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Food Site Security Project: Hope's Harvest

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Katherine van Rijswijk

Dr. Stamm

ILS4340- Global Food Security While Leading Change Locally

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Food Security Site Project

Johnson & Wales University



HOPE'S HARVEST RI



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Part One

In the state of Rhode Island and across the nation, many communities are plagued by food insecurity. To be food insecure means that a person, or family, does not have consistent, reliable access to affordable nutritious foods. Food insecurity currently affects 12% of Rhode Island residents (Agudelo). So why do so many Rhode Island residents and Americans nationwide face issues with food insecurity? It is not due to any shortage of food. In fact it is the exact opposite, “vast quantities of fresh produce grown in the U.S. are left in the field to rot, or... hauled directly from the field to landfill, because of unrealistic and unyielding cosmetic standards.” (Chandler). It is estimated that around 6 percent of fruits and vegetables grown in the United States is unharvested and left to rot in the field. That adds up to 97,000 acres of produce wasted each year (Gunders).

In an effort to solve the issue of food insecurity and reduce food waste, Eva Agudelo founded Hope’s Harvest Rhode Island (HHRI) in early 2018. The goal of Hope’s Harvest is to recruit volunteers to harvest and collect produce from local farms that would otherwise go to rot in the fields, and distribute them to hunger relief agencies in Rhode Island. Oftentimes farmers make the financial decision to leave a significant portion of their produce unharvested because it would end up costing them more to harvest and process the produce. This could be due to an excess in supply of a particular crop in contrast to the demand for that crop - the labor cost of harvesting these plants would minimize the profit generated from the revenue that would be made from these products. Another reason being that the produce does not meet the aesthetic standards of the customer and holds little value since it would likely not be purchased (Gunders). This crop of unharvested fruit and vegetables is still completely edible and safe to eat. The problem of a wasted crop is somewhat alleviated when volunteers take the time to recover the unharvested produce.

The people who receive the benefits of Hope’s Harvest, essentially the reason that Hope’s Harvest exists, are those that are experiencing food insecurity. This includes people who are

experiencing temporary or chronic food insecurity. The people who are most likely to be experiencing food insecurity are: children and the elderly, minority groups and low-income households (RTI). Hope's Harvest does not operate out of any single location and instead distributes donations among Rhode Island's many hunger relief agencies. That being said, Hope's Harvest serves the community as a whole; by providing the farmers with an alternative to allowing excess produce go to waste as well as a financial incentive to encourage their participation, helping to provide more fresh produce to food banks and soup kitchens, and by providing the community with this resource to aid them in alleviating their own food insecurity.

Hope's harvest is still in its first year of operation but gleaning is an ancient practice, with mentions of gleaning in the bible, it is one of the first methods that the human race has developed to alleviate hunger. Nationwide gleaning projects with similar missions have attempted to address hunger in their communities. Eva Agudelo, Hope's Harvest's founder, has years of experience working with hunger relief agencies and tackling the problem of food insecurity. Her knowledge on the issue of food insecurity lays its foundation in her education, with an M.S from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy from Tufts University. Eva has since served as the Assistant director of programs at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank where she administered "federal nutrition programs and [supported] Rhode Island's statewide network of food pantries and meal sites." (Agudelo). She also serves on the Rhode Island Food Policy Council as the Vice-Chair.

The list continues to include her starting the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative through the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project as well as a Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) program officer at Wholesome Wave supporting incentive programs at farmer's markets across the U.S. (Agudelo). Through these experiences, Eva has a comprehensive grasp on the reason food insecurity exists and is equipped with ability to tackle the issue head on. As the sole employee of the organization, Eva directs every part of Hopes harvest, from coordinating with farmers, mobilizing volunteers and coordinating with and making deliveries to hunger relief agencies. With the help of volunteers to glean the fields and the occasional intern from local universities to tackle necessary, but sidelined projects, she is able to fully operate HHRI and see her vision unfold.

Hope's Harvest Rhode Island is fiscally sponsored by Farm Fresh Rhode Island, which is a registered 501c3 organization (Agudelo). Farm Fresh RI is an organization whose mission is to "grow a local food system that values the environment, health, and quality of life of the farmers and eaters in our region." (Farm Fresh Rhode Island). They are able to do this by creating a local food hub that creates a community of local food producers and consumers and making local foods easily accessible to those in the community. This strengthens local farmers and the economy of the state. Farm Fresh also allows Eva access to their storage and refrigeration, as well as access to their vehicles to better aid Eva with transporting and safely storing her hauls.

Through the partnership with Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Eva is able to accept donations to fund Hope's Harvest from the public. Eva is also able to fund the gleaning project by securing a number of grants from organizations and government initiatives that seek to tackle food insecurity in the United States. Once the fields are gleaned, Eva must deliver the produce to local food banks and soup kitchens. This is no small feat as deliveries can be time sensitive and hunger relief agencies can be very particular about the types of food that they receive from donors in order to keep vulnerable populations safe from the possibility of coming into contact with and getting sick from foodborne illnesses.

Hope's Harvest has a lot to work with in a state like Rhode Island, since it is a small state with many small farmers and hunger relief agencies, the resources are abundant but there are still some obstacles that Eva faces when running the day-to-day operations of the organization. In the following chart the needs and assets of Hope's Harvest are clarified:

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A strong personal network of local farmers and contacts within local hunger relief agencies ● Passion and dedication to the cause ● Extensive education and experience in the relevant field 	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eva does not currently have consistent access to a vehicle that is capable of the work that needs to be done ● The possibility of cross-contamination from farm to farm ● An inconsistent supply of volunteers
<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekend gleaning outings ● Reaching out to students at local universities for community service hours 	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seasonal changes ● Outbreaks of foodborne illnesses ● New law, FSMA, may affect the availability of crops and the willingness of farmers to participate.

