



# Good Shepherd Food-Bank

*Feeding Maine's Hungry*

## Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2014 – 2016

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## Acknowledgements

Completion of Good Shepherd Food Bank's Strategic Plan FY 2014 – 2016 would not have been possible without the hard work of dozens of staff, board members and community stakeholders.

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## *Executive Summary*

### History

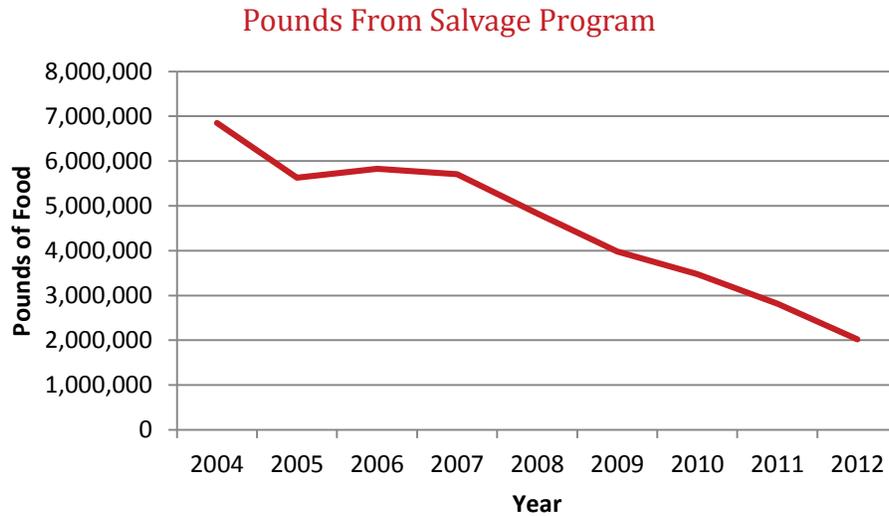
Good Shepherd Food Bank was started in 1981 by JoAnn Pike, during a time period when most food banks around the country were formed. This was the result of cuts in the government safety net for food assistance (most notably food stamps and child nutrition programs such as the school lunch program) were creating a growing problem of food insecurity. At the same time, the grocery industry was consolidating; independent grocers were being replaced with large, regional chains like Hannaford. These retailers centralized inventory purchasing and warehousing and built distribution centers from which they would direct inventory to stores and reclaim unwanted inventory. This unwanted inventory was usually thrown away, at a cost to the retailer. Community leaders like JoAnn Pike saw how much food was being wasted. There was an obvious solution – connect with the food retailers, ask for their surplus food (most of which was still quality food), and distribute this salvaged food to people in need.

The movement took off and food banks around the country grew, thrived, and served their mission. Many of these food banks, like Good Shepherd Food Bank, were started by people who were driven to this work by their faith and the fundamental belief that no one should go hungry. That underlying passion is still what drives this organization today.

For the next twenty years, Good Shepherd Food Bank grew to become the largest hunger relief organization serving the entire state, thanks to its partnership with Hannaford and their shared commitment. As many as seven to eight Hannaford tractor trailer trucks each week delivered food to the Food Bank. Staff and volunteers would receive, inspect, and warehouse the food; food pantries would come to the Food Bank to shop for food and pay a shared maintenance fee to cover the overhead costs of the Food Bank. For the first twenty years or so, this single revenue stream covered all the costs of the organization. As recently as 2004, the Food Bank's budget was \$1.6 million and more than half of that was covered by the shared maintenance fee which averaged \$0.15/pound.

