

Spring 2019

## Growing Together: Iowa Master Gardeners and Community Volunteers Glean Fresh Produce for Donation

Carly McAndrews

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### Recommended Citation

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**Growing Together: Iowa Master Gardeners and Community Volunteers  
Glean Fresh Produce for Donation**

by

Carly McAndrews

A creative component completed  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

Major: Sustainable Agriculture

Program of Study Committee:

Betty L. Wells, Major Professor  
Cynthia L. Haynes  
Christine A. Hradek  
Jane M. Rongerude

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

April 2019

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\*Items to be included in the Growing Together Community Donation Gardening Toolkit (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>)

## **Gleaning Training: Project Overview**

### *Growing Together Iowa*

Growing Together Iowa is a collaborative project between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Master Gardener and community volunteers, and donation sites like food pantries and community centers (Master Gardener Program, 2019). With funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), Growing Together provides mini-grants to counties across Iowa where Master Gardeners and collaborators build and maintain donation gardens or glean produce for donation. One in eight Iowans experiences food insecurity at some point during the year (Feeding America, 2018). Master Gardeners are helping address food insecurity in their communities through the donation of high-quality fresh produce to local donation sites. This past growing season (2018), the Growing Together project received feedback from Master Gardeners and farmers that high quality, local produce might be made available to Iowans with low-incomes through gleaning. The video training emerged as a way to prepare volunteers to build a strong foundation for a gleaning initiative in their counties.

### *Gleaning Training Video*

The gleaning training video offers Master Gardeners and community volunteers an opportunity to learn about how they might get involved in or start a gleaning initiative in their area. It includes background information on gleaning, tips to connect with community partners and plan an initiative, information on harvesting and post-harvest handling, and information related to transportation and distribution of the produce once it has been gleaned. This training cannot replace on-farm experiences. Rather, it exposes aspiring gleaners to considerations they

might not have otherwise made before starting to glean. The training is broken up into a “playlist” that allows the viewer to select the pieces most relevant to his or her project. It also includes supplemental worksheets and resources, and opportunities to pause the video and brainstorm as a group. The training also features interviews with folks who are engaged in food systems work across Iowa, exposing aspiring gleaners to different perspectives and models for success.

### *Interviews*

I conducted interviews with farmers, donation site personnel, and folks who are involved in gleaning or donation gardening initiatives for inclusion in the training video. Most of the interviews were recorded on video, but some interviews were over the phone to accommodate folks who were out of state or otherwise unable to meet in person (see Appendix A for a full list of interviewees). The following goals helped guide the direction of the interviews:

1. To learn from folks who are already engaged in food systems work what tools are needed to create a solid foundation for a gleaning initiative.
2. To generate footage of folks who are engaged in gleaning and food rescue to include in the training to help illustrate points made in the training, and to offer multiple perspectives.
3. To expose audience members to different models for success.

I brought questions with me to the interviews that kept the above goals in mind (see Appendix B for the full list of questions). However, the questions were open-ended enough to allow the interviews to go in a different direction, opening up space for discussion.

Upon completing the interviews, I watched all of them and took detailed notes with timestamps. This review served the dual purpose of creating a catalogue of what was said when to streamline editing the videos, as well as to note common themes. Overall, the interviewees discussed many different subjects related to gleaning and agriculture, including food safety considerations, how to find donation sites and donors, best practices while gleaning, and more.

## **Gleaning: Historical Roots and Present-day Practices**

The ancient practice of gleaning has its roots in the Torah, which instructs “householders” to leave overlooked or fallen produce in the field for “the poor” (Gardner, 2015, p. 42). Gleaning was considered a right rather than a privilege. Today, gleaning looks much different. Gleaners are frequently volunteers who work for hunger relief organizations, rather than the food insecure themselves. This is due to a variety of factors. Today, folks who are experiencing food insecurity in the United States often work multiple jobs and lack time or transportation to travel out to a farm to glean produce. Urbanization has also isolated folks from farms, making it difficult to get out to the farm to glean. The definition of gleaning has also been expanded to include rescuing produce from grocery stores and institutions (USDA, 2010, p. 2) where food is often stocked in higher quantities than retailers anticipate selling and then wasted (Stuart, 2009, p. 24). In this paper, I examine the history of gleaning and how gleaning is practiced in the United States today. I’ll focus on three key aspects of modern gleaning initiatives – planning the project, building strong relationships, and growing the project and systems gradually.

### ***History of gleaning***

The earliest written evidence of gleaning comes from the Torah. In his article “Pursuing Justice: Support for the Poor in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” Gregg Gardner (2015) explains that both Deuteronomy (the first book of the Torah) and Leviticus (the third book of the Torah), maintain a right of “the poor” to “pe’ah,” produce from the edges of a field; “gleanings,” produce that has fallen during harvest; and “forgotten produce,” produce that has been accidentally left in

the field post-harvest (p. 42). That such specific rules existed governing what produce was eligible for gleaning elucidates just how commonplace gleaning was. The farmer, or what early Rabbinical texts refer to as “the householder,” would actually be seen as stealing from the poor if s/he interfered with what was seen as a right to gleaning (p. 47). This is because the produce “...never belonged to [the householder] in the first place. Rather, I argue that these items are given to the poor directly from God” (p. 47). God, not the householder, was understood to be the owner of the land and anything that grew on it (p. 40). While this right to gleaning might seem progressive by today’s standards, Gardner suggests that it is not evidence of a prioritization of social justice or egalitarianism, explaining, “While the texts at hand attempt to ameliorate the conditions of the poor, no effort is made to lift these individuals out of poverty or to eradicate poverty” (p. 58). To the contrary, these early rabbinical texts reflect a belief that poverty is similar to a drought in its inevitability (p. 59).

