - Slack
  - Discord

## **CLEAN AND STOCK THE FRIDGE AND PANTRY**

Daily maintenance of the fridge/pantry ensures that the space remains a safe and inviting place to retrieve food and essential items for everyone.

### ***Supplies needed:***

- Garbage, compost, and recycle bins - appropriate bags
- Sanitizing supplies
- Bags - ziploc and plastic/reusable for the community to hold items.
- Lockbox to store and secure cleaning supplies - provide the lock combination to volunteers through your group chat
- Volunteer checklist:
  - Was the space cleaned?
  - Do food/items meet the food safety guidelines?
  - What is the temperature of the fridge and freezer?

### ***Cleaning:***

- Sanitize and wipe shelves, walls, door handles, drawers, and other high-touch areas
- Pick up litter around the fridge space and properly dispose of it
- Refill sanitizers and plastic/reusable bags

### ***Checking in:***

- Check fridge & freezer temperatures and post info in the group chat
- Take photos of inventory and send to the group chat
- Follow food/essential item guidelines and remove unacceptable items
- Organize fridge and pantry where older items are in the front and newer items are in the back
- Remove excess packaging and group similar food items together

### ***Donation Pickups:***

- Pick up food & essentials from food apps/stores/businesses
- Ensure food & essentials follow food/essential item guidelines

# FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES

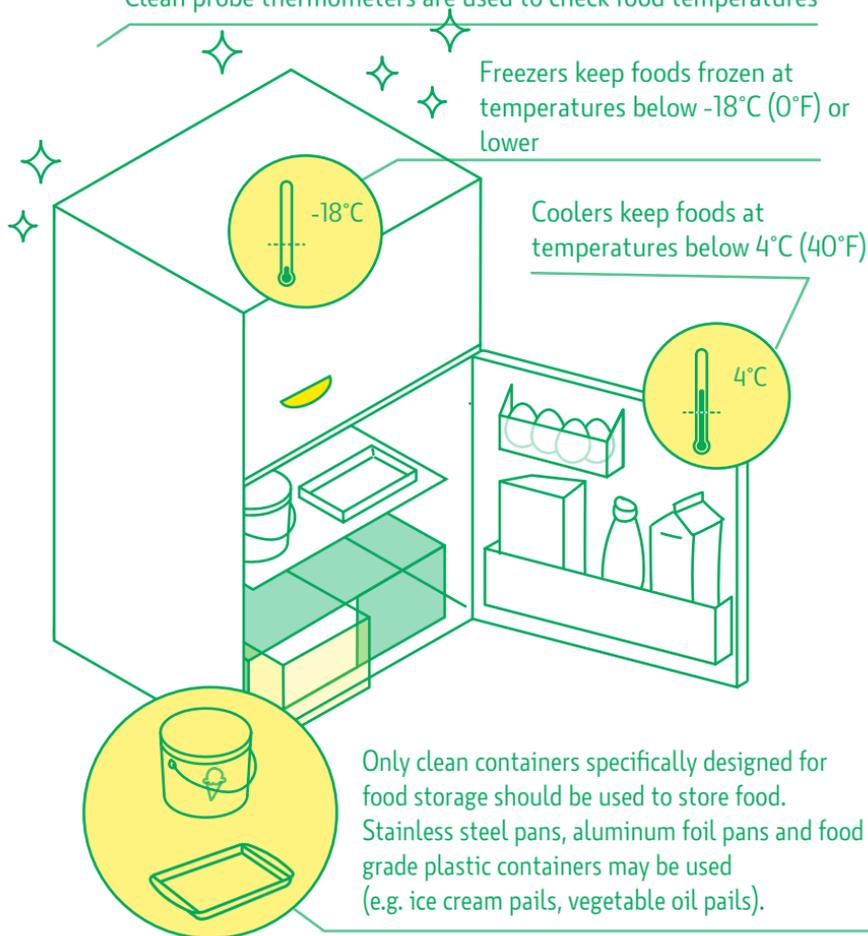
## Food Equipment and Food Containers

Food equipment must be maintained in proper working order and be in a clean and sanitary condition

Clean probe thermometers are used to check food temperatures

Freezers keep foods frozen at temperatures below  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $0^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) or lower

Coolers keep foods at temperatures below  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $40^{\circ}\text{F}$ )



Only clean containers specifically designed for food storage should be used to store food. Stainless steel pans, aluminum foil pans and food grade plastic containers may be used (e.g. ice cream pails, vegetable oil pails).

Refrigeration equipment will be regularly cleaned and sanitized to ensure safety at all times.

Containers will be thoroughly washed, rinsed, and sanitized between uses.

## Acceptable



Fresh fruit and vegetables

Commercially canned foods



Dry goods (e.g. cereal, crackers, pancake mix, etc.)

Sealed non-alcoholic beverages (e.g. water, juice, milk, milk alternatives, etc.)



Grab and go food (single serving snacks, granola bars, etc.)

## Acceptable if labeled with best before date



Breads and pastries

Fresh eggs



Dairy products

## Unacceptable



Raw meat or seafood

Expired foods and passed best before date foods



Used or opened packaged food items

Alcohol



Home cooked meals or meals not made in an approved food facility

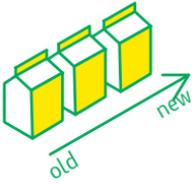
Cans that are severely dented, bulging, rusty or leaking, home-canned foods, cans without a label



Eggs that are cracked, leaking, or visibly dirty

Mouldy produce or bread

## Stocking Protocols



Rotate newer items to the back, older items to the front

Organize similar food items together, veg with veg, fruit with fruit, dry foods with dry foods



Remove any unacceptable food items



Remove packaging, bags, and split up a bunch to give people more access to items (remove plastic packaging from fruits and vegetables, break apart bananas from their bunch, etc.)