Access to food is not only a part of what it means to be food secure, It is a key component to survival. Healthful food is undeniably a need for all living organisms and yet, in our society, it is often viewed as a privilege. A number of sociological and physical factors determine whether a person has access to nutritious foods and whether they are able to fully utilize the food products or not. Factors like: wealth and income, race, geography, transportation, education etc. deeply affect the likelihood of a person being food insecure. The goal of Hope's

Harvest is to bridge part of that gap, so that those who are either unable to travel to a site with nutritious foods or cannot afford it (often times both of these things coexist) are still able to access the foods that they need in order to improve their diet and overall health and wellbeing. When a substantial part of the community does not have access to nutritional and whole foods, but there is an excess of crops being produced, there is an inequality problem with distribution in the food system. It is crucial to work within the community and to use policy to find solutions to this issue.

The social ecological model (SEM) is a great model for affecting change in the community and addressing food insecurity. With the social ecological model, the relationship of the individual to the surrounding individuals is considered. Those individuals are part of larger organizations, these organizations affect the community and the governance of the society that they live in which, in turn, is how they shape or are shaped by one another. These communities can also impact the perception of those who live within them. By alerting members of communities and educating them on the reality of food insecurity, it may create some momentum for change. Educating community members on adequate nutrition and the quality vs. the quantity of their calories is also an important part of creating change.

When considering SEM, it becomes a little clearer how change can be made possible. Working up from the individual to their personal networks and what changes can be made on a personal level. Moving now towards organizational change: what is the current social climate? Observing where or if changes need to be made. The next step is observing the community and the culture within that- what do these individuals value? What are considered the norms and do these need to be changed in order to effect real change to further the agenda within the community? At the governmental level it is necessary to consider public policy. Are there policies in place that prevent the change that the individual or organization is trying to make, or does policy need to be written and implemented in order to aid the agenda of the individual or organization? The social ecological model can be utilized as a means of explaining the current social ecology of a society but can also be used as a vehicle for change.

The social ecological model (SEM) differs from social cognitive theory (SCT) and the transtheoretical model (TTM) in some notable ways. It differs from social cognitive theory in

that it considers the relationships between the various layers of society to explain why things are the way they are while social cognitive theory focuses on environmental factors to explain or change behavior. SCT also only considers three factors that reciprocate to determine behavior while SEM considers five levels of society to determine the knowledge, attitude and potential skills of the individual. The transtheoretical model deals with the stages of change, and the factors that go into what it takes for an individual to make behavioral changes. It is done on a personal level and does not take into consideration environmental, or societal influences the way that SEC and SCT do. It is similar to the social cognitive theory in that it deals with behavior, but while TTM is considered on a personal level, SCT takes environmental factors into consideration.

Hope's Harvest deals with the issue of food availability and food access by addressing the issues that cause there to be an availability and accessibility issue in the first place. Hope's Harvest does this by working within the organization's personal network by aligning with Farm Fresh RI, the farming community in Rhode Island and using public policy such as the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Act in order to make the system work for the organization. This is how an individual or organization can use the Social ecological model to effect change in the community. The organization makes it their mission to bring produce closer to the people that need it. These products are not processed but are given to organizations that either know how to utilize the product which is then given to those who need it. Other organizations are able to instruct the person receiving the product on how to properly utilize and prepare it.

In order to create a solution to a problem, the causes of the problem need to be fully analyzed and understood. The issue when it comes to food insecurity is that the food system is corrupt and needs to be reformed. In lieu of reformation, local change is the best way to impact those in need. It is then necessary to devise a plan that will aid in alleviating some of the harm caused by the problem that has been created. Working within the surrounding area, and by using the resources available either by the community and/or any government assistance, it is possible to design a program that may ease some of the strain on the community. This is how it is possible to create change on a local level by utilizing social ecological theory.

Food insecurity exists as the product of a food system that values profit over humanity. In theory, food insecurity is a simple concept with somewhat simple solutions. In practice things are not so simple, especially when thinking about it on a global platform. It can become overwhelming to even attempt to find a solution to the problem; which is why it is important to act on a local level. Using the social ecological model to create change is effective on a local level. Since local organizations and even local representatives are easily within reach, it can be a lot less daunting to operate this way. With the support of the local community, some of the issues of food insecurity can be addressed. The issue of distance becomes less of an issue when a person is willing to transport food from an area that is inaccessible to most to an organization where people can reach it. Organizations that donate food to those who need it address the issue of whether or not people can afford to eat nutritionally balanced foods, as well as having a facility where these foods can be processed and or prepared, for those who might not have access to clean water, a kitchen or to those who do not have the knowledge of how to safely prepare food. These resources are critical for alleviating food inequality, and while it may seem small, when many of these organizations around the globe are dedicated to the same cause, a substantial impact can be made.



Individual: Hope's Harvest Rhode Island is operated by a single person who has identified the issue and has the knowledge, skills and assets to implement a plan that would help to alleviate some of the intense strain that faces many Rhode Island residents.

Interpersonal: By aligning with an organization like Farm Fresh RI, Hope's Harvest is able to receive donations, have access to their vehicles and refrigeration. This is vital to the success of the operation. This a prime example of using the social network as part of the solution. Volunteer outreach at farmer's markets adds to this interpersonal network.