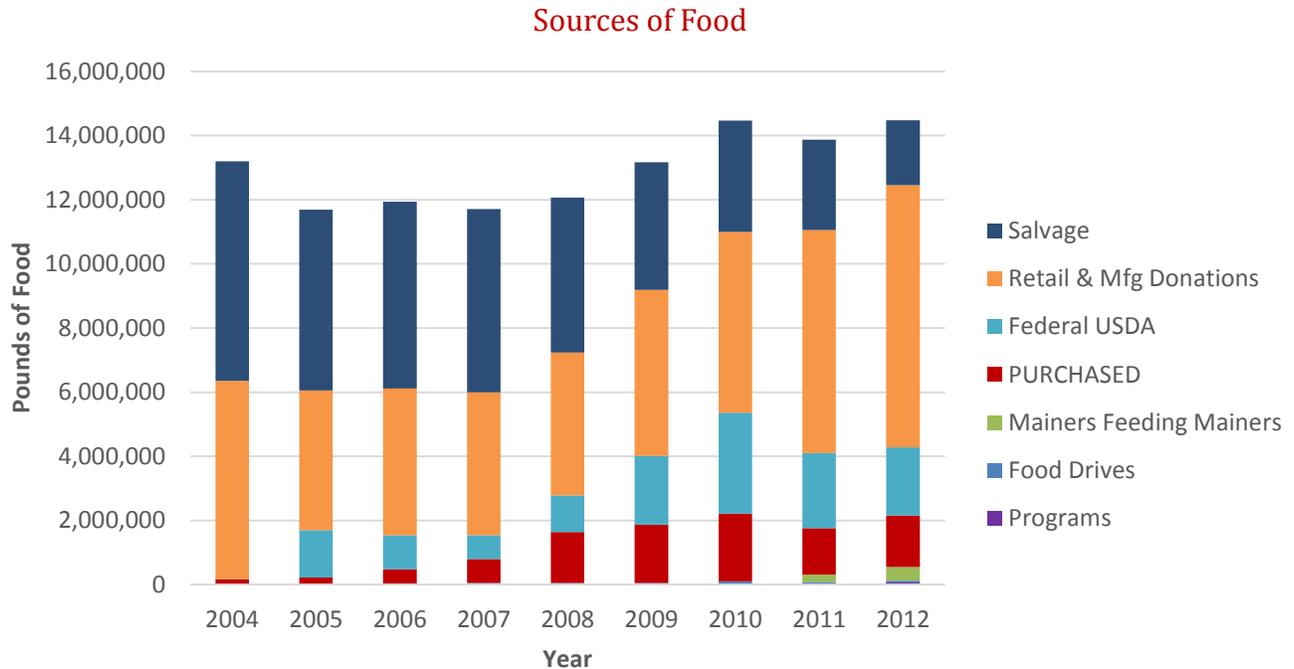
### Changes in Food Sourcing Increases Cost

But times have changed. With the rapid advancement in inventory technology, supermarkets now can order and receive items exactly as they run out of the product. This has resulted in less and less salvaged food available for food pantries. The Food Bank now averages one or two trucks each week with salvage product and it is one of the last food banks in the country to receive any such food deliveries. Since 2004 (the earliest data available), pounds received from the Hannaford salvage program has declined 70 percent.

