

Hope's Harvest 2023 Volunteer Orientation Video Script

Slide 1: Welcome to the Volunteer Orientation!

Welcome, everyone, to the Hope's Harvest 2023 Volunteer Orientation! Thank you for your interest in gleaning with Hope's Harvest. This is a reminder that viewing of this orientation is REQUIRED for gleaning with us in 2023.

If you're here, you have already learned about Farm Fresh RI, registered as a volunteer, and signed our waivers. You're now almost finished with your 2023 volunteer orientation- congratulations! Make sure to pay attention and feel free to rewatch this video or parts of the video to familiarize yourself with our volunteer guidelines, and remember to sign the gleaning agreement linked in this video's description!

Slide 2 Agenda

In this video we'll be covering all of the necessary information you'll need to know to glean with us this season - here's a quick overview of our agenda. To begin, we'd like to open with a land acknowledgement.

Slide 3 Land Acknowledgement

We at Hope's Harvest aim to address hunger in our communities respectfully and effectively. So we can do this together, let's all get on the same page about the root causes of food insecurity! When we talk about hunger, it's important to understand the reasons why people currently struggle to access food, especially food that is locally grown, fresh, and nourishing. Not only did slavery and European colonization build the agriculture system that we know today in the United States, but the effects of systemic racism and colonialism continue to cut many people and communities off from affordable and healthy sources of food even now. We at Hope's Harvest recognize that our building as well as the farms and hunger relief agencies that we partner with are located on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of Indigenous peoples including the Narragansett, Niantic, Nipmuc, Pokanoket, and Wampanoag. In what is now called the United States of America, our food system was built on this stolen land, as well as the forced labor of enslaved Africans, Native peoples, migrants, and other vulnerable populations. By bringing up these realities, we aren't looking to place blame, but rather to give ourselves a fuller picture of why we're coming together today. Hope's Harvest always strives to ground our work in respect for this land, these people, and those in our communities who struggle with food insecurity today because of these legacies of inequality. We'll talk later on in the orientation about what this legacy looks like in Rhode Island, and appreciate your willingness to be on a learning journey with us about these topics, and how we meaningfully address them today, with our work, and our shared commitment to righting the wrongs of the past.

Slide 4 Hope's Harvest as a program of Farm Fresh RI

It has been a year since Hope's Harvest officially became the home for all hunger relief programming at Farm Fresh RI in June of 2022. It's been a joy to deepen our partnerships in the last year, and we know that this is just the beginning of new collaborations between Hope's Harvest and Farm Fresh's other programs shown here to further our goals of providing local food to alleviate hunger throughout the state. If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, or ideas about our partnerships, or Farm Fresh's other programs, feel free to reach out to us at hh@farmfreshri.org.

Slide 5 Staff

Meet the Staff for the 2023 Season!

We'd like to introduce you to the members of our 2023 Hope's Harvest Staff so you know everyone's faces and names when you join us out in the field.

We have three full time, year round staff - Myself, Eva, Program Director for Hope's Harvest, Shannon, our former Full-Year AmeriCorps VISTA, recently promoted to Operations Manager and going into her THIRD season with the program, and Ally, our Hunger Relief Programs Manager.

Many of you are familiar with Tasha, who is joining us this year as a Gleaning Associate after serving as our outstanding Full-Year Americorps VISTA member last year. They will be staying with us through December this season. We'd also like to introduce Shae, this year's AmeriCorps Summer VISTA, Brooke, who will be coming on as our full year Volunteer Accessibility AmeriCorps VISTA, and Jordan who will be joining us as our Hunger Relief AmeriCorps Summer VISTA.

Our team works tirelessly in all conditions, heat, wind, rain, and snow to get healthy food into the hands of our neighbors and we're so grateful to them for the HUGE difference they make in their community.