Organizational: Hope's Harvest gets involved at farmer's markets to get the word out and to pick up any extra products and informing the farmers about their options when it comes to food waste at the market that they may be able to utilize making it mutually beneficial for all involved.

Community: It is part of the American culture to value good food and charitable acts. But American culture also values convenience. Individuals are not resistant to helping others, but they are more likely to do it when it is convenient for them. Hope's Harvest makes it easy for farmers to unload their excess produce and do a good deed. The community also gets involved through volunteering.

Public policy: Public policy can often interfere with the progress of an organization like Hope's Harvest but it can also prove to be beneficial. For example, the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Act allows Hope's Harvest to distribute food for charity without worry of being sued in the event that someone were to fall ill from the produce.

Hope's Harvest makes use of the social ecological model to address some of the issues around local food insecurity in Rhode Island. HHRI are able to address these issues by using the resources available to them through their social network, local communities and even some areas of government. No system is perfect.

By utilizing the social ecological model of behavioral theory, Hope's Harvest seeks to obtain its goal of alleviating food insecurity throughout the state. Through community driven activism, farmer participation, the work of hunger relief agencies and with the help of the local government's policy and funding, a gleaning project like Hope's Harvest has the tools it needs to address the dual issue of food waste and food insecurity in Rhode Island.

Part Two: Action Plan

The great thing about a gleaning organization is that it can operate without a whole lot of equipment. It does not require a building, processing equipment, a reliable water source or packaging of any sort. However, the assets and equipment that an organization like Hope's Harvest does require are absolutely vital to the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Hope's Harvest's dedicated founder, Eva Agudelo, has purchased all necessary equipment for harvesting produce and is able to sufficiently operate using Farm Fresh Rhode Island's facilities, if necessary. Facilities include: refrigeration, storage and vehicles. Hope's Harvest is still in need of a reliable and effective vehicle. The premise of HHRI is to alleviate food insecurity by improving accessibility and bringing into facilities that are more accessible to those that frequent hunger relief agencies. Since FFRI's trucks are far too large for most farms and city roads, they can prove to be difficult to use for the purposes needed.

Within the context of running an organization that relies upon grants and donations in order to fund their operations and on volunteers and interns to aid in the actual operating activities, there are other factors to consider when thinking about the needs of the organization. Since HHRI is fiscally sponsored by FFRI, it is crucial that Hope's Harvest is seen as a legitimate, effective and professional organization. Documents that demonstrate the standard operating procedures of the organization and can answer a lot of questions that donors may have about how Eva is ensuring the safety of the product and the individuals that will receive these products.

For these reasons, Eva is having me create a food safety manual that delineates the step by step flow of operations and how safety is addressed at each critical control point. This manual also includes information on the expectation of volunteers to aid in ensuring that quality and safety are being taken into serious consideration. This document's primary purpose is to show

donors, fiscal sponsors and farmers that safety is a top priority for HHRI and that there is a plan set in place for any problems that may arise, but mostly it is a plan to avoid these problems all together. The document clearly outlines state and federal legislation and policy that can affect or contribute to how HHRI is able to operate within Rhode Island.

It is a huge responsibility to feed people on such a large scale and while the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Act¹ can alleviate the stress that accompanies this responsibility, it is not something to be taken lightly. This is why it is crucial to have a comprehensive document that a person who is unfamiliar with the organization can pick up, read and leave with a full understanding of why and how HHRI operates and protects those who are on the other end of the process, those that rely on food banks to provide healthful and nutritious foods without having to worry about themselves or their families consuming compromised or harmful products.

It is precisely due to the risky nature of a gleaning project that potential donors, sponsors, farmer's and hunger relief agencies may show some apprehension about having their brand or reputation associated with an organization like HHRI. A food safety manual will help to quell some of their fears, "warm the feet" of those who may show some reservations about working with or making a contribution to Hope's Harvest and hopefully encourage members of the community to participate in any way they may be able to.

The document addresses issues like: food sourcing², and what qualifies as a safe and reliable food source as well as information on how to determine if food items do not meet the standards of Hope's Harvest and Hunger relief agencies and how to handle and discard sub-par produce. The manual also includes details about cross-contamination³ - how it is avoided - and how all hauls and harvests are tracked and recorded so that accountability may be taken for compromised products.⁴

Gleaning projects are not something that are widely known about so constructing a food safety manual can be difficult as there are not quite so many examples to follow. In order to be as thorough as possible when creating the manual I had to first, discuss with Eva her vision for the manual, what she believed to be the more important aspects of the operation and figuring out all

¹ Page 3 of the Food Safety manual in Appendix one.

² Page 6 of the Food Safety manual in Appendix one.

³ Page 5 of the Food Safety manual in Appendix one.

⁴ Page 6 of the Food Safety manual in Appendix one.

critical control points. Next, I found inspiration in food safety manuals for hunger relief agencies as well as manuals for farms. Selecting the parts that relate to a gleaning project and inputting information customised for HHRI.

At this stage, the manual is still under development and probably will always be a work in progress as regulation and standards change through the years. The aim of the document is that it is not so information dense that a person gets overwhelmed or easily bored by it, but rather to present relevant information in a manner that is transparent, easily digestible and understandable to the reader with no grey area to speculate or interpret meaning.

