



A NARRATIVE CHANGE CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT

**MARCH 2022** 



# >>> IMAGINE

# A future where nutritious food is a human right

Next Shift is a narrative change campaign born out of Closing the Hunger Gap, a network of organizations and individuals working to expand hunger relief efforts beyond food distribution towards strategies that promote social justice and address the root causes of hunger. As workers and volunteers at food access organizations, we are committed to building a just food system that ensures everyone's human right to nutritious food and dignity - and that starts with us.

Every individual and organization in the food access sector has a role to play in Next Shift. This toolkit is an attempt to reflect that, designed to support people and organizations at different stages and with different needs. This document is a consolidation of years of thought-leadership and effort from people

throughout our sector, but it is by no means comprehensive. Conversations are everevolving and this toolkit is a snapshot of the current movement. We hope this will provide you with a starting point and encourage you to become a part of our community, if you aren't already, for support tailored to you and your circumstances.

Please take from this toolkit whatever serves you in facilitating a conversation around thriving wages, safe and fair working conditions, and shifting leadership and decision-making power to center people impacted by racism and economic exploitation.

Leave whatever doesn't.



# WHAT IS NEXT SHIFT?

**Next Shift** is a campaign for racial and economic justice in our food system, starting with the transformation of our own anti-hunger and hunger relief sector.

We're calling on staff, volunteers, and leadership of food banks, food pantries, food councils, and soup kitchens to lead our sector in transforming the food system by better understanding and finding solutions to address the root causes of hunger and poverty.

Economic justice is the next step toward ending the chronic need for food banks, and that change starts with us.



# JOIN US!

We're asking you to join us in the **Next Shift** towards a world of abundant nutritious food with dignified access for all by advocating for and moving resources toward:

Thriving wages and safe and fair working conditions for all staff and workers in anti-hunger and hunger relief organizations. As food access organizations we must model our commitment to economic justice. A thriving wage goes beyond a living wage, enabling workers to do more than just cover their basic needs, instead allowing them to prosper, have self-determination in the choices they make for their families and plan for the future. This means putting the health, safety and humanity of employees, volunteers and people experiencing hunger first. This could mean adequate staffing and budgeting that ensures a realistic workload, safety measures to prevent workplace injury, COVID precautions, equal pay, ability to speak out without retribution, building

and decide what safe and fair means to them.

Building organizational structures that center racial equity. Shifting leadership and decision-making power to center people impacted by racism, hunger, and economic exploitation. Communities know what they need, and we can align our sector's resources to better meet those needs with leadership rooted in experience. This could mean creating a Board of Directors that reflects the community, employing people from the community in leadership positions, and adopting a model of shared decision making that includes those with lived experience of poverty and hunger.

a culture of anti-racism and honoring employees' efforts to organize, unionize

Shifting the narratives around hunger. We are here to shift our sector from charity to solidarity, and that starts with addressing the stories we tell ourselves about who we are, what our responsibilities are, and why we exist as a sector. We reject the notion that hunger is separate from other issues such as human rights and economic, racial, environmental and social justice. We believe that our sector has a powerful role to play in reshaping the narrative around hunger and its solutions, and moving beyond addressing immediate needs to tackle the root causes of hunger and poverty.



# SHARED LANGUAGE CHECKPOINT

## What is a narrative change campaign?

An analysis of narrative power rooted in the framing of the stories that circulate in society and a set of actions to intervene where those stories are told to challenge underlying assumptions.

The goal of a narrative change campaign is to:

- Re-imagine a different future
- Build shared analysis and momentum for movement building
- Changing perceptions, belief systems, and assumptions
- Hearing about the issue from the people most affected by it

Anyone can join a narrative change campaign at any time, you don't have to have your organization on board to be a part of Next Shift!

You can learn more about narrative change strategies at <u>Center for Story-Based Strategies</u> or <u>The Social Change Initiative</u>.



We have to talk about economic justice, institutional racism, housing, workers rights when we talk about hunger and food security. We need to think not only of those in immediate need of food today, but what about tomorrow?

# WHY NOW?

As people who work at the frontlines of hunger relief, we witness the overwhelming impacts of the ongoing hunger crisis every day. This crisis has been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and our food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and organizations have had to adapt, just as our communities have had to find a path forward through uncertainty and hardship. We believe that now is the time for deep change in how we address hunger and food insecurity; from a focus on food access to one committed to ending hunger at its root. As the anti-hunger and hunger relief sector, we can and must play a crucial role in the next shift toward equity, justice, and community prosperity.

Next Shift is a campaign for racial and economic justice in our food system, starting with the transformation of our own hunger relief sector. It's time to reimagine how the care that fuels our day-to-day work can also fuel a broad transformation of our entire food production and distribution system via changes in power, policies, and practices. Economic justice is the next step toward ending the chronic need for food banks, and that change starts with us. That means a thriving wage and safe, fair working conditions for all food access workers, and shifting leadership and decision-making power to center people impacted by racism, hunger, and economic exploitation, and changing the narratives around hunger. Communities know what they need, and we can align our sector's resources to better meet those needs with leadership rooted in experience.