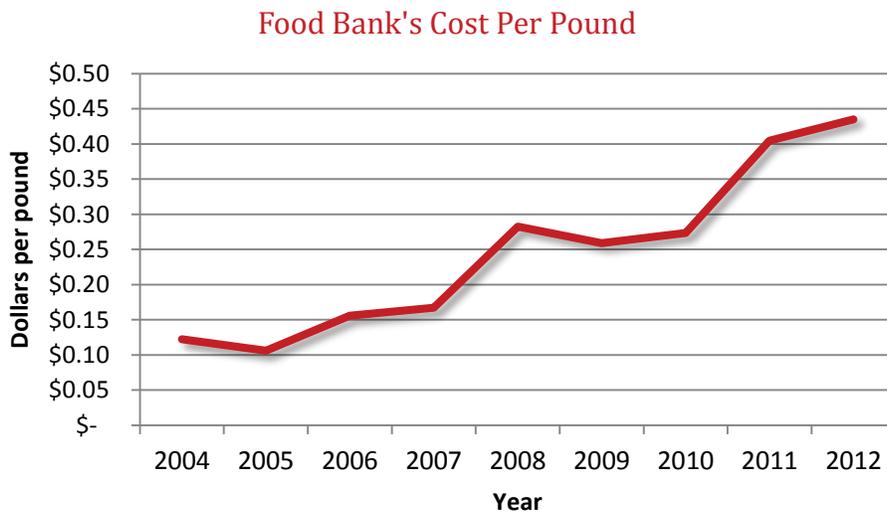


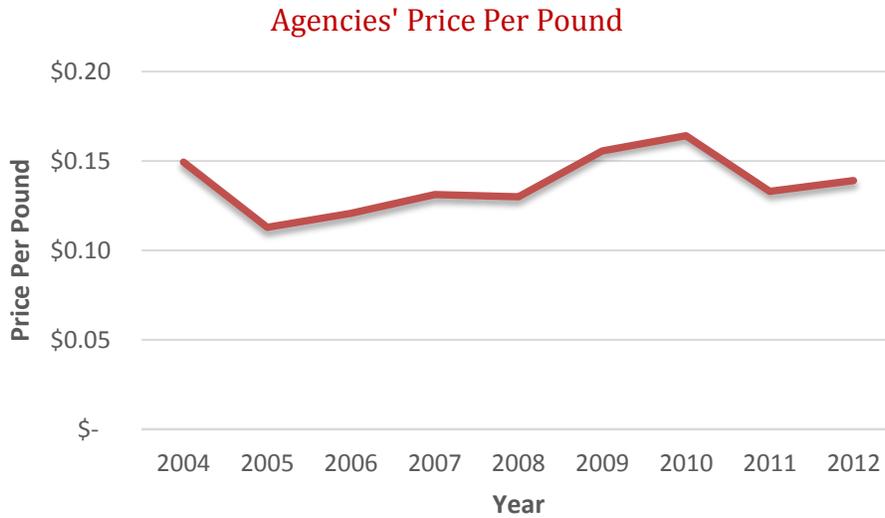
In response, Good Shepherd Food Bank, like all our food bank partners across the country, now employs several strategies for getting food. Donated food from retail stores still makes up the largest source of food, but the model has changed (see chart on page 3). Retailers do not have enough food to warrant their delivery to us, therefore the Food Bank must drive to retail stores to pick up whatever they have on-hand. Not only has the quantity of donated food declined, but the quality has as well. The Food Bank does not receive enough “staples” that food pantries rely on such as canned fruits and vegetables, canned soup, and shelf stable protein such as tuna fish and peanut butter. In response, the Food Bank uses its purchasing power to buy food at reduced prices and then sells that food to the pantries at much lower prices than what they can get at retail; however even the reduced price is still higher than many pantries can afford.

In 2005, the Food Bank began administering the USDA food programs, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and The Commodity Surplus Food Program (CSFP). These federally funded programs were created to provide food to those in need while supporting key agriculture sectors. Utilizing GSFb’s warehousing infrastructure and existing network of partner agencies, the USDA is able to efficiently distribute food without having to create its own distribution channel. The volume from this program is dependent on many factors all outside the Food Bank’s control including commodity prices, national poverty data, and political appetite.



These new strategies have proven successful and the Food Bank sources as much food as it ever has before. However, these new strategies cost significantly more than a truck pulling up directly to our warehouse door. The Food Bank’s total cost to secure each pound has risen 255 percent since 2004 (the earliest data available). In response, the Food Bank increased its fundraising programs such that in 2012, agency fees represented only 29 percent of total revenue, despite fees charged holding relatively steady at \$0.14/pound.





## Emphasis on Equity and Nutrition

In addition to procuring more food, the Food Bank also began to recognize the need to ensure equitable distribution. This means that regardless of where you live in Maine, if you are in need, you should have the same access to food. The data below highlights that the Food Bank is clearly not equitably serving the state. Currently, people that live closest to the Food Bank have better access to food and those living in the more rural counties are at a disadvantage.

	<b>TOTAL POUNDS DISTRIBUTED IN PAST 12 MOS.</b>	<b>2010 PERSONS IN POVERTY</b>	<b>PPIP*</b>
ANDROSCOGGIN	2,011,579	14,772	136
AROOSTOOK	739,863	10,927	68
CUMBERLAND	2,341,554	28,399	82
FRANKLIN	296,988	4,515	66
HANCOCK	537,755	6,059	89
KENNEBEC	1,196,405	14,851	81
KNOX	263,085	4,931	53
LINCOLN	178,436	3,712	48
OXFORD	1,048,243	7,499	140
PENOBSCOT	1,430,496	22,771	63
PISCATAQUIS	300,357	2,834	106
SAGadahoc	325,169	3,139	104
SOMERSET	400,963	9,477	42
WALDO	1,038,308	5,577	186