With a completed food safety manual Hope's Harvest can help those who are invested, in any way, feel a little more secure in the organization's ability to effectively and safely collect and distribute food products to those who are willing and able to accept them. This will help to further their reach and hopefully increase the influence of HHRI around the state. Though the world we live in is ever-changing and a young organization like Hope's Harvest is subject to change over the course of time with things like legislation and food codes changing over time, it is important to have a document like this. It is also easily edited to be able to make the necessary updates and changes as soon as needed.

A relationship with Hope's Harvest can be mutually beneficial for all parties involved. Farmers benefit from reducing their own waste and clearing out their storage and fields. Food banks and the community members that make use of their services benefit from being able to access whole, nutritious foods which impacts and benefits the community as a whole. The social ecological model of behavioural theory is exemplified through Hope's Harvest. It includes, involves and benefits all levels of the social ecology from the individuals involved (not only the recipient), their families, local organizations (hunger relief agencies), local businesses (the farms) and local government by reducing the impact on healthcare and improving the economy by enabling people to be fed enough to be consistent and reliable employees.

The importance of food cannot be underestimated. It has shaped the world we live in permanently. It is vital for our health and survival as well as our cultural heritage, religions, families, and our comfort in general. There is no debating that we all have the right to be fed. Improving accessibility to good foods to those who have difficulty in accessing foods due to

circumstances beyond their control will help people structure their lives, provide for their families and allow them to find a way out of food insecurity.

In order alleviate the issue of having limited access to foods, organizations like Hope's Harvest need to be able to operate and involve as many relevant parties as possible. Which is why a document that can provide information and answer the questions of the parties involved is so valuable. It can take some of the strain away from Eva having to explain this to each and every interested party, so that she can instead focus on other areas of the organization that need constant attention.

Part Three: Evaluation of Action Plan

The problem that I was addressing for Hope's Harvest Rhode Island was the organizations lack of a food safety manual that would demonstrate to local hunger relief agencies, the protocol that Hope's Harvest RI has set in place to ensure that safe produce is being delivered and how they mitigate the risk of cross-contamination and other food safety concerns. Eva Agudelo is HHRI's sole operator, and the organization is still very young, so it can be difficult to address all the problems that come with starting and running an organization. Having interns to manage some of the other projects needed can be an effective way of delegating responsibility and freeing up time to address some of the more imminent concerns of the organization.

In order to measure whether or not there was an immediate need for a food safety manual from the agencies that receive HHRI donations, it was important to find out if there were any concerns about the food safety practices of HHRI. Since one of the main purposes of this document is to demonstrate to these agencies that HHRI is capable of operating safely, and that the organization is adhering to all relevant food safety standards; it was also necessary to address whether or not they would see value in having a food safety manual that was easily accessible to them in order to address any concerns they may have on HHRI's ability to effectively do this.

The survey⁵ that was sent out, was one that HHRI founder Eva Agudelo was planning on distributing around the time that I needed to distribute my survey. Due to the nature of the work that employees of hunger relief agencies must accomplish, there is little time for much else. So

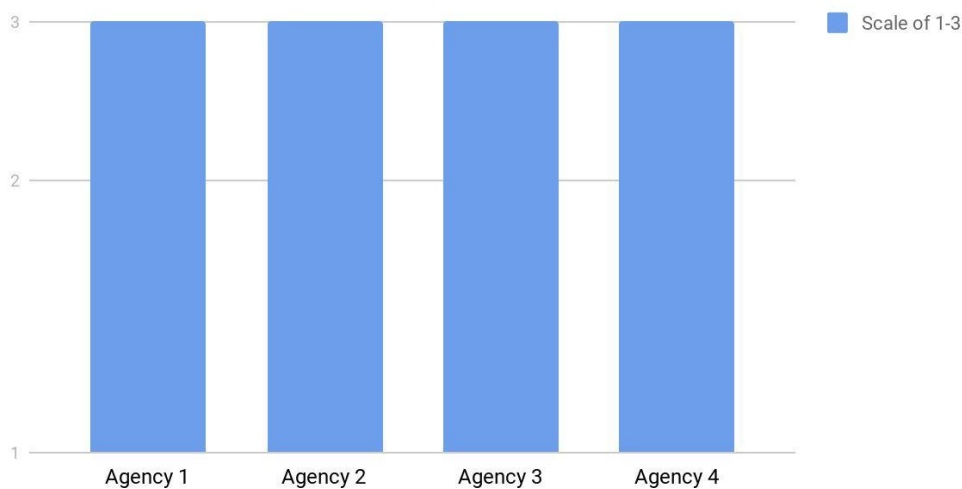
⁵ Appendix Two

for the sake of efficiency, they surveys, that were conducted via Google Forms, were combined into one, with questions regarding food safety⁶ attached.

Given the fact that those who would be providing feedback on the survey were pressed for time, and given that the size of the food manual makes it a substantial time commitment, the questions addressed the need for the manual and documented food safety standards rather than an assessment of the manual itself. The questions relating to the food safety manuals and their responses were as follows:

1. How important is it for your agency to maintain strict food safety standards?
(On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being not important and 3 being very important.)