Slide 6 Our Challenges: Hunger in RI

Okay, so let's get into it! We at Hope's Harvest believe it's important to provide a primer for everyone who works with us on why we do what we do— which is why we spoke a bit earlier about how land and labor are related to food insecurity. As volunteers, we want you to know the broader context of the issues we're working to address, and how you fit into that bigger picture when you come out and glean with us. Some of you may have already seen this information in other presentations, but we invite you to revisit it as there's always more to learn, and we've added some updated information for this orientation. So let's start by talking about hunger in Rhode Island.

A 2022 STATUS REPORT conducted by the RI Community Food Bank on Hunger in Rhode Island found that just over 3 in 10 households in RI lack access to adequate food, and that rate rises to 4 in 10 for families with children.

Hunger in RI has always been an issue, but has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, environmental disasters, and inflationary pressure on food prices... In 2020, food insecurity in Rhode Island reached the highest level recorded in twenty years with one in four households at risk of hunger. While the rates lowered slightly in 2021, 2022 saw a dramatic increase in food insecurity in our state. At a moment when a striking number of Rhode Island households are struggling to afford adequate food and food prices are historically high, key federal programs that were initiated in response to COVID-19 are ending, leaving people hungry.

Slide 7 Our Challenges: Food Insecurity and Racism

As previously stated, it is a fact that food insecurity disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and other people of color due to systemic and structural racism. This encompasses a host of issues including unequal access to jobs and housing, discrimination by banks or government agencies, underfunded public schools, racist policing fueling the incarceration crisis, lack of voting rights or access in black and brown communities, and on and on.

You can see the stark contrast in how many white vs non-white people are food insecure in this figure. So, when we think about addressing food insecurity, we're stepping into a space where many people's basic needs are not being met, and taking on one small piece of that bigger picture, by ensuring that ALL of our friends and neighbors are able to access the nourishing food they need to thrive.

Slide 8 Our Challenges: Food Waste on Farms

At the same time that millions of people across the country are going without healthy, fresh food, research is also showing that a huge amount of produce goes to waste on farms. You can see here that food wasted on farms accounts for about 21% of the total food waste in the US, 17 million tons, and about \$14 Billion in lost revenue for farmers.

Slide 9: Why does good food go to waste?

So why does this happen? Well, farmers aren't doing anything wrong - they're often growing more than they need to make sure they have enough for their markets in the case of bad weather, pests or disease pressure, and to account for "ugly" produce or produce that's too big or too small for packaging. And farmers run on tight margins and often can't afford to pay their workers to harvest food that isn't going to be sold. Again, nothing wrong with that, but rather than see edible food on farms getting brought to the compost pile or fed to farm animals, we want to make sure that it's going to its highest and best use. If it can feed people, we're able to get it there.

Slide 10 Hope's Harvest's Mission

Our mission is...

To improve the livelihoods of local farmers, increase food security for RI's most vulnerable residents, and get everyone engaged in strengthening the food system by eliminating on-farm food waste in Rhode Island.

How do we do this? By...

Slide 11 Hope's Harvest's Strategy

...recovering surplus food from hard working farmers and delivering it to hunger relief agencies across Rhode Island - bringing high quality fruits and vegetables to children, seniors, and folks in our communities who lack the access to nutritious foods.

This process is not a new model, it has been happening for thousands of years. Farm-based food recovery, also known as "Gleaning", is the ancient practice of collecting unharvested produce from farmer's fields and distributing it to people in need.

So, the farmer lets us know when they have product available in the field, we recruit and manage volunteers to go out and harvest it, and then we bring it to hunger relief agencies across RI to distribute it to people in need.

Slide 12 Hope's Harvest's Program Expansion

In 2023, we're continuing to contract with farmers, which not only helps us establish great relationships with our farming partners, but also allows us to compensate them for all of their hard work and dedication to food access. We'll be contracting with 10 farmers in 2023, and the majority of these funds will be spent with socially disadvantaged farmers. We are also excited to expand our capacity to purchase surplus bulk quantity crops such as carrots and potatoes for distribution to food pantries during their busiest times during the fall and winter holidays.

