

## Feeding the Future of America A Volunteer's Guide to Leading a Blessings in a Backpack Program Site

When school dismisses on Friday, more than 13 million children will leave their classroom, uncertain whether they will have enough food to eat that weekend. One in five American children face food insecurity - more than the populations of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago combined. During the school week, most of these children depend on the federal free and reduced meal program their school offers. Sometimes, the meals at school are the only ones they get. When the school closes its doors on Friday afternoon, many of these children go home to empty cupboards and hunger pangs for 65 hours until they return to school on Monday morning. Who will feed them this weekend?

**We will.** Thank you for considering leading a Blessings in a Backpack program site and making hunger-free weekends a reality for children in your community. You are joining a team of dedicated volunteers who are part of a national team that provided more than 3.2 million hunger-free weekends to children living with food insecurity last school year. In your role as Program Coordinator you are responsible for:

- Leading the local volunteer team to raise funds to cover your school's food expense
- Serve as the liaison between Blessings in a Backpack and your school
- Partnering with a local grocer to purchase food and arrange pick-up/delivery of food
- Packing backpacks weekly

Due to the dedication of our volunteers throughout the country, children living with food insecurity will benefit from more than 3.5 million hunger-free weekends this school year. But we know the impact of our work goes beyond removing food insecurity. Student survey results show that children fed by Blessings in a Backpack experience the following positive results:

- 78% feel cared for by their community
- 71% feel they are helping their family
- 60% exhibit improved behavior
- 59% find it easier to learn at school

### INTRODUCTION

Before getting into the details, below is some general information about Blessings in a Backpack and our work to feed the future of America.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Blessings in a Backpack (BIB) mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.

**VISION STATEMENT:** Every school-aged child in America has the nourishment needed to learn and grow. As a leader in the movement to end childhood hunger, BIB strives to ensure children don't go hungry on the weekends by empowering individuals and communities to take action.

If you are interested in mobilizing your community to feed children who are living with food insecurity, please review this entire document and complete the required paperwork. We look forward to partnering with you!

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COSTS TO FEED A CHILD?

As little as \$100 feeds a student for the entire 38-week school year. \$90 pays directly for food to fill weekly backpacks and \$10 is dedicated to non-food program support. Each year, \$5 per student will be deducted from your online account effective April 1 and November 1, based on the head counts in place at that time.

### STEP ONE: FINDING A SCHOOL

The first step is to identify a school in your area. If you do not have a particular school in mind, visit [www.localschooldirectory.com](http://www.localschooldirectory.com), and select your state, then city. This results in a complete listing of schools in the selected area. The website looks as follows:



Click on the school name and scroll down to the “Faculty Details and Student Enrollment” section. The “Free Lunch Student Eligibility Breakdown” bullet gives number of children and percentage of children who qualify for the free or reduced price meal program at this school. The example to the right shows 110 students with 59.5% of the student body qualifying. This is the need at this particular school. Our goal is to feed at least 50 children per school.

### Faculty Details and Student Enrollment

#### Students and Faculty

- Total Students Enrolled: 185
- Total Full Time "Equivalent" Teachers: 8.6
- Average Student-To-Teacher Ratio: 21.5

#### Students Gender Breakdown

- Males: 97 (52.4%)
- Females: 88 (47.6%)

#### Free Lunch Student Eligibility Breakdown

- Eligible for Reduced Lunch: 11 (5.9%) ←←
- Eligible for Free Lunch: 99 (53.5%)
- Eligible for Either Reduced or Free Lunch: 110 (59.5%)

### STEP TWO: SCHOOL PROCEDURES

After selecting a target school, make an appointment to meet with the school principal or counselor to introduce the BIB program. Explain our mission “*Blessings in a Backpack mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.*” Many schools, which have started the BIB program, have seen better test scores, improved reading skills, positive behavior, improved health and increased attendance.

#### The school’s role in supporting the BIB program is to:

- Identify children to participate in the BIB program. Some schools will select children who appear to be most at risk while others may target children in a specific grade or level.
- Provide a designated space or room in the school to pack or store food.
- Send a permission letter to parents asking for their consent to allow their child to participate in the BIB program. There are two types of letters – Opt-in and Opt-out. School staff and PCs work together to determine the best way to communicate information about the program to parents.
  - **The Opt-out Letter** can be sent home with the first bag of food at the start of the program and if the parents choose to have their child participate, they do not need to do anything. If they do not want their child to receive food bags, they will sign the letter and return it to school with their child.
  - **The Opt-in Letter** requires permission letters to be sent home with children prior to the start of the program and consent must be given by signing and returning the letter to school before the food bags are sent home.