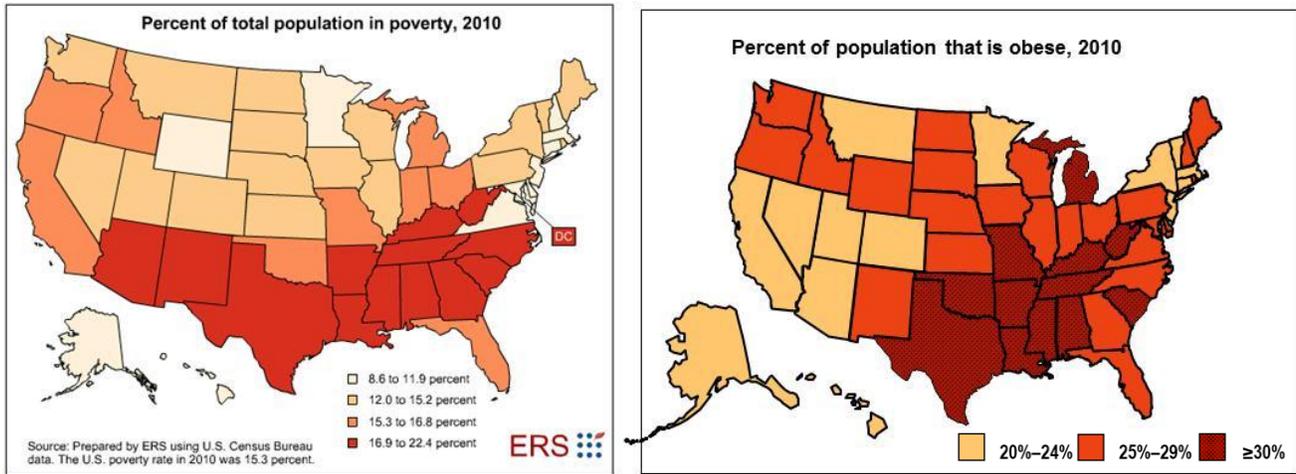
WASHINGTON	474,119	6,412	74
YORK	<u>1,184,028</u>	<u>16,483</u>	<u>72</u>
<b>GRAND TOTALS:</b>	<b>13,816,821</b>	<b>162,358</b>	<b>85</b>

\*PPIP: Pounds per person in poverty – the amount of pounds of food GSFB distributed to the county per number of people living in poverty in the county.

Part of this problem is pure logistics – it costs more money and is more difficult to move food longer distances. Another issue is food pantry capacity – communities that support their food pantries with volunteers and funds are more successful at accessing food. And lastly, the Food Bank is realizing that the traditional food pantry model is not effective at reaching all people in need, most notably children whose parents are not willing or able to go to a food pantry.

In response to these challenges, the Food Bank started programs to improve equity in food distribution and reach Maine’s most vulnerable citizens. In 2008, the Food Mobile program began bringing 6,000 – 7,000 pounds of food to targeted areas where need has surpassed the capacity of the food pantry. In 2011, the Food Bank started its Back Pack program that provides food over the weekend for children who rely on the school lunch program during the week for a regular, nutritious meal. Similarly, in 2012, the Food Bank became a site sponsor for the federal Summer Food Program that provides lunches in the summer for children who rely on the school lunch program. And in 2012, GSFB launched its first School Pantry at Portland High School for students in need. But all of these programs come at a cost and the Food Bank has recognized that it needs to be conscious of identifying the most cost effective ways to serve people in need.

Another trend impacting the Food Bank is the recognition that hunger and obesity are now an inter-related problem. The reason is simple: when you have limited resources to spend on food and you don’t know when you’ll have more money to spend, you buy as much food as you can as inexpensively as you can. All too often this leads to purchases of quick carbohydrates – white bread, pasta, ramen noodles, and soda – which are calorie-dense and void of nutrients, leaving us with a generation of people who are overweight and undernourished. Not surprisingly then, these people also have higher rates of type II diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Poor health causes people to miss work, not be able to care for their children, have less money to spend on basic necessities because their health care costs are so high. All these factors contribute to the continuing vicious cycle of poverty.



Good Shepherd Food Bank, like most all food banks across the country, recognizes the need to focus on ensuring that people in need don’t just get access to food, but access to the nutritious food they need to thrive. Most people in need in the United States don’t lack access to calories; they lack access to proper nutrition. Feeding America (the national umbrella organization for food banks) now organizes produce purchases through large scale growers. However, Good Shepherd Food Bank has been unable to take advantage of this system because the transportation charges make the purchases cost prohibitive. Therefore, in 2009, the Food Bank started its Mainers Feeding Mainers program which connects low income families with locally grown produce. The Food Bank secures purchases ahead of the growing season, insuring a good price while also supporting local farmers, some of whom are also food pantry clients.

A barrier in getting clients to use the healthier food is that they oftentimes don’t know how to cook it. Therefore the Food Bank launched its Cooking Matters program in 2010 which teaches families how to cook healthy food on a limited budget. This program also provides healthy recipes and other resources to the food pantries to encourage more consumption of healthier foods.