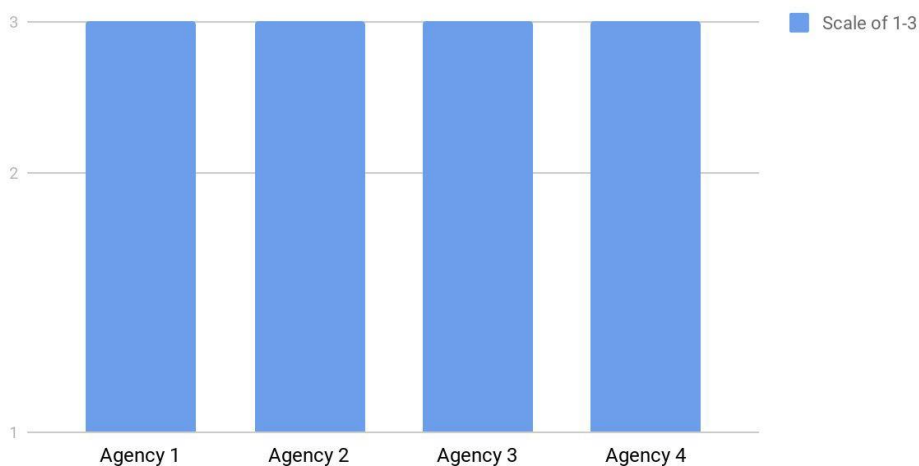
How important is it for your agency to maintain strict food safety standards?



2. Overall, how satisfied were you with Hope's Harvest RI's food safety practices?
(With 1 being the least satisfied and 3 being most satisfied)

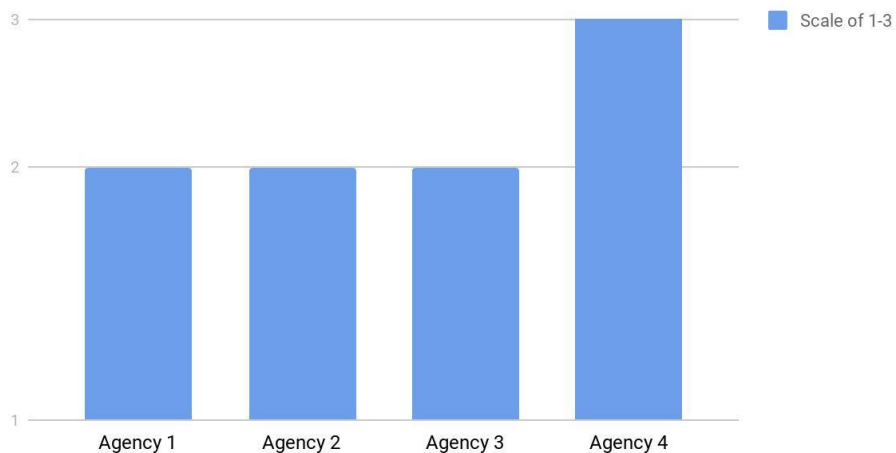
⁶Questions 18-21 in Appendix Two

Overall, how satisfied were you with Hope’s Harvest RI’s food safety practices?



3. How important is it that Hope’s Harvest RI have a comprehensive food safety plan on file, which is available to your agency upon request?
 (On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being not important and 3 being very important)

How important is it that Hope’s Harvest RI have a comprehensive food safety plan on file, which is available to your agency upon



4. Are there ways could we improve our food safety practices to meet the needs of your agency?

For this question, both Agency 1 and Agency 4 left the space blank while Agency 3 responded with a definite “no”. Only Agency 2 mentioned the value in it saying, “In general, our food safety standards for whole produce are not as restrictive as for perishable foods that need to be refrigerated. However, the safety of our guests is a priority and we would appreciate knowing your food safety policies and procedures.”

Given this information it is clear to see that while, maybe not entirely necessary at this point, the food safety manual is a good way for hunger relief agencies to feel secure in the quality of the produce coming from HHRI. Since all agencies regard food safety as a top priority it is safe to say that having the manual definitely doesn't hurt the organization and it is possible that as Hope's Harvest RI grows, it will become increasingly relevant as risk increases.

Conclusion

In my world, food insecurity and food waste are hidden problems. So hidden, in fact, that even after living in South Africa, where over half the population is food insecure, and attending two years at culinary school I was still largely unaware of the issues that many food insecure people face and the reason behind this insecurity. After gaining some understanding on the global food system and its impact on consumers and even larger impact on the powerless, the two issues of food insecurity and food waste come out from the shadows; but the problem seems too big to face and corporations are too powerful to take on in a fight against hunger.

Which is why being able to witness and understand the work of someone like Eva Agudelo, the founder of Hope's Harvest RI, who fearlessly tackles those problems is inspiring. Unfortunately because of the season and due to the season, I was unable to attend a gleaning trip to get a real feel for the work that is being done. I was grateful for the opportunity to help provide a food safety manual for HHRI in order to provide a document that outlines HHRI's food safety protocol. This was a project that proved to be difficult for me. I did what I could to provide a comprehensive and detailed food safety manual that outlines the key safety factors for

a gleaning project, but in the end I felt that I lacked the experience and perspective needed to give Eva the document that she had hoped for. This has been a great learning experience for me. I have learned the value of time, activism and many other things that I take for granted.

A few times, during my time working on this project, I tabled at FFRI's wintertime market. I was tasked with reaching out to attendees and encouraging them to sign up for the email list that would provide them with information about HHRI and their upcoming events. I learned how important it is to be assertive, and start a conversation about a topic that many people are unaware of, just like I was. Learning to approach and converse with strangers is a daunting task for me so getting over that was essential for outreach.

Since a lot of the work was self-directed, I had to make sure that I was sticking to a schedule and personal deadlines. Being proactive is something I had to work on as I am prone to procrastination, but having someone dependent on my work and feeling like my work had a purpose was a huge motivating factor. While I don't think my talents lie in food safety regulation, I found a passion for this line of work. I have a newfound respect for people who dedicate their time and efforts to helping others and doing their part in rectifying a broken system no matter how small it may seem. Hopefully my small contribution to this incredible organization will help in some way.