In his article “Customary Rights & Women’s Earnings: The Importance of Gleaning to the Labouring Poor, 1750-1850,” Peter King (1991) examines the role gleaning played in English households in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and how (agri)cultural changes impacted gleaning rights and access to fields to glean from. King concludes that based on surveys and autobiographical accounts of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, gleaning was a more popular practice in central and eastern England than in other parts of the country, and that it accounted for “...between about 3 or 4 per cent and 13 or 14 per cent of the average laboring family’s annual income” (p. 474). King also notes that gleaning was one of the few kinds of agricultural work that women had access to during this period in England. Gleaning was “...a vital safety net for the winter months and was a particularly useful source of food in years of dearth” (p. 474). Gleaning was considered a right of the poor, although the farmer seemed to get to define who

was “poor,” and in fact the definition of poverty varied across England during this period (p. 468). In 1788, the Court of Common Pleas sided with farmers, who won a legal victory against gleaners that essentially redefined gleaning as a privilege rather than a legal right (p. 471). However, this did not interfere with the widespread practice of gleaning. It was the introduction of mechanical harvesting techniques in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that dramatically decreased the role gleaning played in households experiencing food insecurity (p. 474).

### ***Gleaning in the United States today***

According to the anti-hunger organization Feeding America (2018), one in eight people in the United States struggles with hunger. This is true in spite of the fact that food is wasted every stage of production and distribution, from seed to plate. For many, the answer to this paradox and injustices within the United States food system that cause hunger is a food sovereignty approach. The international organization of peasants, La Via Campesina, defines food sovereignty in The Declaration of Nyéléni as follows:

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations”.  
(Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007).

It is important to stay rooted in the understanding that while gleaning is a necessary practice to increase access to fresh produce in local food pantries and community centers, in a socially just world, this practice wouldn't be necessary because everyone would not only have enough food to eat, but would have access to the foods they most prefer, and to land to grow that food if they so choose. Gleaning addresses the symptom of an unjust food system – hunger – rather than the root cause of an unjust food system – the inequitable distribution of resources,

particularly land, capital, and food. That does not render gleaning a useless or unnecessary practice – in fact, it is very useful and necessary to provide fresh produce to clients at donation sites. Rather, it simply opens up space to examine the practice of gleaning with a critical lens and stay grounded in the end-goal of eradicating poverty and moving toward food sovereignty.

### ***Key aspects of modern gleaning initiatives: Plan, Build Relationships & Grow***

Background research into modern gleaning operations in the United States, as well as interviews with farmers, Master Gardeners, community volunteers, and donation site personnel, illuminated traits of successful gleaning operations. In this section, I'll explore three keys to success that were identified – planning the project before jumping in, building strong relationships, and growing the project and systems gradually.

#### ***Plan***

There is no one-size-fits-all model for gleaning. There is great diversity in scale and organization of gleaning groups across the United States. In spite of this variation, most gleaning groups would benefit from taking care to plan the gleaning initiative before heading out to the farm. Folks involved in the project should be sure to identify key project players, acquire necessary materials, and determine transportation systems.

The Food Rescue Network (2015) and the USDA (2010) both recommend identifying donors and donation sites before gleaning produce. When determining donation sites, gleaners should consider frequency and hours of operation, capacity for refrigeration, and the produce needs and preferences of clients at that site. Gleaners should also aim to identify one or more volunteers to regularly correspond with the farmers and donation site personnel participating in

the project. This helps maintain consistency and prevent miscommunication. Some groups recommend hiring at least one paid staff member with on-farm experience to lead the project (Beyranevand et al., 2017).

Gleaning groups should also ensure they have necessary materials in stock before starting to glean. These can include harvest bins and tools, a portable hand-washing station, and post-harvest materials like rubber bands for bunching or bags for greens. The gleaning checklist (Resource C) can help volunteers make sure they have necessary supplies, although projects' needs will vary. Some gleaning groups depend on the farmer to provide materials like harvest bins and hand tools, and facilities like a restroom and wash station, but gleaners should not assume that these will be available for use without asking first. Farmer Donna Warhover from Morning Glory Farm in Mount Vernon, Iowa, explained during our interview, "I think for my farm, it would be difficult for a gleaning crew to use my facilities for cleaning and bagging, just because space is limited and we're doing that for our market and shareholders. Them taking what they gleaned and ... prepping it for distribution somewhere else would be best." Donna also stressed that every farm has a different system. For this reason, it is necessary for the gleaning crew to talk to the farmer prior to the day of gleaning not only to answer any of the farmer's questions, but also to make sure the group brings any materials they will need with them on the day of the glean.

Gleaners should seek to establish systems that promote speedy transportation and distribution to preserve the quality and freshness of the gleaned produce. How exactly produce is distributed will vary greatly among gleaning groups. Important considerations for gleaners to make include where supplies will be stored, what vehicle(s) will be used to transport the produce, where the produce will be washed or packed, and the distance from the farm to the

donation site. The transportation brainstorm exercise (Resource D) encourages gleaners to make these considerations before beginning to glean.

### ***Build Relationships***

Perhaps the most prominent theme in the gleaning literature is the importance of relationships to any local food systems initiative. In particular, it is key to maintain open communication and positive relationships with farmers and donation site personnel (Hundhammer, p. 1). Jack Leng, Education and Outreach Coordinator with Boston Area Gleaners, stressed the importance of collaboration with donors and distribution sites during a phone conversation, explaining, “If you foster [strong relationships], everything will start to fall into place.” Similarly, Randy Burnight from Up From the Earth, a food rescue and donation garden group in Iowa, explained during our interview, “A lot of our success is based on one-to-one [interactions]... we know the people personally.” In order to have a successful gleaning initiative, all of the project players should be included throughout the evolution of the project, not as a last-minute addition.