### Backpack Options

Drawstring Backpacks -- These are typical nondescript drawstrings that will fit into a child’s regular backpack. They are not branded or distinguishable as a BIB backpack. Drawstrings should be numbered (we do not use names) as the children will receive the same drawstring backpacks each week. School staff will need to

collect these on Mondays so you can repack food for the following week. Drawstring bags are available free of charge to our programs.

Plastic Grocery Bags – Plastic grocery bags may be available in your local market. Please check with your Program Manager (PM) or Managing Director (MD) for details.

The school can determine how they distribute bags to students each week, and below are ways other schools have done it:

- Assigned staff members place filled bags in the child’s backpack in the children’s cubbies when the classroom is empty
- Children walk through an “assembly line” to pick up filled bags (this is usually done with larger BIB programs)
- Volunteers deliver packed bags to the designated classrooms for teachers to distribute

Confidentiality is a concern for all schools. The decision of which children will be selected to participate in the BIB program is made at the school level and is never communicated to a volunteer or the BIB national office. BIB and our volunteers will only need to know the number of children being fed at a school. Please reassure the school that all participants and their families remain anonymous.

Photographs of volunteers and packing events are welcome—please share them widely to gain support for the good work you are doing. Photographs of children are not permitted. The BIB national office has images of children that have been approved for national release. Please contact your PM or MD with your requests.

**Once you have received approval to start the program, please complete the following forms located at the end of the packet:**

- Program Site Information Form:  
This is completed once you have received school approval. Please provide as much information as possible. Once we receive these forms, you will be assigned a Program Manager or Managing Director to assist you with your account. The PM or MD serves as the liaison between the national organization and the local school. Your PM/MD will send you log-in information to the Program Coordinator Toolkit on the BIB website. This page contains formal “Opt Out” and “Opt In” letters as well as our logos, federal tax ID number, and other resources and tools to manage your program.
- Memorandum of Understanding:  
This form is an agreement between Program Coordinators and the Blessings in a Backpack national office that you recognize this is a three-year commitment to feed the students at your designated school(s). Funding for one semester (19-weeks) must be secured prior to the start of the program.

The forms can be scanned and emailed to [anitaknazze@blessingsinabackpack.org](mailto:anitaknazze@blessingsinabackpack.org) or faxed to (502) 259-9023.

### **STEP THREE: ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY**

Blessings in a Backpack’s unique structure allows the program to be tailored to each community’s resources and needs. This flexibility and community-level focus has fostered rapid growth throughout the country, resulting in more children receiving weekend nutrition. Local volunteer teams focus on raising the support necessary to cover their community’s program expense. Your PM/MD can assist you in developing a program budget for your site based on the number of children you are serving.

The local volunteer team is responsible for raising financial support to cover the food and a portion of non-food program expense for the children participating in Blessings in a Backpack at your school. We recommend you begin with feeding 50 children; you can always increase the number at a later time. To begin implementing the program, 19-weeks of funding must be secured. For example: 50 children x \$100 each x 3 years = \$15,000. Many of our volunteers hold fundraising events, research and apply for community grants,

and solicit private donors, businesses, and organizations at the local level. The Program Coordinator Toolkit, located on our website, <http://www.blessingsinabackpack.org>, will have information and tools needed for fundraising. Your dedicated Program Manager will provide the link and log-in information.

## **DONATIONS**

**Checks:** All checks should be made payable to Blessings in a Backpack with your **School's Name** on the memo line. Donations that note your school's name will be placed in your school's account. When donations are mailed to the national office or made online, and includes the donor's contact information, the national office will thank the donor for their support with a letter that serves as a charitable gift receipt. Checks should be mailed directly to our bank:

**Blessings in a Backpack Lockbox  
PO Box 950291  
Louisville, KY 40295-0291**

**Cash:** These donations can be forwarded to our office via a money order or check from the Program Coordinator with the donor's contact information along with the amount donated. When the donor's contact information is included, the national office will thank the donor for their support with a letter that serves as a charitable gift receipt. Do NOT send cash via ground mail.

**Credit Cards:** Those who wish to donate via credit card can go to the BIB's website homepage <http://www.blessingsinabackpack.org> and click on "Donate Now."

Please discuss any other type of intended donation with your PM or MD. Please only ask for donations to support the program as defined by Blessings in a Backpack and as outlined in the fundraising tools included in the PC Toolkit on the website. Any funds raised for purposes beyond providing weekend nutrition for children living with food insecurity must have prior approval from your PM or MD.

