



QUICK START GUIDE FOR NEW BACKPACK PROGRAMS

Thank you for your interest in starting a Blessings in a Backpack program. You are joining a team of dedicated volunteers that provide more than 3 million hunger-free weekends to kids who are at risk of being hungry on the weekends. The following guidelines will walk you through the steps of how to make hunger-free weekends a reality in your community.

In your role as program coordinator, you are responsible for:

- Leading your volunteer team to raise funds to cover program expenses.
- Serving as a liaison between Blessings and your school.
- Ordering and delivering food for weekly distribution.

As a partner with Blessings in a Backpack, you can expect the following support from the national office:

- Assistance in program implementation by your dedicated program manager.
- Marketing, PR, and valuable branding.
- A ready, convenient source for food that meets Blessings nutritional standards.
- Administrative support including financial reporting.
- Fundraising support including tools, templates, and resources.
- Online training and learning opportunities to assist you in managing your program.

Step 1: Know the mission & vision of Blessings in a Backpack.

Mission Statement: 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 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, Blessings strives to ensure kids don't go hungry on the weekends by empowering individuals and communities to take action.

Step 2: Understand what it costs to feed a child.

Your local volunteer team is responsible for raising financial support to cover the food and a portion of the nonfood program expenses for the kids at your school. With Blessings in a Backpack, \$130 will feed one child on the weekends for one 38-week school year. It takes into account the food cost, program support, and mission support that is raised by programs locally and by the national staff. Locally, your program strives to raise \$113 a child to cover food and a portion of direct program expenses. The national organization raises the rest, covering mission support and direct program expenses incurred by Blessings in a Backpack to support your local program location.

To calculate the funding you will need to raise, multiply \$113 by the number of children identified in your program. For example, if you are feeding 50 kids, you will need to raise \$5,650 to run your program for the entire school year. You may send the first weekend food bags home with the kids once one-half of the funding has been raised.

Please note, your actual budget will be determined by your food expenses which may vary by market. Programs have the option of providing additional food bags during holiday and summer breaks.



Step 3: Identify and meet with your school partner.

- Select a school partner. If you do not have a particular school in mind, visit www.schooldigger.com to research schools in your community. The website provides information on the number of children who qualify for free and reduced meals at each school.
- Schedule a meeting with the principal or counselor to introduce the Blessings program.
- Share the Blessings in a Backpack mission.
- Explain the school's role in supporting the program:



- Identify kids to participate in the Blessings program. Some schools will select kids who appear to be most at risk while others may target kids in a specific grade or level.
- Provide a designated space or room in the school to sort or store food.
- Send a permission letter to parents asking for their consent to allow their child to participate in the Blessings program. There are two types of letters – Opt-in and Opt-out. School staff and program coordinators 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 kids 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.
- Distribute weekend food bags.

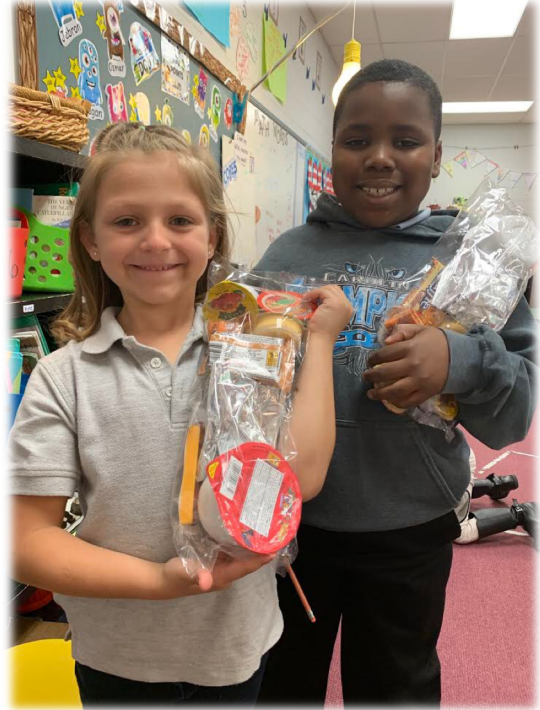
Student Confidentiality

- Confidentiality is a concern for all schools. The decision of which kids will be selected to participate in the Blessings program is made at the school level and is never communicated to a volunteer or the Blessings national office. Blessings staff and volunteers will only need to know the number of kids 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 kids are not permitted. The Blessings national office has images of kids that have been approved for national release. Please contact your program coordinator or managing director with your request.

Step 4: Complete the paperwork.

Once you have received approval from the school administration, you will need to complete the appropriate paperwork below.

- **Program Information Form:**
This form provides contact information for the school, volunteers and staff managing the program.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):**
This form is an agreement between the local volunteer team and the Blessings in a Backpack national office which outlines the guidelines for operating a Blessings program.



Step 5: Identify your fundraising resources.

Your dedicated program manager will work with you and our volunteer team to create a fundraising plan for your program. Many of our volunteers solicit individual donors, businesses, and organizations, as well as apply for community grants or hold fundraising events.

Step 6: Educate your donors on how to make donations for your program.

Our website provides information on how donations can be made to your program. Regardless of how a donation is made, remind your donors that the **program name** must be indicated so the donation can be placed in a designated fund for your program.

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 Blessings website homepage blessingsinabackpack.org and click on "Donate Now."

Don't forget to thank your donors! 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.

Are you ready to get started?

Please contact Anita Knazze at anitaknazze@blessingsinabackpack.org or (312) 366-2745.