#### *Building relationships with farmers*

In their comprehensive collection of gleaning case studies, Beyranevand et al. (2017) stress the importance of cooperation and collaborative problem-solving between growers and gleaners, as opposed to a top-down approach that only seeks to involve the farmer at the final gleaning stage rather than throughout the process. It is important for gleaners to ask the farmer from the start of the project what their needs and concerns are so that they can be addressed before the gleaning group arrives. Farmers will want to know that folks coming to their farm

have some understanding of vegetable production. Beyranevand et al. (2017) note that it is an added benefit when there is a point-person in the group that is knowledgeable about vegetable production, and whom the farmer can approach with questions and concerns.

Gleaners should be fluent in local and federal laws around volunteer liability and food donation in case growers have questions about them. Gleaners should be aware of and able to explain the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, which protects food donors from liability except in instances of gross negligence (Feeding America, 2018). Some publications advise that volunteers sign waivers before gleaning on a farm to assuage farmers' concerns around liability (USDA, 2010; Beyranevand et al., 2017). Gleaners should also explain to farmers how their donation could be tax deductible. This could increase their willingness to host a gleaning group (Food Recovery Network, 2015).

Gleaners can go above and beyond to maintain strong relationships with participating farmers. Regina Gabrovich from Healthy Acadia, a gleaning group in Maine, told me when we spoke over the phone that when she goes out to glean, she asks farmers if they could use help with tasks like weeding or harvesting for their markets. She explained that this is in line with Healthy Acadia's mission to strengthen local food systems, and it has the added benefit of helping the organization build a positive relationship with growers. Feed Iowa First, a gleaning group in Cedar Rapids, sometimes shares equipment with farmers who participate in their gleaning initiatives. Even small gestures can help strengthen collaborations between project partners. For example, if the gleaning group has a website or an active newsletter, they could list the farms they partner with and thank them for their donation.

### *Building relationships with donation sites*

In addition to building positive relationships with donors, it is also important for gleaning groups to build relationships with donation sites. Some gleaning groups are affiliated with a particular food pantry. Others drop off produce to multiple sites throughout the growing season. Regardless of how many different donation sites a group brings produce to, it is important that the needs and concerns of the gleaners and donation sites are discussed before any gleaning occurs. This can help prevent miscommunication and even wastage of gleaned produce.

Before gleaning, gleaners should check in with the donation site to determine what crops are most useful to clients at that site (Hundhammer, 2011, p. 2). This ensures that the donated produce meets the food needs and preferences of clients. Growing Together already encourages Master Gardeners who are starting a donation garden to ask the donation site what they should grow. This same foresight will extend to gleaning initiatives, ensuring the produce is useful and desired.

While fresh produce is in high demand at food pantries and donation sites in Iowa, there can be challenges to donating it. Tobin and Mollie Krell from Homestead 1839, a non-profit farm in West Burlington, Iowa, explained during our interview that donation sites have varying availability. Tobin explained, “There’s a lot of... different places that have food drop sites, but a lot of them don’t have the capacity to store fresh vegetables, especially the ones that need to be cooled.” Capacity for refrigeration can be a major barrier for food pantries that wish to accept fresh produce donations. Gleaners should consider this factor before bringing produce to any donation site. Tobin went on to explain, “With food banks in general... they’re not accessible all the time, it might be a couple hours every day, it might be once a month, it varies so much.” In order to maintain a positive relationship with the donation site, it is necessary to know exactly

when and how frequently the site is open. Up From the Earth (2019), a food rescue and donation gardening group in Woodbury County, put together a booklet for volunteers that contains hours of operation and locations of all of their food pantry partners, and the booklet is revisited frequently to keep the information up to date. This kind of careful planning is essential to maintain clear expectations and positive relationships between gleaners and the donation site(s).

### ***Grow***

In addition to carefully preparing and building strong relationships with project partners, gleaning groups should take care to grow their project and systems gradually. In our interview, Jenny Jorgensen and Randy Burnight from Up From the Earth advised fledgling projects to start small and grow gradually. Jenny explained, “I would recommend to people... start small your first year. When we first started, we decided 10 churches [would participate in the project]... We’ve grown every year in the amount of poundage as well as the [number of] collection sites .” Today, Up From the Earth (2019) has an extensive network of volunteers, donors, and donation sites.

Keeping thorough records can help a gleaning group sharpen their systems internally over time, as well as express the impact and results of their project to funders. Growing Together already requires grantees to keep track of pounds of produce donated. In their guide to gleaning, the organization Salvation Farms recommends gleaners record additional information like contact information for farmers and donation sites, volunteer hours, mileage to reimburse volunteers, and amounts and kinds of produce donated (Salvation Farms, 2019, p. 5). In their gleaning toolkit, the USDA (2010) suggests that developing detailed records is one step to

increasing the sustainability of the project over time, ensuring that if there is staff or volunteer turnover, important information about the project is not lost (p. 5).

### ***Conclusion***

The ancient practice of gleaning is still utilized in the United States today to help increase access to fresh produce for folks experiencing food insecurity. Gleaning offers opportunities to increase the availability of fresh, local, high-quality produce for Iowans with low-incomes. Master Gardeners, farmers, and collaborators with Growing Together Iowa have expressed an interest in gleaning fresh produce from farms. The supplemental resources and gleaning training video were created as a way to prepare volunteers for their first gleaning initiative. These materials emphasize that a successful gleaning initiative is grounded in careful planning, strong relationships between farmers and donation site personnel, and gradual growth of the project and systems. While the training does not replace aspiring gleaners' on-farm experiences, it should help them build a solid foundation for their project and anticipate challenges and opportunities as they begin gleaning fresh produce for donation.

## Resource A: Gleaning FAQ

### *What is “gleaning?”*

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines gleaning as: “...the act of collecting excess fresh foods from farms, gardens, farmers markets, grocers, restaurants, state/county fairs, or any other sources in order to provide it to those in need.”<sup>1</sup> This definition perhaps more accurately describes food recovery or food rescue. While these efforts are related, gleaning often involves building a relationship with the farmer and the farm, where rescuing produce from a grocery store for donation does not<sup>2</sup>. What that can mean is going out to the farm and harvesting the produce or collecting remaining produce at the end of a farmers’ market. It is important to remember that gleaning involves collecting high quality produce that is fit for human consumption.