To ensure your donors continue to give, Blessings in a Backpack recommends that the local volunteer team communicate with donors outside of asking for their support. Stewardship examples include a year-end progress report letter, a thank you note from a child, or inviting donors to come see the program in action. If you would like to learn more about engaging your donors to ensure their ongoing support, please ask your PM or MD for more information.



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DONATE NOW

Blessings in a Backpack  
Feeding The Future Of America®



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92700

CHILDREN

1064 47

SCHOOLS

STATES

**MISSION**

Blessings in a Backpack mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.

**VISION**

Every school-aged child in America has the nourishment needed to learn and grow. As a leader in the movement to end childhood hunger, Blessings strives to ensure children don't go hungry on the weekends by empowering individuals and communities to take action.

**One in five American children faces food insecurity** — more than the populations of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago combined. During the school week, most of these children depend on the federal free and reduced meal program their school offers. Sometimes, the meals at school are the only ones they get. When the school closes its doors on Friday afternoon, many of these children go home to empty cupboards and empty bellies for 65 hours until they return to school on Monday morning. **Who will feed them this weekend?**

*As a Blessings in a Backpack donor, you help make hunger-free weekends a reality for children in your own community. If you'd like to designate your support to help feed children at a current program site, please include the program's name in the Designation section below. If you name a program site at which Blessings in a Backpack is not currently operating, your gift will be allocated to serve children in the geographic area of your requested school.*

**Recurring Gift**

Make this a monthly gift

**Designation**

Designation:

Enter Program/School Below



## **DONATION REPORTS**

Donation reports are updated on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30/31<sup>st</sup> of each month. It usually takes our financial team 7–10 days to record donations into our accounting system. If you would like a copy of your donation report, please send an email to your Program Manager. Make sure to indicate the name of your school in all correspondence.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Financial statements are available to review online. Please ask your PM or MD for details.

## **STEP FOUR: FINDING A FOOD VENDOR**

After you have raised the designated funds, you will need to secure a food vendor. Many of our programs use a food delivery source such as Sysco, US Foods, or the food provider used by the school. Please contact your PM to determine whether there are established food vendors in your area. You may also choose to work with a local food bank or grocer. The goal is to find a vendor that will be willing to work with you on ordering, delivery/pick up, and pricing.

If you choose to work with a local vendor, please call and arrange a meeting with the manager to explain the BIB program. You will need to agree upon a set menu/pricing and arrange the pickup or delivery schedule (weekly, bi-monthly or monthly) as well as payment options. If you decide to work with Wal-Mart or Sam's Club, BIB will issue a BIB Wal-Mart credit card. Some grocers have in-store account options that are willing to directly bill the BIB national office; please make sure they indicate your school name on all invoicing. BIB can also pre-pay the grocer once the store gives you the balance. The check should be mailed directly to the Program Coordinator who can then take the check with them when purchasing the food.

Blessings in a Backpack has set menus and pricing with Sysco Foods, Meijer, Optimum Foods and Champion Food Service. Please work with your PM or MD to set up an account with these vendors.

***Itemized receipts must be provided for all food purchases, program expenses, and check requests.***

## Menu Options

Each backpack should contain the following food items:

- Two Entrée Items
- Two Breakfast Items
- Two Healthy Snacks

The menu below provides a list of approved food items. We highly recommend purchasing store and/or generic brands, as these prices are more cost effective. Food items should be single serving and easy to prepare. Canned food items should have pop-tops as not everyone has access to a can opener. Additional food items may be included in the backpacks if funding permits. Please do not include candy, gum, or any foods with nuts.

Blessings in a Backpack has approved menus and pricing with food vendors including Sysco and Meijer. Prepackaged solutions are also available through Optimum Foods and Champion Food Service in select areas. Please check the PC Toolkit for more information or contact your PM or MD.

### Approved Menu Items

Breakfast	Entrée	Healthy Snacks
Breakfast Bars	Soups	Fresh fruit
Oatmeal	Canned Meats	Canned fruit
Cereal Bowls (single serving)	Ravioli type products	Cheese Sticks
Grits	Meat Sticks	Raisins
Granola Bars	Canned Beans	Animal Crackers
Fruit & Grain Bars	Canned Vegetables	Cheese & Crackers
	Non-Peanut Spread (Sunbutter, Wow Butter)	Graham Crackers
		Fruit Snacks
		Pudding (2% Milk)
		Applesauce
		100% Juice





## Program Coordinator Position Description

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### Position Summary:

Blessings in a Backpack (BIB) mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.

The role of the Program Coordinator (PC) is to manage and oversee BIB program site(s) in a specific geographic location. The PC recruits and leads a team of volunteers to raise funds to cover program expenses, purchase food and pack bags during the 38-week school year. Serving as the liaison between BIB and school administrators, PCs build relationships and partnerships within their community to increase public understanding, awareness and education of childhood hunger.

