



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Teach Healthy Cooking and Eating on a Budget



The Challenge



In 2011, over 50 million Americans were food insecure, meaning they had limited access to food because of household-level economic and social conditions. Information about affordable meal options and cooking techniques can stretch a dollar and help diminish the food insecurity felt by many Americans.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting



Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **Food Insecure:** A household is food insecure when consistent access to food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times over the course of a year.
- **SNAP:** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.



- **Gleaning:** The collection of crops, either from a farmer’s field that has already been harvested (gleaners can partner to harvest the leftovers) or from fields that are not economically profitable to harvest due to low market prices.

Identify a Location

Connect with a local food pantry or food bank that may host weekly community dinners and ask if you can run a class on MLK Day or during that week. Use [Feeding America’s Food Bank Locator \(http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx\)](http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx) to find information about a food bank near you.

Women with infants or children could be greatly impacted by a healthy eating and cooking class that teaches them how to make affordable, nutritious meals. Connect with centers that serve this group such as neighborhood associations, local non-profits, churches, and [WIC \(Women, Infants, and Children\) State Agencies \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/statealpha.htm\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/statealpha.htm) to find out if you can host cooking classes at a center near you.

Browse Helpful Resources

- [Feeding America’s Food Bank Locator \(http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx\)](http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx)
- [WIC State Agencies \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/statealpha.htm\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/statealpha.htm)
- [Cooperative Extension Office \(http://www.extension.org/category/family_caregiving_nutrition\)](http://www.extension.org/category/family_caregiving_nutrition)
- [USDA Healthy Eating on a Budget Tips \(http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-on-budget.html\)](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-on-budget.html)
- [Nutrition.gov \(http://www.nutrition.gov/\)](http://www.nutrition.gov/)
- [Let’s Move \(http://www.letsmove.gov/\)](http://www.letsmove.gov/)
 - [Eat Healthy \(http://www.letsmove.gov/eat-healthy\)](http://www.letsmove.gov/eat-healthy)
 - [Kids \(http://www.letsmove.gov/kids\)](http://www.letsmove.gov/kids)
- [USDA Gleaning Toolkit \(http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf\)](http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf)
- [Post your project \(http://mlkday.gov/serve/register.php\)](http://mlkday.gov/serve/register.php)
- [Summer Food Service Programs \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer-food-service-program-sfsp\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer-food-service-program-sfsp)
- [Create Community Gardens \(http://mlkday.gov/plan/actionguides/nourish.php\)](http://mlkday.gov/plan/actionguides/nourish.php)
- [Child Nutrition Programs \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/about-team-nutrition\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/about-team-nutrition)
- [Farmer’s Market Programs \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp)
- [Food Banks and Pantries \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/)
- [SNAP \(http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/) (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- [Spirit of Service Curriculum \(http://www.scholastic.com/MLKDay/\)](http://www.scholastic.com/MLKDay/)
 - [Grades 3-5 \(http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3757657\)](http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3757657)

- [Grades 6-8 \(http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3757658\)](http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3757658)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



Set Goals

Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can prepare to teach healthy cooking and eating in your community. Here are a few ideas for planning tasks to complete:

- Review resources (above) that can assist you in developing a curriculum and/or planning menus for the service project. Below are a few tips on planning your curriculum:
- You may want to start by talking about buying the ingredients used in preparing the meal on a budget. Let participants know the average cost of food items used in preparing the meal and the total cost of meals as well as nutritional information.
- At the end of the lesson, incorporate a community meal that brings together volunteers and participants to eat the food that they just made.
- Send home recipes, informational pamphlets on planning meals on a budget, and if possible, a cooking tool or ingredient to help your participants long after MLK Day.
- Spread the word about programs that provide food assistance throughout the year or other nutritional projects in which attendees can participate, including those listed in the resources section above.
 - Identify volunteers who already have knowledge around nutrition and shopping on a budget and use them to train others to run classes or serve as assistants.
 - Contact a higher education institution with a nutrition, cooking, or biology program in your community and ask if they might have people interested in volunteering or training volunteers about nutrition and cooking on a budget. Also try reaching out to a local chef who is active in the community who might provide his/her services.

Raise Resources for Equipment and Supplies

Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to teach health cooking and eating in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project

- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

Mange Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: promoting healthy cooking and eating in the community in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with photos or videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building partnerships with potential collaborators or sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



Assess and Reflect

Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What healthy cooking and eating resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example: If you planned a one-day health cooking and eating workshop in your community, what else could you provide as a follow-up to the lesson that would help the community achieve a lifestyle change toward healthier eating? How can you turn a one-day workshop into a monthly occurrence?



Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a health cooking and eating

event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](#) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

27 reads

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