### *What form can gleaning take?*

Gleaning can take a variety of forms. A large gleaning group in Vermont, [Salvation Farms](#), got its start working with just one farmer. They had a strong relationship with the farmer, and they wanted to start small. Other gleaning groups, including [Feed Iowa First](#) in Cedar Rapids, have a large network of farms they glean from when produce is available. Gleaning can also happen at farmers’ markets. For more information on gleaning from farmers’ markets, please see Resource E.

### *Why is there produce available to glean on farms? Doesn’t the farmer need to sell all of the produce?*

[Boston Area Gleaners](#) estimates that up to 20% of food grown on farms is never harvested.<sup>3</sup> A variety of factors can lead to this situation:

- Farms are exposed to all of the elements, and with more extreme weather events, they may plant more than they know they can sell to mitigate risk.
- A market may fall through, leaving a farmer with more produce than she or he can sell.
- The produce may be difficult to market but still good to eat. Think of a twisted carrot, a turnip that is slightly too large, or peppers that are too small and won’t have a chance to mature before the fall frost.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. (2010). *Let’s Glean! United We Serve Toolkit*. Retrieved from: [https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda\\_gleaning\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Laurie J. Beyranevand, Amber Leasure-Earnhardt, and Carrie Scrufari, *Models for Success: A Set of Case Studies Examining Gleaning Efforts Across the United States*. Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, Vermont Law School. South Royalton, VT. January 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Boston Area Gleaners. (2019). *Gleaning is harvesting surplus farm crops, preventing waste & nourishing local families*. Retrieved from <https://www.bostonareagleaners.org/>.

As Theresa Snow, Executive Director of the gleaning initiative Salvation Farms in Vermont, puts it, “It’s not really the farmer’s fault when there is food loss on farms. Gleaners help move food into the community when farms can’t afford to.”<sup>4</sup>

### *When do folks glean, and what kinds of produce can be gleaned?*

Any type of produce can be gleaned, it’s just a matter of what the farmer has available when. Crops that need to be picked daily or multiple times a week, like zucchini, tomatoes, cucumbers, and eggplant, are often gleaned to maintain fruit production when the farmer has a gap in his or her market.

Weather events can also result in gleaning opportunities. If a frost is coming unexpectedly, farmers might call a gleaner to harvest what they know they won’t be able to sell. If heat causes premature bolting in greens like lettuce, bok choy, or spinach, farmers might call a gleaner to prevent widespread loss.

Production practices can also lead to gleaning opportunities. For example, if a farmer needs to till a crop under to plant another crop but there is still produce in the field, s/he might call a gleaner to harvest the area before tilling. If they have extra land, farmers will sometimes plant a low-maintenance crop like winter squash for a gleaning group to come harvest later in the season.

### *Where can gleaned produce be donated? What considerations should folks make when deciding where to donate the produce?*

Fresh produce is in high demand at local donation sites. Some common donation sites include food pantries, food banks, schools, community centers, and congressional meal sites.

The terms “food pantry” and “food bank” are often conflated, but they actually mean different things. Food pantries distribute food directly to clients, whereas food banks are warehouses that store food for distribution to food pantries and other donation sites. Because of the relatively small scale of gleaning initiatives, and because there are more food pantries than food banks in Iowa, it is more likely that gleaners will work with a food pantry than a food bank.

To view a state-wide map of donation sites that have received produce from Growing Together projects in the past year, visit the Growing Together Community Donation Gardening Toolkit at: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>

It is important to discuss the gleaning project with the donation site personnel before the first glean. Discussing details like access to refrigeration, hours and frequency of operation, and the needs and preferences of clients at the donation site can help your group determine where to bring the gleaned produce. Resource B will help gleaners think through some of these details.

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<sup>4</sup> Laurie J. Beyranevand, Amber Leasure-Earnhardt, and Carrie Scrufari, *Models for Success: A Set of Case Studies Examining Gleaning Efforts Across the United States*. Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, Vermont Law School. South Royalton, VT. January 2017.

*Why is food safety so important? In my garden, I don't always use the practices outlined in the Growing Together [food safety video](#) and I've never had a health problem. After all, I'm using organic practices.*

It is always important to follow food safety best practices when growing or gleaning produce for donation. Although these practices may differ from what you do in your home garden, this food is being eaten by folks who represent a wide range of ages and health statuses. Consider that clients at the donation site might not have health insurance, or might not be able to take time off work to get the care they need without stressing other areas of their budget.

Utilizing organic practices is an excellent way to keep chemicals out of the environment. However, just because a farm or garden uses organic practices does not automatically mean the produce is safe to eat. Like conventional farms, organic farms can still be susceptible to outbreaks of E.coli and salmonella, which are preventable by washing hands and using other food safety best practices, and which have nothing to do with chemical usage.

Although it is true that donors are protected from liability by the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, it does not protect donors in cases of gross negligence. It is important to follow food safety best practices to make sure the safest, most delicious produce is donated.

*What is the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, and why is it important?*

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was passed by President Clinton in 1996 to encourage farms and retail outlets to donate food without fear of criminal or civil liability should the food later be found to have caused harm. This act protects food donors when they donate to a non-profit except in instances of gross negligence or misconduct.<sup>5</sup> Farmers and other food donors may be wary of donating fresh produce if they are unaware of this act, so it is an important act for gleaners to be able to explain to project collaborators.