Appendix One

Hope's Harvest RI Food Safety Manual

Version 1 - Spring 2019 (DRAFT)



HOPE'S HARVEST RI



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Introduction - Hope's Harvest RI and Food Safety

Hope's Harvest RI (HHRI) mobilizes volunteers to rescue food from farms in RI, CT, and MA that would otherwise go to waste and distributes it to hunger relief agencies in Rhode Island. Hope's Harvest RI started gleaning from farms in 2018 and is fiscally sponsored by Farm Fresh Rhode Island, a registered 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Gleaning addresses the issues of food waste and hunger within our community and strengthens our local food system by making communities less dependent on foods shipped from far away. Hope's Harvest RI makes nutritious, locally grown food available to those in the community that would normally not have access to these products.

Hope's Harvest RI prioritizes food safety, which is a crucial part of operating effectively. By ensuring that the food we are providing to agencies meets food safety requirements, we can safely provide top quality produce to those in need. This manual outlines our policies and procedures for meeting all standards, requirements and regulations set forth by local, state and federal agencies.

Food Safety Rules and Regulations

Importance of Food Safety

Hope's Harvest RI makes food that was previously inaccessible available to those in need. It is of the utmost importance that proper food safety practices are followed in order to prevent illness and ensure that those receiving foods provided by HHRI are getting a high quality and healthy product. When a person dealing with food insecurity becomes ill from consuming unsafe foods it can have a big impact on their lives. Healthcare is costly so adequate treatment for foodborne illness may be an expense they cannot afford and many people cannot afford to take time off work to recover from illness. Ensuring the safety of the produce that will be consumed by the recipient aids in preventing such things from happening.

RI Department of Health Food Regulation

In addition to the FDA food code, the Rhode Island department of health (RIDOH) has developed their own Food regulation to further protect the health of Rhode Island residents. These regulations set forth by the Department of Health help to create a more comprehensive plan for disease and illness prevention. The three priorities of RIDOH focus on addressing the

environmental and societal determinants of health, access to health services and promoting health equity.

2017 FDA Food Code

The FDA Food Code was developed as a means of protecting the public from illness that can be caused by consuming or being exposed to compromised, contaminated or hazardous foods. These practices are adopted by local, state and federal agencies to ensure that safe practices are implemented for the protection of the general public. Compliance with Food Law in the FDA Food Code outlines the importance of safely sourcing food products as a primary line of defense against the contamination of food products.

By complying with FDA regulations⁷ Hope's Harvest RI is able to ensure safest practices when sourcing, harvesting, storing and preparing produce thus ensuring a safe food product. This is important in considering the health and safety of those who will receive these donations and consume the produce donated by HHRI to avoid any individuals becoming ill from consuming unsafe foods.

Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act

Hope's Harvest Rhode Island is able to operate due to Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act⁸. This law allows Hope's Harvest to donate food to hunger relief agencies with the intent of providing fresh, wholesome and nutritious foods to those without steady access to such foods. In the event that the produce that was believed to be safe, proves to be harmful, HHRI will not be subject to civil or criminal liability as long as the organization demonstrates good faith and exhibits no gross negligence or intentional misconduct when harvesting, transporting, storing and donating food.

Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

The goal of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)⁹ is to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to food safety. The FDA has implemented FSMA and its seven rules to protect the food supply chain and all those who depend on it from contamination by foodborne illness and

⁷ More information on the FDA food code can be found here: <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/retailfoodprotection/foodcode/default.htm>

⁸ More details about the Bill Emerson law can be found at the following website: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/partners/become-a-product-partner/food-partners> ⁹ More information on the Food Safety Modernization Act can be found at: <https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/>

disease. The seven rules are designed to clearly state actions that are required by food growers and producers to prevent the contamination of their products.

This may be cause for some concern with local farmers and food processors since attempting to adhere to the rules of the Food Safety Modernization Act can be costly and the inability to afford to keep up with increased standards for acceptable safety and sanitation procedures may discourage farmers from working with Hope's Harvest RI.

In order to better help those that will be affected by FSMA, the FDA and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), has funded a network of governments, industry, and academia for the development and delivery of training individuals on the accurate way to implement this act. Staff at Hope's Harvest attend all relevant training on FSMA as part of the food safety plan to ensure knowledge of and adherence to all regulation that applies to the operation of the organization and providing a safe food product.

The rules that apply to gleaning are as follows:

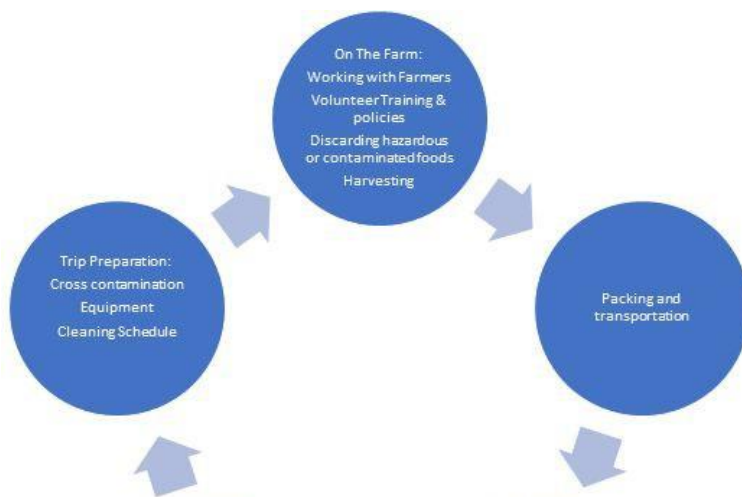
1. Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption (Produce Safety Rule)

Gleaning trips involve volunteers harvesting produce fit for human consumption. Standards for harvested produce is elaborated upon in the 'Food Sourcing' section of this manual.