Ensure food items are stocked in the appropriate location (fruits, vegetables, and drinks inside the fridge, dry foods on shelves, etc.)



Sanitize non-perishable packaging with provided disinfectant



Food donation guidelines signage will be posted at site as well as online.



All volunteers will complete the application Health Services Food and Safety course prior to volunteering at the fridge space.

- \* Keep foods covered/wrapped while in storage
- \* Best before dates are dates after which the manufacturer cannot assure optimal quality of the product

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## **Connect with local food donors**

Reach out to local businesses, organizations, or groups who may be able to donate food or hygiene items on a singular or regularly occurring basis. Even businesses, organizations, or groups that are willing to offer support with posters, business cards, or social media content will help to get the word out and attract more patrons and donors to your community fridge.

Examples of organizations and businesses that support the Hatch:

- Leftovers Foundation
- Grow Calgary
- Good Neighbour Community Market
- Sikh Society of Calgary
- Tree of Life
- Dental offices

**TIP: Create a variety of email templates to make reaching out to groups a quick and easy process.**

For instance, The Hatch created email templates to reach out to places interested in donating, and to thank people for their donations.

# WRAPPING UP.. FOR NOW

A community fridge is more than just a place for food. It is a mutual aid initiative that plays an integral part of the community, bringing together neighbours, friends, and strangers to support one another and learn about each other's needs.

With the motto of “take what you need, leave what you can,” a community fridge is designed to be a welcoming space, accessible to a diverse range of ages, cultures and backgrounds. As the fridge project unfolds, your group may need to reinforce the ideals of a mutual aid project: no judgment on anyone who accesses the fridge and no surveillance or monitoring of the space.

Unlike a food bank, a community fridge should have no barriers to access. It should meet the needs of the community and help all involved develop a shared understanding of what food insecurity is and how it affects everyone differently. Following the model of solidarity, not charity, the fridge space should encourage collective action and community collaboration.

We hope this guide helps you build and maintain a community fridge, connect with community members, and foster community life in your area. As a group, we continue to learn from the fridge project as we work to address food insecurity in our community, and we're excited to see your community fridge come to life!

## *A community fridge means...*

**Amanda:**

An example of the better world that we can all build together

**Steph:**

A way to address food insecurity in a welcoming, accessible space

**Natalie:**

A safe and welcoming space where neighbours can support neighbours

**Jasmine:**

A safe space where we can nurture each other and be nurtured by each other

**Tasha:**

A way of showing up in community where we can connect and care for one another

**Gabrie:**

A place for community care and connection where we can all contribute in some way



# RESOURCES

## **Mutual Aid:**

- ~ [Building Power, Resisting Recuperation: Dean Spade on Mutual Aid, COVID-19, and Beyond](#) (podcast)
- ~ [Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis \(and the Next\)](#) by Dean Spade (book)
- ~ [What is Mutual Aid?](#) via @peopleforpeoplelosangeles
- ~ Barnard Center for Research on Women, [“Building Accountable Communities”](#) video series
- ~ [“Consensus: Direct Democracy @ Occupy Wall Street.”](#) October 13, 2011 (video)
- ~ Seattle Solidarity Network, [“Building Your Own Solidarity Network,” A guide to building a successful solidarity network along the lines of the Seattle Solidarity Network](#), written by SeaSol organizers
- ~ The Canadian Poverty Institute, [Vibrant Communities Calgary: Examining Calgary’s Emergency Food Assistance System](#), report, 2021

## **Community Fridges/Food Centres:**

- ~ The Socialist Project, [Community Fridges & Mutual Aid Amid the Pandemic](#), 2020
- ~ Mashable.com, [A Guide to Building a Community Fridge](#)
- ~ [Calgary Community Fridge Resources](#)

## **Food Growth/Community Gardens:**

- ~ [Soil: The Dirty Climate Solution](#) (podcast)
- ~ The Discourse.ca, [Duncan’s downtown farm grows more than just produce](#), profile of KinPark Farm

### **Local Food Programs:**

- ~ [Brown Bagging For Calgary's Kids](#)
  - [FAQs PDF](#)
- ~ [Fresh Routes](#)
- ~ [Leftovers Foundation](#)
- ~ [Grow Calgary](#)

### **Legality & Safety of Food Donations:**

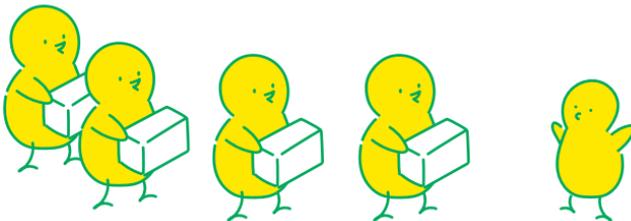
- ~ Food Donation and Civil Liabilities in Canada by Zero Waste Council
- ~ Food Distribution and Donation Guidelines by Alberta Health Services

### **Social Media Content:**

- ~ [Engage, Inform, Recruit: How Nonprofits Can Use Social Media to Recruit Donors and Volunteers](#) | NTEN. NTEN; [www.nten.org](http://www.nten.org).

### **Maintain Community Partnerships:**

- ~ [4 steps to develop Strong Community Partnerships for your nonprofit](#): Soapbox engage: Online fundraising platform for nonprofits.





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