*Should our gleaning group help the farmer with farm tasks unrelated to gleaning to thank them for their time and donation?*

Sometimes, gleaning groups will offer to help farmers with tasks unrelated to gleaning like weeding or harvesting for market. While this can be a great way to build a positive relationship with farmers and thank them for their donation, it is important for volunteers who are gleaning with a particular organization to stay in line with the guidelines of that organization. If the organization you are volunteering with prohibits volunteers from this kind of activity, volunteers should communicate that to the farmer before the first glean. While farmers will not necessarily expect volunteers to help with tasks outside of gleaning, it is always a good idea to discuss expectations beforehand. Outside of helping with farm tasks, small gestures can also strengthen

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<sup>5</sup> Feeding America (2018). *Protecting our Food Partners: The Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act*. Retrieved from: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/partners/become-a-product-partner/food-partners>

collaborations between project partners. For example, if the gleaning group has a website or an active newsletter, they can list the farms they partner with and thank them for their donation.

## Resource B: Brainstorm – Plan & Connect!

Before your start to glean, consider who your group should connect with. Making connections in the planning stages of the project, rather than after the project has already started, can help build a strong foundation for the collaborative initiative.

Consider...	Notes
<p>What donation sites are in your county? Some common donation sites include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food pantries &amp; food banks</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Community Centers</li> <li>• Congressional meal sites</li> </ul> <p>To view a state-wide map of donation sites that have received produce from Growing Together projects in the past year, visit the Growing Together Community Donation Gardening Toolkit at:  <a href="https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/">https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/</a></p>	
<p>What produce growers are in your county?</p> <p>Use the Iowa State University Farm, Food and Enterprise Development CSA directory to find a farm near you:  <a href="https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/iowa-csa-directory/">https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/iowa-csa-directory/</a></p>	
<p>What volunteers will participate in the project? How will your group attract volunteers?</p>	

## Resource C: Gleaning Checklist

Different gleaning operations will require different supplies. Talk amongst your team about what will and won't be applicable in your situation. But please note that the key concepts outlined in this food safety [video](#) should always be followed.

- Handwashing supplies
  - Portable sink, soap, and paper towels
- Sanitized harvest tools
  - May include knives, scissors, or loppers
  - Check in with the farmer about what crop(s) are available to harvest
    - For greens, you should bring knives or scissors
    - For winter squash, bring clippers or loppers
    - For tomatoes, just bring your hands!
    - If you're unsure what tools to bring for the job, the farmer may have suggestions.
- Sanitized harvest totes, crates, buckets, or bags
  - What you harvest the produce into depends on what you're harvesting. Potatoes can be packed in milk crates. Tomatoes should be packed in shallow harvest totes. Greens can be bunched or bagged, and packed in crates or cardboard boxes.
- Rubber bands or twist ties
  - These are useful to bunch kale or collards, for example.
- Sanitizer solution
  - Be sure to dilute whatever solution you're using per the sanitizer instructions. For example, every gallon of water only needs 1 tablespoon of bleach when sanitizing items that come in contact with food.
- Clean vehicle to transport produce
- Coolers, ice packs, or a cooled vehicle
  - This will help keep produce at a safe temperature before it reaches its final destination.
- Record-keeping supplies
  - Blank record-keeping templates
  - Scrap paper
  - Pens
  - Clipboard
  - Scale to weigh harvested produce
  - Volunteer sign-in sheet
- On-farm safety
  - First aid kit
  - Close-toed shoes and weather-appropriate attire
  - Sun protection
  - Earplugs (in case heavy equipment is in operation near the group)

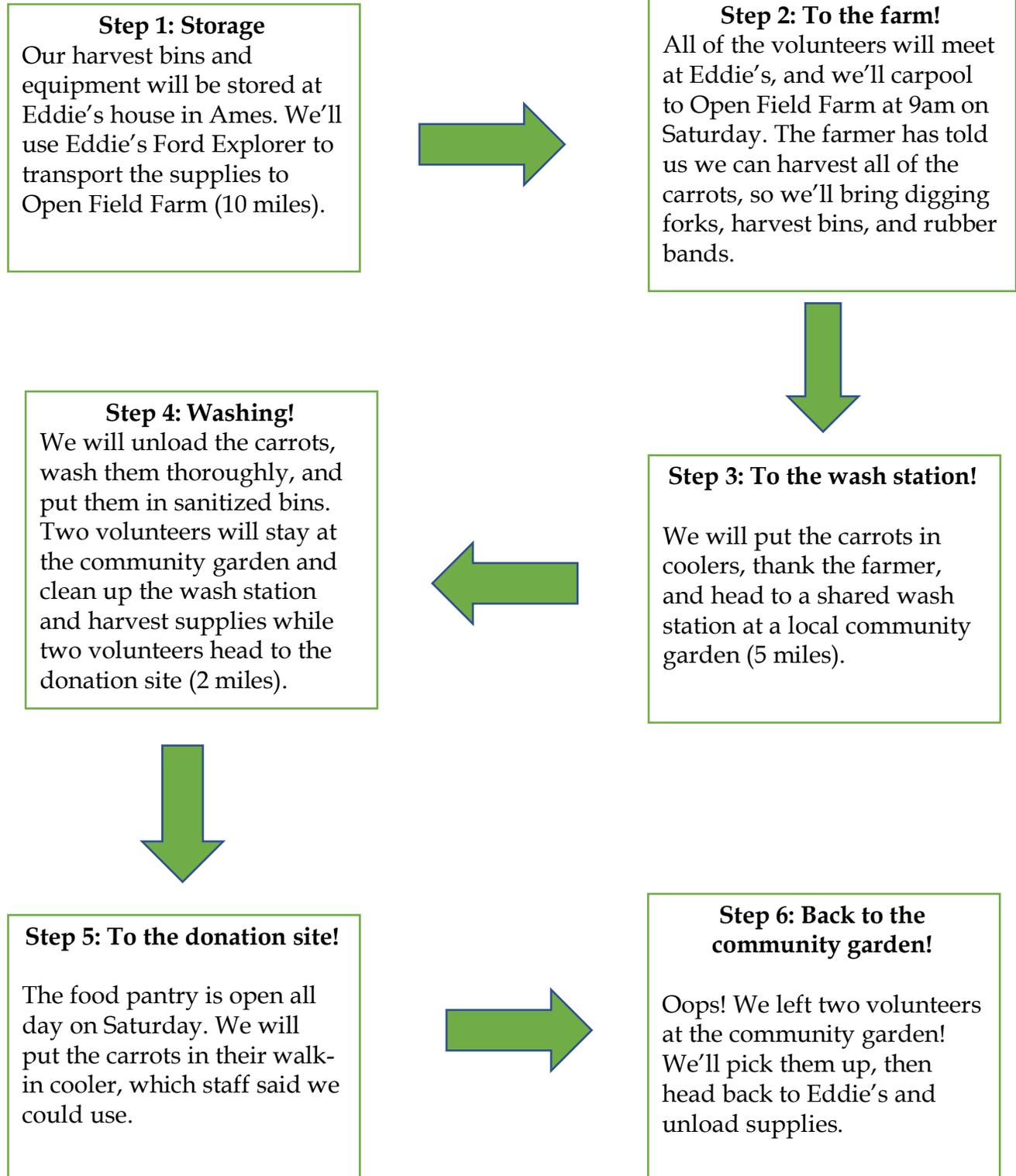
\*Be sure to check in with the farmer ahead of time to discuss any special safety considerations on his/her farm.