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### Responsibilities:

- Manage and oversee operation of the BIB program(s) in a selected area
  - Recruit and lead a volunteer team in raising funds to cover food expenses including fundraising activities and local community grants
  - Select a food vendor -- local grocery, chain grocery or national vendor secured through Blessings in a Backpack.
  - Establish and cultivate relationships with community-based organizations and groups in an effort to expand the number of children served
  - Educate the general public and community audiences about BIB by participating in local community fairs/events, speaking engagements at community/civic groups, i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce
- 

### Qualifications & Requirements:

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Passionate and committed to the mission of Blessings in a Backpack
- Comfortable speaking to organizations/groups and individuals about BIB
- Communicate effectively and possess good interpersonal skills and leadership qualifications
- Must have access to a computer and ability to communicate through email
- Ability to speak in alignment with the BIB's mission and brand
- Program Coordinator orientation and training
- Minimum three-year commitment
- Time commitment is approximately 2-3 hours per week for one volunteer to procure food, pack and deliver to the school for 50 children. This can be impacted by drive time for those in rural areas and by food vendor selection. Shopping at a local vendor may result in additional time vs. a food vendor that delivers to the packing site.

### For additional information or questions, please contact:

Anita Knazze, Volunteer Services Manager

312-893-5513 or <mailto:anitaknazze@blessingsinabackpack.org>



## Parent Opt-Out Letter

Dear Parent,

Your child is eligible to be a recipient of the Blessings in a Backpack program and once the program is implemented will receive a bag of non-perishable food every Friday. These will be dispensed in a discreet and caring manner. This program runs the full 38-week school year. If you wish for your child to participate in the program you do not need to do anything. There is no cost associated to this program. If you choose to opt out of this program please sign below and return the letter to the school.

Thank you!

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Signature

*I do not want my child to participate in the Blessings in a Backpack program.*

**(Spanish version available in PC Toolkit)**



## Parent Opt-In Letter

Dear Parent,

The Blessings in a Backpack program is available at **SCHOOL NAME**. The program is designed to provide non-perishable food every Friday to children that would benefit from supplemental nourishment over the weekend. Bags will be dispensed in a discreet and caring manner. This program runs the full 38-week school year. There is no cost associated to this program. If you wish for your child to participate in the program please sign below and return the letter to the school.

Thank you!

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Signature

*I want my child to participate in the Blessings in a Backpack program.*

**For additional information regarding this program please visit the Blessings in a Backpack website <http://blessingsinabackpack.org/>**

**(Spanish version available in PC Toolkit)**



**Program Site Information**

**Program Coordinator**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H): \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**School Information**

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children to be fed: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Start/End Date of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Name for School (if applicable)**

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Food Vendor**

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Memorandum of Understanding  
Blessings in a Backpack National Office  
and Program Coordinator

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to outline the responsibility and duties between the Program Coordinator and Blessings in a Backpack (BIB) National Office to ensure that the Blessings in a Backpack Program is carried out in a way that is consistent with BIB National Policy and supportive of the Program Coordinator. This MOU will cover:

Fund Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

School(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Program Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

BIB will support the Program Coordinator by providing a tool kit to assist with program start-up, operations and fundraising. BIB will also assign a dedicated Program Manager that will serve as the liaison between the resources of the National Office and the local program. A full list of benefits provided by BIB National are included in the PC Toolkit.

**Program Coordinator Responsibilities:**

Fund Raising:

1. The Program Coordinator must obtain one semester of funding before the Blessings in a Backpack program can be initiated in the designated school.
2. The Program Coordinator commits to maintaining the program a minimum of three years.
3. Should funds fall short during the school year, it is the responsibility of the program to secure or provide funds needed to cover the shortfall.
4. S/he will apply for and secure local grants and provide application information to BIB National.
5. In advance of any fundraising events, the Program Coordinator, working with the dedicated Program Manager, will ensure the Accounting Department of the National Office has all the necessary information to be able to issue donor acknowledgements in accordance with IRS and state requirements.
6. For any grants secured on behalf of the designated program by the National Office, the Program Coordinator will be compliant with terms of the grant as outlined by the grantor. (A separate MOU will be prepared to address specific terms for any nationally-raised funds.)
7. In the unlikely event the BIB program ends, any remaining funds will be transferred to the closest qualifying BIB program that is consistent with donor intent.