The Hope's Harvest Program at Farm Fresh is also building our capacity to deliver fresh local food from farms to pantries across the state. We work closely with our Market Mobile packhouse and delivery team to deliver gleaned produce to our numerous partners, including pantries who utilize the MM ordering platform as part of the Farm to Food Pantry program, funded through the USDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement. Through this program, agencies can purchase locally grown and produced goods, including items such as fruits and vegetables, dairy, eggs, meats and poultry, at wholesale prices. 45 pantries also now have the option to receive free, gleaned produce with their online Market Mobile orders, helping us reach a wider audience and cater to pantries who prefer receiving smaller quantities of food more frequently. Hope's Harvest will also continue administering the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition program in partnership with the RI Department of Environmental Management, which provides eligible seniors with produce boxes procured with fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs from local RI farms.

As you can see, all of these programs are still focused on delivering the highest quality locally grown food to hunger relief agencies, and we're thrilled to continue growing our capacity to do so in a myriad of ways.

Slide 13 Accomplishments So Far (gleaning)

If you'd like to share the impact that you have as a volunteer with Hope's Harvest, Since 2018, we have been able to recruit 1100 volunteers, over 700 of whom have spent over 6300 hours harvesting 837,000 lbs of fresh fruits and vegetables from about 51 different farms, distributing that produce to 49 hunger relief agencies and serving approximately 25,000 people per month.

Slide 14 Accomplishments So Far (hunger relief programming)

In 2022 our work with the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program allowed us to distribute over 9,000 boxes to seniors throughout the state in 2022. Because of SFMNP and the previously mentioned “Farm to Food Pantry” program, 24 agencies and every senior center in the state received products from 40 growers and we sent over \$178,500 in producer payments across both of these programs. We love being able to grow our impact with these initiatives that support RI’s families AND small businesses.

Slide 15 Hope’s Harvest Partners: Farmers

We have three major stakeholder groups. First, we work very closely with farmers across Rhode Island and SE MA. This list includes many of our past farming partners, who we hope to work with again this season.

Slide 16 Hope’s Harvest Partners: Hunger Relief Agencies

These are some of the hunger relief agencies that we work with, ranging from Olneyville Food Center next door to us in Providence down to the Jonnycake Center in Westerly. Our agency partners are true heroes, serving their communities every day and making a huge difference by getting our produce out to individuals, families, and senior citizens who struggle to make ends meet.

Slide 17 Hope’s Harvest Partners: Hunger Relief Agencies

Here is a list of agencies who are currently ordering on the Market Mobile platform, and who now have the option of receiving donated gleaned produce with their orders because of our merger with Farm Fresh Rhode Island.

Slide 18 YOU Make This Work Possible! (Volunteers)

Last, but certainly not least, YOU, our volunteers! You all are essential in making sure that this project works and that we can increase the value of all of our time and effort by coming together to harvest food. Every volunteer really dramatically increases the amount of food that we're able to recover and distribute - making a huge difference! We've been blessed to have a lot of steady and consistent volunteers who have worked with us for years, and new recruits every year who join us and fall in love with the sunshine, the earth, and the good we're able to do out in the fields.

Slide 19 Gleaner Benefits

So let's talk about being a gleaner with Hope's Harvest RI.

We get so much positive feedback from volunteers about how much they love gleaning with us out in the fields. Fresh air, being in nature, getting exercise, meeting other volunteers, learning about agriculture and different local farms, and most importantly MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES. You're already here, so you probably already know about these benefits, but we want you to know that we see ourselves as an organization that provides a great experience, and great value to our volunteers and we're here to make sure you get everything you want out of your time with us.

Slide 20 Process for Gleaners

Gleaning with Hope's Harvest RI is a three-part process: first is registering as a volunteer with Farm Fresh RI (a new part of our sign up process this year!), second is getting on boarded as a gleaner (happening as we speak), and last is signing up for trips. We're excited to continue our merger into Farm Fresh RI by having a unified organization-wide volunteer system, and our hope is that doing Hope's Harvest orientation this way will give you a more complete picture of our role at Farm Fresh RI and other ways you can get involved with local food work. This change will show up in the volunteer signup process and some updates to our newsletter, but rest assured that our day to day field work and the rest of your experiences with us will remain the same!