**Resource D:  
Brainstorm - Transportation!**

How will the produce move from the farm to the donation site?

Questions to consider:	Strategy:
Where will the gleaning supplies be stored?	
<p>What vehicle will be used to transport supplies to the farm, and produce from the farm?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have access to a refrigerated truck? If not, what steps will you take to keep the produce at a safe temperature?</li> <li>• Is the vehicle clean and covered?</li> <li>• Will folks carpool to the farm? If not, how much parking is available at the farm?</li> </ul>	
<p>Where will the produce be washed?</p> <p>(Keep in mind - you should not assume the farmer will allow you to use his/her facility to wash produce without checking.)</p>	
<p>Where will the produce be donated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the donation site's hours?</li> <li>• Do they accept fresh produce?</li> <li>• What is their storage capacity?</li> <li>• Contact info for donation site staff?</li> </ul>	

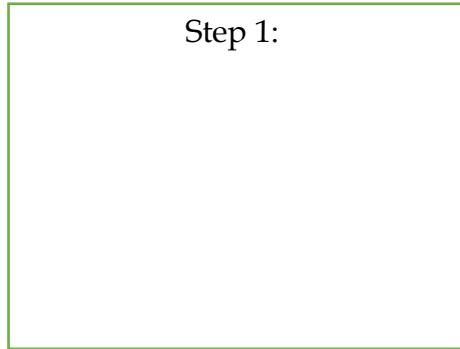
## Sample Transportation Plan



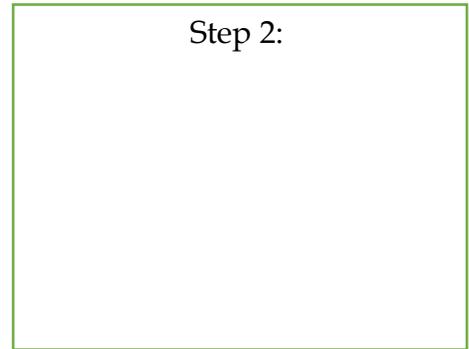
## Make a Plan!

Using your brainstorm sheet, develop a transportation plan.

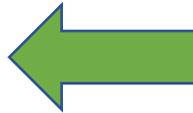
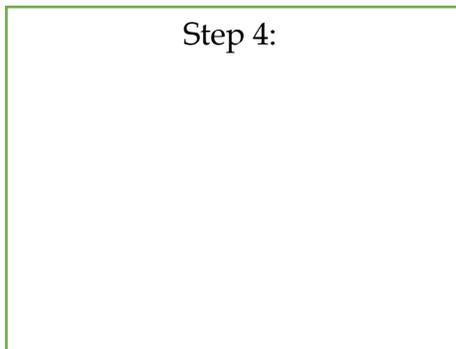
Step 1:



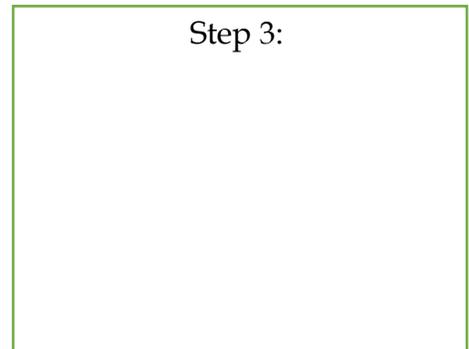
Step 2:



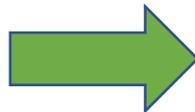
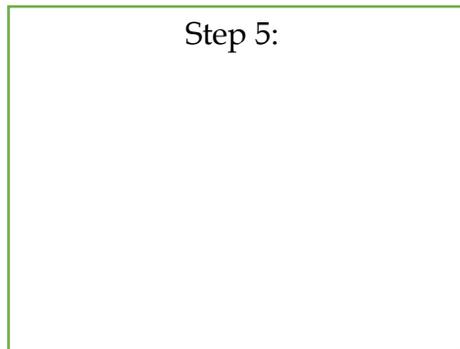
Step 4:



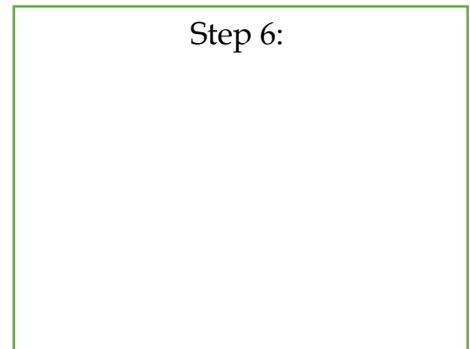
Step 3:



Step 5:



Step 6:



## **Resource E: Gleaning Produce from Farmers' Markets**

Farmers and community volunteers across Iowa are coming together to address food insecurity in their communities by gleaning produce from local Farmers' Markets. Volunteers with [Table To Table](#), a non-profit food rescue organization in Iowa City, partner with Iowa City Farmers' Market vendors to donate produce that is left at the end of the market to local pantries and community centers.