## An Ever Growing Need

Despite all the innovation in programs, and despite the fact that the Food Bank is securing more food than ever before, the problem of hunger persists and, in fact, continues to grow. Since 2005, the number of people facing food insecurity in Maine has grown 50 percent.<sup>1</sup> This significant increase in demand has been particularly felt by our partner agencies, which were already operating on scarce budgets. The size of the problem sheds light on the fact that the food banking system alone cannot solve hunger. Food banks rely on government programs to do their part and the food banks fill the

<sup>1</sup> USDA Economic Research Service, “Household Food Security in the United States in 2011.”

gap. These government programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, better known as “food stamps”), Women Infants and Children Program (WIC), Child Nutrition Programs (school breakfast, school lunch, and summer food), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the previously mentioned USDA programs, CSFP and TEFAP. Rather than be seen as an alternative to government supported assistance, food banks are realizing that they are partners with these programs and should work to encourage eligible clients to utilize the government programs when necessary.

In addition, food banks can play a role in ensuring that these vital programs are maintained. Indeed, it is in their interest to make sure the government safety net remains intact because when programs are cut, the need doesn’t go away. Reducing government assistance merely shifts the need from federal dollars to the food banks and their partner agencies. Federal nutrition programs provide approximately \$97 billion worth of food to low-income citizens; all the food banks in the country provide \$4 billion.<sup>2</sup> Even a 5 percent cut to these programs would represent a 100 percent increase onto the food banking system.

## A Changing Business Model

The final trend impacting Food Banks is the growth in perishable food donations. While non-perishable salvaged food continues to decline, grocery stores are growing their “perimeter” categories – deli, produce, seafood, and meat. Traditionally, these product categories continued to be thrown away because food banks were not equipped to handle perishable food and these categories did not represent large quantities. However, with the growth in consumer demand for a wider variety of these products and the fact that grocery stores earn higher margins on the categories, the amount of perishable food available for donation has grown significantly.

Grocery stores are under pressure to cut costs as well as to be better stewards of the environment and their communities; this has led to an industry-wide push for stores to be “zero waste.” This trend represents a significant opportunity for the Food Bank to source more food and, more importantly, more nutritious food as the perimeter categories are often the most nutritious. However, the Food Bank’s infrastructure was built on housing non-perishable food. Perishable food needs to be kept cold and has a very short shelf life. The Food Bank must adapt its processes and infrastructure to be able to access and quickly turn-around perishable food.

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<sup>2</sup> Bread for the World, “Fact Sheet: Churches and Hunger.”

## Good Shepherd Food Bank's Response

The Food Bank is facing multiple trends impacting its mission including:

- Decreasing salvaged food from the Food Bank's historical, primary donor
- Changing food sourcing model has increased costs
- Focus on equitable distribution
- Focus on nutritious food
- Increasing need
- Increasing availability of perishable food donations

In response, the Food Bank began a strategic planning process in May 2012. The process began with a committee comprised of board members and staff. The committee first collected input from staff and stakeholders to determine the core values of Good Shepherd Food Bank that underlie all of our work.

The committee presented the following as core values:

- **Collaboration:** We value all our partners in the fight to end hunger, knowing that we are stronger together.
- **Innovation & creativity:** We strive to constantly evolve and evaluate, so we may implement the most effective strategies to achieve our mission.
- **Compassion & respect:** We value and hold in high regard our staff, our volunteers, our partners, our donors, and most importantly, the people in need for whom we work.
- **Integrity:** We recognize that we are stewards of others' gifts. We take this responsibility seriously and will conduct all business with fairness and transparency.
- **Passion:** We do this work with a shared passion based on our various personal and religious beliefs that no one should face the day hungry.

The committee then reviewed several sources of information including: financial results, food donations and distribution figures, staff input, and peer benchmarking and best practices. In September, the committee recommended the following be the Food Bank's strategic objectives in order to address the trends above:

- Safely source and distribute nutritious food to people in need: We will continually explore and implement strategies for sourcing and distributing nutritious food in the safest, most cost effective and equitable way and in increasing quantities, at least equal to the need for hunger relief in Maine.