Food Logistics:

1. In geographic markets where the National Office has established a preferred vendor to supply food for the backpacks, the Program Coordinator will work with the local representative to establish procedures for placing and receiving food orders.
2. In other markets, the Program Coordinator will work to build a relationship with a grocery, establish agreed upon pricing and a schedule to obtain, pay for, and transport food. Receipts for food purchases must be forwarded to [accountspayable@blessingsinabackpack.org](mailto:accountspayable@blessingsinabackpack.org) within 30 days of purchase.

3. As an alternative to 2. above, food may be purchased at Walmart or Sam’s Club, using an in-store charge card provided by the National Office. (You must have access personally to membership at Sam’s Club: it is not provided by the National Office.)
4. All groceries purchased must be for items on approved menus, as developed by BIB nutrition consultants.

Program Operations:

1. The Program Coordinator will return forms in a timely fashion, including but not limited to: MOU, Program Coordinator Information form, grocery receipts, etc.
2. The Program Coordinator will recruit a team of volunteers to achieve program goals.
3. The Program Coordinator will ensure backpacks are packed for each child enrolled in the program. When there are not sufficient resources to serve 100% of the need at the school, children to receive food bags are to be determined by the appropriate school personnel.
4. The confidentiality of the children enrolled in the program is to be assured at all times.
5. All monies raised to support the local program will be deposited in a school specific fund with the BIB National Office: no separate bank or PayPal accounts are to be used by the local program.
6. BIB will assess an administrative fee of \$10.00 per child annually. The fee will be deducted from the program fund in two installations of \$5.00 each in April and November, based on the number of children participating in the plan, as reported by the Program Coordinator.

Branding and Marketing Materials:

1. All BIB related logos, videos, statistics, and other information will be provided, upon request, and must be kept current and in conformance with any marketing style guide provisions when used in or on any publicly disseminated information including but not limited to webpages, printed materials, advertisements, brochures, emails and all other forms of media.
2. Marketing materials are to be used solely for the purpose of achieving BIB’s mission.
3. The Program Coordinator will keep BIB apprised of local fundraising events and grant activities so BIB can help promote and support these efforts. The Program Coordinator consents to promotion of local events on the National BIB website and other social media.

**BIB Responsibilities:** Through the assigned Program Manager, BIB will:

1. Provide accurate accounting reports on the program’s funding not less than twice per year or as requested by the Program Coordinator..
2. Process grocery invoices or other reimbursements on a timely basis, provided all appropriate documentation have been received.
3. If requested, BIB will supply reusable drawstring bags for use in weekly food distribution.
4. BIB National provides general liability insurance policy related to the program operations. (An additional policy may be required at the expense of the local program for fundraising events. Please consult your Program Manager for further details.)
5. Monitor the program to ensure compliance with BIB National guidelines.

The term of this MOU is for not less than three years based on the Program Coordinator’s signatory date below. Unless the Program Coordinator provides ninety (90) day written notice of the intent to stop a program, the agreement will automatically renew for one school year at a time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Program Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Program Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of BIB National Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ***Blessings National Office Services***

### **Program Implementation Support**

- Dedicated Program Manager for your program.
- PC tool kit available via the BIB website.
- Provide drawstring bags for the program, at no cost.
- Wal-Mart in-store purchasing card system.
- Assist with grocer arrangements.
- National Menus with Meijer and Sysco (delivery where available).

### **Marketing and Public Relations**

- Brand awareness built by national marketing initiatives such as National Blessings in a Backpack Day.
- Highlight local activities on the national website and via social media.
- Press tools to help engage local media.
- Maintain national organization website.
- Monthly email newsletters.

### **Administrative Support**

- Maintain 501c3 (tax exempt) status for donations.
- Independent annual audits and Form 990's, enhancing donor confidence.
- Process financial transactions – receiving and processing donations, grocer payments, reimbursements, etc. Generate donation reports and provide account balances upon request (available the first and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month).
- General Liability Insurance coverage.
- State Sales Tax Exemption and Solicitation Certificates (select states).
- Manage employee matching gift requests.

### **Fundraising Support**

- Provide fundraising tools, such as templates for solicitation letters, grant proposals, progress reports, and thank you letters.
- Provide fundraising newsletters, which share insights from other BIB volunteers and fundraising best practices.
- Provide online donation system with the National organization incurring all related fees and charges.
- Recognize donor support through a charitable gift receipt sent in the form of a thank you letter with the National organization incurring all postage and processing expenses.
- Acknowledging donors through letters of appreciation, tax receipts, and other methods of recognition.
- Event insurance policy (at cost to the program event).

Please contact Blessings in a Backpack, Inc. with any additional questions:

Office: 502-259-9952

Toll Free: 800-872-4366

Fax: 502-259-9023