Farmers and Master Gardeners in Buchanan County also work together to glean extra produce from the Independence Farmers Market. In 2018, vendors donated over 700 pounds of produce to the Independence Area Food Pantry through this gleaning initiative. Master Gardener and Horticulture Program Coordinator Ashley Sherrets and Local Foods Coordinator Sarah Kielly answered the following questions about this collaborative gleaning project in Buchanan County.

*How did this project come about?*

Ashley approached Sarah with the [Growing Together] mini-grant application idea and Sarah shared that produce from farmers market vendors was being composted after each market. Vendors wanted an outlet for that produce to be used rather than being composted. After brainstorming and talking with the food pantry board, we came up with a plan to collect the excess produce at the end of each farmers market and transport it to the food pantry.

*Who is involved in the project?*

Ashley Sherrets, Ag/Hort Program Coordinator/ MG Coordinator  
Sarah Kielly, Local Foods Coordinator  
Independence Area Food Pantry  
Buchanan County Master Gardeners  
Independence Farmers Market vendors

*What kinds of produce have you gleaned? Has the donation site offered any feedback on the donated produce?*

The produce collected was mostly vegetables such as: rhubarb, asparagus, onions, radishes, zucchini, cucumbers, peppers (sweet and hot), potatoes, tomatoes, purple/green beans and herbs. We donated raspberries a few times as well. According to the pantry director, the produce donated from our program was fresh and looked so much better than the produce being received in bulk donations from commercial sources; therefore, it was picked up more readily at the food pantry. Most of the produce was used, but as happens during the growing season, when there was a plethora of zucchini and cucumbers from our gleaning, it was also being donated by other sources and excesses could not always be distributed.

*What aspects of this project have been most successful?*

The farmers' market vendors were happy to have a good use of their excess, unsold produce, which they also did not have to take back home. The Master Gardeners were impressed by the value of produce donation, filling a need in our community as well as reducing waste. It also changed past resistance by the Buchanan County Master Gardeners towards a food donation program. They are looking forward to continuing to glean in the future, and will even forego reimbursement for mileage from grant funds. From the food pantry director, we learned that clients were preserving produce through canning and freezing because it was high quality.

*What aspects of this project have been most challenging?*

The most challenging aspect has been finding weekly volunteers to glean, weigh and transport the produce at each farmers' market. Even though value was identified, not all of my Master Gardeners volunteered, and often it was the same few volunteers transporting after market. Another challenge we faced was the market's location being impacted by flooding. This resulted in not having access to our supplies and needing to improvise in order to donate the produce.

*What items/materials did you need to get started with this gleaning project?*

We purchased all our materials for the project: digital scale, stackable bins, food-grade liners for bins, food safety supplies such as gloves, sanitizing wipes, and signage identifying the project. We also purchased bin cleaning supplies and batteries for the scale. For the food pantry we purchased recipe cards and publications from the Extension store to give patrons ideas on how to use produce.

*What should Master Gardeners and community volunteers be aware of before starting to glean from a local Farmers' Market?*

We recommend assessing volunteer interest before starting this program. We also recommend communicating expectations with the food pantry beforehand, making sure they can give you access to the pantry, adequate space for produce to be safely stored and ideas of what pantry patrons will use. This type of program, once established, is easy to do and maintain, and people should take this as a beginning step towards produce donation in their community.

*Additional thoughts?*

No matter how big or small the donation is, it will still make a difference and add up quickly. Adding in additional ways to receive produce such as community gardens, plant an extra row, or a community produce donation awareness campaign could be opportunities to increase supply available to be donated for the pantry. Projects like these are easy to advertise and increase awareness of ways to collect healthy produce for Iowans in need.

Interested in starting a gleaning initiative at a Farmers' Market in your area? Consider these steps to get started:

- *Research* - Find a farmers' market near you using the [USDA National Farmers' Market Directory tool](#).
- *Brainstorm* – what organizations or individuals might you partner with to get this project started? Possible connections are boundless! You might start with local farmers, community volunteer groups like Master Gardeners and 4-H, and local food pantries or community centers.
- *Take stock* – what resources do you have, and what would you need, to get started gleaning from a farmers' market? If your project will involve Master Gardeners, consider applying for the [Growing Together mini-grant](#) to fund necessary equipment – like food-safe produce bins and farmers' market tabling supplies.
- *Additional resources* - Check out the Growing Together Gleaning Video Training, which will be available on the Community Donation Gardening Toolkit (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>). Although this training is geared toward folks who seek to glean produce directly from farms, some information from the training can also be applied to gleaning from farmers' markets. For even more information on gleaning, don't miss Resource F for a list of additional resources – and good luck! 😊

## **Resource F: Additional Resources for Gleaners**

### ***Gleaning guides & case studies***

Food Recovery Network. (2015). *Food Recovery Network's Guide to Gleaning*. Retrieved February 2019 from: <https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/gleaning>

This gleaning guide is aimed at volunteers interested in gleaning from farms for donation to local food pantries. It outlines steps necessary to start a gleaning group. The guide also offers some information on storing and transporting produce.