2. Sanitary Transportation of Human and Animal Food (Sanitary Transportation)

Unprocessed food products are transported from the farm to the agencies for distribution. Sanitary transportation is necessary to protect the produce and the recipient. Information on the cleanliness of all equipment and vehicles is found under 'Equipment' further along in the manual

Program Workflow Overview



Trip Preparation

Cross-contamination

It is critical to avoid cross-contamination during harvesting, delivery and storage to ensure the safety of the farmers, those that share storage and refrigeration space, and the food banks and soup kitchens that will be receiving the donations. Cross contamination is a primary cause of foodborne illnesses. Following specific safety practices helps to minimize the spread of these and other microorganisms. Avoiding cross-contamination is simple, but requires all individuals to pay careful attention to detail.

Equipment

All equipment used for gleaning must be adequately cleaned to avoid the possibility of harmful cross-contamination of bacteria. Hope's Harvest RI adheres to a strict cleaning schedule to maintain the quality of the produce that is being distributed among agencies that help to alleviate food insecurity. The facilities at Farm Fresh RI provide the supplies needed to clean the equipment used by HHRI for outings.

- Trucks and other vehicles used are swept to clear debris, dirt and plant matter after each outing preventing the spread of foreign matter from location to location. As an added safety measure, no produce comes into contact with the floor of the truck
- gloves used by volunteers are washed and dried between every trip to ensure cleanliness
- Totes are cleared of any plant matter, rinsed and sanitized at Farm Fresh RI facilities after each outing to ensure the safety of the produce as it travels from the farm to its final destination
- Dirt and debris are cleaned from the equipment and tools used in the gleaning process

On The Farm

Working with farmers around their food safety practices

In order to provide a good quality product to those who need it, the product must come from a safe and reliable source. It is not enough to implement food safety practices if the food is not safely produced. A safe source is one that complies with food safety regulations and both FDA and RIDOH food code. A safe food source must also have a system of record keeping and a way

to trace certain products to each farm and the day it was harvested. If the safety of the food has been compromised, farmers should notify all recipients of their crops.

Volunteer Training

The viability of crops is determined by a visual and tactile inspection that volunteers are trained to do on-site with a visual demonstration of acceptable and unacceptable products. Final say is given to the site supervisor. If produce is found to be up to the standards of HHRI and the hunger relief agencies, it is packed and distributed. If the product is not up to standard, it is disposed of. Volunteers are also trained, on site, to safely operate the various types of equipment needed to complete certain tasks. The safe and responsible operation of harvesting equipment ensures the safety of the product being harvested by preventing any harm or injury to the crop and to the individual responsible for harvesting it.

A safe and viable food product is one that:

1. Has not been in contact with the ground (unless otherwise specified)
2. Is firm with no bruising or abnormal softness
3. Has not been damaged by insects and/or other pests
4. Is free of mold, fungus and other visible microorganisms

Volunteer policies

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves appropriately for the health and safety of the farmers, hunger relief agencies, their recipients, and for all volunteers - it is important that all policies are understood and followed. Volunteers agree to these terms when they register for a gleaning trip online¹⁰.

Discarding hazardous or contaminated foods

If there is any hesitation on the safety of a product, it is best to be safe rather than sorry. According to Rhode Island Food Code (216-RICR-50-10-1)¹¹, food that is or appears to be unsafe must be discarded. A thorough, on-site, examination of the product is necessary to ensure whether or not the product is viable. Volunteers and staff should also be aware of how they might

¹⁰For a detailed description of the expectations of volunteers visit:

<https://hopesharvest.org/bringing-local-bounty-to-people-in-need/volunteers-glean-food/volunteer-information/>

¹¹ More information on Rhode Island food code can be found here:

<https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/216-50-10-1>

impact the safety of the product. If produce comes into contact with bodily fluids, it must be discarded. It is important to pay attention to possible exposure to open wounds and nasal/oral discharges as this exposure will contaminate the food product and render it unsafe for consumption. It is best for volunteers to seek the opinion of the project supervisor when in doubt about the viability of a food product.

Harvesting

Harvesting procedures vary from crop to crop and further instruction by the site supervisor will be necessary upon the day depending on what the farmer has in supply. However, there are basic procedures to follow when harvesting any crop to ensure the safety of the produce and the end consumer and reduce the risk of compromising the quality of the crop:

1. All those participating in the harvest should wash hands before and after harvesting on site. This is made available by the Hope's Harvest RI site supervisor. Cross contamination is a serious threat and something that must be considered throughout every step of the gleaning process.
2. Make sure bins are clear of dirt and debris
3. Be able to discern healthy produce from potentially hazardous/diseased/contaminated produce.
4. Understand how to safely operate tools and equipment. If you are unsure of how to safely operate equipment, seek further instruction from the site supervisor.
5. No processing or washing of produce takes place during outings in order to lessen the possibility of produce becoming contaminated.