You have already completed the Farm Fresh volunteer orientation, signed our forms, and signed up as a volunteer. Now you're on the next-to-last step of your 2023 registration: learning more about Hope's Harvest before you get to gleaning. After watching this, we'll ask you to sign a gleaning-specific volunteer agreement, and then you'll be ready to go!

Slide 21 Part Two: Sign Up for Trips

So now we'll go into how to sign up for trips once you've registered as a Farm Fresh volunteer. Our upcoming gleans are sent out to our email list on a weekly basis. You can sign up in these emails for specific gleaning trips on Eventbrite. In the Eventbrite trip confirmation, you will receive information about the farm location, where you will join HH and other volunteers to glean!

Slide 22 Step 1: Select trip in Weekly Newsletter

Event invitations will now be sent out via our NEW 'Dig In: Get Involved' volunteer and community engagement newsletter on Saturday mornings, and sometimes more often during the peak season. Despite coming to you with a slightly different name and header, these emails will be as full of veggie puns and gleaning opportunities as ever, and will also feature other Farm Fresh volunteer opportunities and ways to bring more local food to our communities. Trips can fill up fast, so remember to look for the sender "Hope's Harvest" in your inbox, and add volunteers@farmfreshri.org to your contacts so you don't miss any emails! You can click on the links in the newsletter to sign up for specific trips based on YOUR availability.

Slide 22 Step 2: Register on Eventbrite

When you click the link in our email, you will be sent to sign up for your trip on eventbrite. Basic Information is collected such as Name, Email, and Phone number (in case we need to contact you about any last minute changes to your trip). Please help our team by ensuring you're entering updated, accurate, and spell checked information when signing into Eventbrite so our system can accurately track your hours!

For every trip, you must agree to the Volunteer Agreement, Media Waiver, Liability Waiver, and confirm that you have watched this Orientation Video.

Slide 23 Step 3: Confirmation Email

You will receive information about the farm location, directions, any special equipment or trip details, in an emailed trip confirmation after signing up for an individual trip on Eventbrite. This information will be at the bottom of the confirmation email under “Additional Information”. Sometimes these go to your spam box, and sometimes the trip directions get cut off at the bottom of the email - click on the three dots at the bottom of your email if this happens to see the full trip information.

Please DO NOT bring other people unless they have already signed up using the above process. We promise farmers that we won't put them at risk of liability, and the sign up process is how we protect them and keep our relationships with the farms so they keep working with us and we can keep getting food onto local folks' tables!

Slide 24 Step 4: Glean!

Join HH and other volunteers on your gleaning trip! Arrive at location 5-10 minutes before designated start time to meet our staff - they will be identifiable by a bright orange bandana or HH hat.

HH staff provide safety and harvest training at each trip.

We have handwashing stations, and you will be required to wash your hands before you begin gleaning.

We cannot guarantee accessible restrooms but will do our best to inform you of restroom availability at each farm in the Eventbrite trip information. Please consider this information in advance.

We'll also be handing out our bright orange HH bandanas to all new gleaners for your first trip! These aren't just a cool piece of merch- they also help our farm partners identify our volunteers easily from a distance. We just ask that if we've provided you with one already, hold onto it and remember to keep bringing it with you on trips.

Slide 25 Gleaners Health and Wellness Policy

Hope's Harvest asks all gleaners and staff to prioritize the health and well-being of gleaners, farmers and their staff, agencies, and everyone who receives our food by monitoring any contagious illness you are experiencing or have been exposed to, and not attending trips if you are feeling unwell. We are dedicated to providing for our friends, families, and neighbors in need and we take our responsibility to the people we serve very seriously. Let's keep each other healthy and safe!

Slide 26 Thank you! Questions?

If you have any questions about this video, registration, or the sign up process, please reach out to us by emailing hh@farmfreshri.org. Thank you for your time and dedication to our program, and we look forward to seeing you in the fields in 2023!