Hundhammer, M., & Murphy, B. (2011). *Bulletin #4301, Food for your Community: Gleaning and Sharing*. Retrieved February 2019 from: <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/4301e/>

This extension publication from the University of Maine offers an overview of considerations for aspiring gleaners, including clear communications with potential farmer donors and anticipating and addressing farmers' concerns. The publication also covers basic infrastructure and capacity needs of a gleaning group and includes video profiles of community gardeners.

Laurie J. Beyranevand, Amber Leasure-Earnhardt, and Carrie Scrufari, *Models for Success: A Set of Case Studies Examining Gleaning Efforts Across the United States*. Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, Vermont Law School. South Royalton, VT. January 2017.

This detailed collection of gleaning case studies is a must-read for anyone looking to build or expand a gleaning initiative. It includes a comprehensive table of best practices for gleaning groups (pp. 8-11) and profiles of existing gleaning groups across the United States.

Salvation Farms. *Community-Based Gleaning: A How-To Guide Prepared by Salvation Farms*. Retrieved March 2019 from: <https://www.salvationfarms.org/resources/#gleaning-guide>

Put together by the seasoned gleaners at Salvation Farms in Morristown, Vermont, this guide offers information for beginning and experienced gleaners. The guide covers how and when to pick common vegetables (pp. 14-15), good record-keeping habits, and tips to building strong partnerships with farmers.

United States Department of Agriculture. (2010). *Let's Glean! United We Serve Toolkit*. Retrieved January 2019 from: [https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda\\_gleaning\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf)

This toolkit, created by the USDA in 2010, offers a quick run-down on the basics of gleaning, providing an overview of steps to take when starting a gleaning project.

## ***Legal information on food donation***

Center for Agriculture & Food Systems: National Gleaning Project. (2019). *Legal & Policy Resources: A curated, searchable database of gleaning-related federal and state laws, legal and policy resources, and research organizations*. Retrieved February 2019 from: <https://nationalgleaningproject.org/legal-policy-resources/>

The National Gleaning Project, run by the Center for agriculture & Food Systems, is an excellent resource for gleaners. Their legal and policy page is searchable by state, providing information about both federal and state laws and regulations. Elsewhere on their website, they maintain a map of gleaning and food recovery organizations across the county. Consider adding your project to the map!

Feeding America (2018). *Protecting our Food Partners: The Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act*. Retrieved March 2019 from: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/partners/become-a-product-partner/food-partners>

Feeding America provides information on their website that breaks down the Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, which protects folks from liability when donating to a food pantry, except in instances of gross negligence.

## ***Produce handling & food safety***

Jauron, R. (2002). Harvesting and storing vegetables. *Iowa State University Horticulture Guide: Home Gardening*. Retrieved March 2019 from: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/4064>

This Iowa State Extension publication offers information on both harvesting and storing fresh produce. It contains a detailed table of storage temperatures for different vegetable crops (p. 2).

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach: Farm, Food and Enterprise Development. (2019). *Community Donation Gardening Toolkit*. Retrieved April 2019 from: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>

The Growing Together Community Donation Gardening Toolkit contains information related to growing, gleaning, and donating fresh fruits and vegetables. Here you'll find information on food safety practices relevant to donation gardening and gleaning from farms and farmers' markets.

## Resource G:

Gleaning Training Video – available at the link below\*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d74Lb1fn6k4&list=PLEjo13QKnWZj9EQvjT8fBUEMPhfYIFztU>

\*The gleaning training video will also be accessible via the Growing Together Community Donation Gardening Toolkit (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>). If you have difficulty accessing the training video, please contact the author.

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## Appendix A

### *Interviewees*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Interview type</b>
Donna Warhover	Morning Glory Farm (IA)	Farmer	Video
Regina Gabrovich	Healthy Acadia (ME)	Gleaner	Phone
August Stolba	Feed Iowa First (IA)	Gleaner/farmer	Video
Patty Yoder & Carol Cornelious	Food at First (IA)	Donation site personnel	Video
Mollie & Tobin Krell	Homestead 1839 (IA)	Farmers (non-profit)	Video
John Boller	Coralville Community Food Pantry (IA)	Donation site personnel	Phone
Jack Leng	Boston Area Gleaners (MA)	Education & outreach coordinator	Phone
Randy Burnight & Jenny Jorgensen	Up From the Earth (IA)	Woodbury County Master Gardeners	Video
Emily Meister	Table to Table (IA)	Food rescue program manager	Video

## Appendix B

### *Interview questions*

#### *For farmers:*

1. Do you ever have volunteers out to your farm? In what capacity?
2. Tell me about your experience with volunteers at your farm.
3. Tell me about your experience with gleaning, if applicable.
4. What concerns would you have about a gleaning group coming to your farm?
5. What would you want volunteers to be aware of before coming out to your farm?
  - a. For example: information related to your food safety plan, general horticultural knowledge, etc.
6. In what ways would gleaning fit into your current farm plan, if at all?
7. What advice would you have for a volunteer gleaning group that's just starting out?

#### *For donation site personnel:*

1. Have you ever received produce from local gardens or farms? Tell me about that produce.
  - a. Have you ever experienced any issues with local produce?
2. What experience have you had with gleaning, if any?
  - a. For example, have you ever had volunteers who work at the pantry go out to a farm and glean produce? How do they organize that effort? What works and what doesn't?
3. Would you be interested in receiving produce that was gleaned from a farm? Why or why not?
4. What would you want gleaners to know about the donation site before donating local produce?

#### *For Master Gardeners or gleaners:*

1. Tell me about how your gleaning or food rescue group operates.
  - a. How are volunteers organized? How do you communicate with farmers?
2. How does the produce travel, from time to harvest through to delivery? Who washes the produce? Where are the facilities located?
3. What aspects of the gleaning endeavor work well? What has been a challenge?
4. What have been some key lessons learned through these efforts?
5. For folks who are interested in and excited about starting a gleaning group, what would be your recommendations or words of wisdom?