- Cultivate programs that reduce food insecurity: We will strive to identify solutions that target the root causes of hunger. Specifically, we will support programs that work toward promoting health and food literacy, and building community capacity so that more people are able to consistently access the nutritious food they need to lead healthy, productive lives.
- Advocate on behalf of people living with food insecurity: We will engage with local, state, and federal lawmakers to educate them about hunger in Maine, using information based soundly in evidence and data to promote legislative solutions to fight hunger. In addition, we will mobilize our network of partner agencies and the residents of Maine on behalf of our mission.
- Develop and implement a sustainable business model: We will develop a disciplined and robust business model that works toward long term revenue growth, prudent cost management, and adequate facilities and technology to ensure that we have the infrastructure necessary to sustainably support the mission now and in the future.
- Become a preferred organization in Maine's nonprofit sector: We will foster a culture of excellence, provide a fun and rewarding experience, and support the personal and professional growth of our people so that we are a preferred nonprofit organization for which to work, volunteer and support.

Six committees comprised of board members and staff were then formed (one for each objective; the first objective was divided between “sourcing food” and “distributing food”). Each committee was charged with identifying the key priorities needed to execute the objective and then build action plans for each priority.

## Strategies Objectives and Key Priorities

### Safely Source Nutritious Food to People in Need

**Priority 1:** Develop Nutrition Policy to guide decisions on donated food, purchased food, and program food choices.

**Priority 2:** Develop an annual purchasing plan.

**Priority 3:** Develop sourcing decision making process to ensure cost effective supply of nutritious food.

**Priority 4:** Build and enhance retail donor relationships to maximize donation opportunity.

**Priority 5:** Develop food sourcing goals and strategies by each channel.

**Priority 6:** Research food processing opportunities

**Priority 7:** Develop food safety training program.

### Safely Distribute Nutritious Food to People in Need

**Priority 1:** Optimize ordering process to ensure efficient, accurate delivery of more nutritious food.

**Priority 2:** Optimize receiving process so that food is received safely, quickly, and accurately.

**Priority 3:** Optimize inspection process to insure safety, minimize handling of food, and ensure an efficient flow of nutritious food is available.

**Priority 4:** Build agency capacity to move larger quantities of fresh and non-perishable, nutritious food to clients.

**Priority 5:** Perform needs assessment in North-East region of the state and analyze current capacity of Brewer warehouse to ensure safe and efficient food distribution.

**Priority 6:** Develop distribution decision making process to ensure equitable distribution of nutritious food throughout the state.

**Priority 7:** Develop emergency response capability.

## Cultivate Programs that Reduce Food Insecurity

**Priority 1:** Define program goals and integrate into overall Food Bank strategy.

**Priority 2:** Establish a process for adding/keeping a program.

**Priority 3:** Diversify program funding revenue streams.

**Priority 4:** Increase access to programs to every corner of the state.

**Priority 5:** Value of programs is proven and understood by all GSFB staff.

**Priority 6:** Programs have adequate and integrated staff to meet the size/need of the program.

Separate action plans have been created for each of the following programs: Child Hunger Programs (Back Pack, School Pantry, Summer Food Service, and Kids Café), Cooking Matters, and the Food Mobile.

## Advocate on Behalf of People Living with Food Insecurity

**Priority 1:** Create and implement a plan for collecting service data from our network partners on an annual basis.

**Priority 2:** Create and maintain a food insecurity resource center available to the public.

**Priority 3:** Create and maintain relationships with key state elected officials and staff.

**Priority 4:** Engage with peer organizations in Maine who are currently active in advocacy.

**Priority 5:** Create and maintain relationships with key federal elected officials and staff.

**Priority 6:** Leverage our statewide network of partner agencies to become advocates and share our message.

**Priority 7:** Finalize policies regarding when and how we speak about policy issues relating to hunger.

## Develop and Implement a Sustainable Business Model

**Priority 1:** Create a long-term Development strategy.

**Priority 2:** Develop a disciplined, data focused process for forecasting and tracking organizational costs.

**Priority 3:** Create a comprehensive Technology strategy.

**Priority 4:** Develop a Risk Management strategy to mitigate or reduce organizational exposure in key areas.

## Become a Preferred Organization in the Non-profit Sector

**Priority 1:** Create a culture of engagement and continuous improvement.

**Priority 2:** Reignite the volunteer program by designing a program that connects multiple types of volunteers with meaningful projects.

**Priority 3:** Create communication channels and opportunities for sharing among different stakeholders.

**Priority 4:** Develop best practices to encourage a healthy, fun, and rewarding work place.