Packing and Transportation

Packing

In the event that Hope's Harvest must store their produce, FFRI has multiple coolers that maintain different temperatures in order to accommodate the requirements for safely various products. Refrigerators and freezers must be kept clean and in good working condition. In order to comply with federal regulation:

1. Refrigerators are kept at the correct temperatures.
2. Refrigerators are not filled beyond capacity. Doors must close and seal and there is sufficient air circulation to keep produce at the correct temperature.
3. Any product that becomes discolored, odorous, or looks to be contaminated and/or hazardous is discarded.

Transportation

The transportation of harvested produce is another factor to consider when thinking about food safety. When transporting food products there are some key elements that Hope's Harvest RI takes into consideration.

1. The interior of the vehicles used in the gleaning process are clean and clear of dirt and debris
2. Produce is not to come into contact with the floor or walls of the vehicle
3. Produce bins are stored securely to avoid tipping and damage during transportation
4. Adequate temperature control of the vehicle is necessary for produce that is time and temperature sensitive

Delivery

Hope's Harvest RI delivers all donated and gleaned produce to hunger relief agencies that are willing and able to accept them. Some deliveries can be time sensitive for a number of reasons. Communication between agencies and HHRI is necessary to ensure the timely delivery of produce. FFRI allows HHRI to use their trucks for the transportation if necessary. The facilities and vehicles are kept clean in accordance with FFRI Food Safety practices.

Return to Site/Cleanup

Record keeping and Traceability

Another essential safety practice is making sure to keep an accurate record of all pickups and deliveries to be able to trace any issues back to a certain date and specific place in the event that, despite the measures taken to avoid it, a lapse in food safety has occurred. Staff at Hope's Harvest RI are responsible for collecting and accurately recording this data. Data is recorded after each trip and delivery.

Traceability is essential for the organization and the agencies that are receiving donations so that if any incident were to arise, the issue can be rectified efficiently and effectively. Hope's Harvest RI documents and logs the location, date and time of each pick-up as well as the product and weight of the pick up on a spreadsheet¹², where entries are time stamped and have paper

¹²https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QIc2CqO_yWhH4meUwQxEdWvtNrsLz9-HavMb4vnsguc/edit?usp=sharing

backups, and makes note of which organization receives each product to ensure accountability and safety.

Appendix Two

Hope's Harvest RI - Partner Agency Survey - 2018 Growing Season

Thank you for your partnership in our first year of operation. With your participation, we distributed 36,000 lbs. of fresh, healthy, local food to people in need!

We are already planning for next season and would greatly appreciate feedback and suggestions based on your experiences with Hope's Harvest in 2018. We are committed to learning and growing from your input, while continuing to provide a service that meets your needs.

Please complete this survey at your earliest convenience, and contact Eva at eva@hopesharvest.org, 401-680-0281 with questions, comments, or to provide feedback in person/over the phone instead. Thanks for everything you do!

Agency Name

Your answer

Name and title of person completing this survey

Your answer

Approximately how many unique individuals do you serve per month?

Your answer

Did deliveries from Hope's Harvest RI increase your guests' access to fruits and vegetables?

Your answer

Overall, how satisfied were you with the timing of your deliveries?

Not at all satisfied 1

2

3

Very satisfied

How could we improve the timing of deliveries?

Your answer

Overall, how satisfied were you with the quality of produce you received?

Not at all satisfied

1

2

3

Very satisfied

What specific areas of produce quality could use improvement?

Your answer

Overall, how satisfied were you with the variety of produce you received?

Not at all satisfied

1

2

3

Very satisfied

In what ways could we improve the variety of produce you receive? What would you like to see more/less of?

Your answer

Overall, how satisfied were you with how your produce was packed (totes, bags, etc.) when delivered?

Not at all satisfied

1

2

3

Very satisfied

How could we improve our produce packing?

Your answer

Overall, how satisfied were you and your staff with communication from Hope's Harvest RI regarding deliveries and program logistics?

Not at all satisfied

1

2

3

Very satisfied

How could we improve our communication with you/your staff?

Your answer

Hope's Harvest RI wants to ensure that our services are increasing access to healthy food for your guests. We would like to gather data and stories about if and how this is happening for the purposes of seeking additional resources to support our work and for sharing our successes with potential volunteers and other stakeholders. As the main point of contact with the end recipients of the product we distribute, your partnership in these efforts is indispensable. However, we know your time is limited and guests' can be even more so. We appreciate any support in this area that you're able to provide. Any other suggestions, thoughts, or approaches to capturing this information are welcome as well.

Are you willing/able to help administer a 3-5 question survey to your guests about how their access to produce has improved as a result of Hope's Harvest RI's deliveries?

Yes No

Maybe

Other:

Are you willing/able to help set up a short (10-15 min) interview with a guest of your agency who has benefitted from Hope's Harvest RI's deliveries?

Yes No

Maybe

Other:

What would you consider a fair per lb. service fee - that your organization could easily absorb - to help Hope's Harvest RI cover the cost of transporting produce to your agency? (please assume you will receive at least 50 percent more produce from Hope's Harvest RI in 2019 than you did in 2018)

Your answer

How important is it for your agency to maintain strict food safety standards?

Not at all important

1

2

3

Very important

Overall, how satisfied were you with Hope's Harvest RI's food safety practices?

Not at all satisfied

1

2

3

Very satisfied

How important is it that Hope's Harvest RI have a comprehensive food safety plan on file, which is available to your agency upon request?

Not at all important

1

2

3

Very important

Are there ways could we improve our food safety practices to meet the needs of your agency?

Your answer

If you'd like, please provide any additional feedback you have about your experience of working with Hope's Harvest RI in 2018, and/or suggestions for how we can improve in 2019:

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