To bring about broad and comprehensive change towards a just food system where people have self-determination in how they access food, we must also align in solidarity with others along the food supply chain including farmers and farm laborers, truck drivers, grocery store workers, and those who prepare and serve our food. These are the essential workers who labor (without pause) to keep us fed, yet so often cannot afford to buy the food they produce due to

low wages and unfair working conditions. While hunger relief organizations serve a crucial role in getting food to people who need it, we can also function as hubs of information, resources and connection to support root-cause work at every point in food production and distribution.

Imagine a future where everyone has access to nutritious food and can eat in peace. without the threat of unstable housing, lack of adequate healthcare, criminalization, abuse, or deportation. To get there, we must lean into the adaptability, flexibility and diversity that make our organizations function today, and move resources to meet the demands and opportunities of this moment and beyond. This path from charity to solidarity emerges as we walk it together. The Next Shift campaign serves as a map for the initial conversations within our organizations that will identify and nurture shared values that we can act on. Join us as we make the shift toward inclusivity. abundance and justice.



# A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Language evolves. This means the definition of words can vary in different contexts.

The glossary that follows is our attempt to outline the language in this toolkit and our definitions of terms to minimize confusion and maximize dialogue. If there are any terms used in this toolkit that are not included in this glossary but need any additional clarification, please reach out to us at <a href="mailto:nextshiftcampaign@gmail.com">nextshiftcampaign@gmail.com</a>.

There is no correct or incorrect term for our sector. The boundaries for who is included in any one term are malleable and dependent on context. When we refer to At this time, Next Shift has chosen to prioritize the terms anti-hunger and hunger relief when talking about our sector and the organizations within it. We chose these terms because they are commonly used among organizations that more closely adhere to charity models (see; National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference or Feeding America describing themselves and their members as "hunger relief organizations"). We also appreciated that these terms have already been used by critics of our sector (see; "anti-hunger industrial complex").

At times, we may use the term food access as this can better encompass the full scope of our sector including but not limited

"If you are passionate about food justice and creating a world where nutritious food is a human right, you are included here even if our imperfect language choices don't reflect it."

"our sector", we are talking about one that largely consists of non-profit 501(c)3 entities like food banks and pantries, and can also include grassroots organizations and mutual aid, advocacy and activist groups, educational institutions, local government, the agricultural sector, and workers in the food system. If you or your organization do not use or do not identify as any of the terms or categories we include in this toolkit, that is okay. If you are passionate about food justice and creating a world where nutritious food is a human right, you are included here even if our imperfect language choices don't reflect it.

to urban farms and community gardens, mutual aid groups, and workers throughout the food system.

Other terms we considered were emergency food, hunger alleviation, and food justice sector/ organizations. If these or any others feel better to you or more familiar to your context, please use them. We wished to include an explanation of our decisions to be transparent and to share the tensions and discussions we held even in the process of choosing a descriptive name for our sector.

## **GLOSSARY**

#### **Economic exploitation:**

A relationship in the distribution of economic wealth wherein a worker does not receive the proper amount of income or entitlement.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Economic justice:**

The ethical and moral lens with which to construct and change economic institutions that are set up to impact individuals. It takes into consideration how systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, ableism, among others have influenced economic institutions such that certain groups of people are persistently marginalized. Economic justice is the body of work that aims to change systems, policies, and organizations to right the wrongs of systems of oppression within the economic institutions.

#### **Food sovereignty:**

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 agriculture 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.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Narrative assumptions:**

Assumptions make up the glue that holds the story together; they are the unstated parts of the story that you have to accept in order for the story to make sense.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Narrative change strategy:**

Analyzing and understanding the power embedded in a particular story, and then structuring that story in such a way as to win hearts and minds and build a large base of support for the cause.

#### **Root-cause work:**

Means identifying and then remedying the core issue(s) that sets in motion the entire cause-and-effect reaction that ultimately leads to the problem(s). Racism, poverty, economic exploitation and extractive capitalism are recognized as the root causes of hunger and so efforts to eliminate the problem of hunger requires transforming these systems into ones that are fundamentally just.

## People with lived experience/ people who experience:

Those who have embodied experience of hunger and poverty, meaning they have lived with or are living with the realities of food insecurity, including food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, EBT and other means of accessing food for free or reduced cost, due to insufficient income. Member organizations across our sector use varying terms like "customer", "client" or "member" as a way to reference the end-users of the organization's services in an attempt to uplift dignity.

#### Thriving wage:

The income that is needed for people to actually thrive, not just cover their basic needs. This allows for people to build up an emergency savings fund and pursue activities that provide them joy.

#### Sources

- 1. https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/ view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195088274.001.0001/acprof-9780195088274-chapter-3#:~:text=This%20chapter%20 introduces%20the%20concept,agreed%20or%20 expressed%20sympathy%20towards
- http://usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/what-is-foodsovereignty/
- 3. <a href="https://www.powershift.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/CSS-ReimaginingChange-1stEd%2BEBOOK.pdf">https://www.powershift.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/CSS-ReimaginingChange-1stEd%2BEBOOK.pdf</a>



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# What is Closing the Hunger Gap? How do I get involved? Where do I start?

<u>Closing the Hunger Gap</u> is a network of organizations and individuals working to expand hunger relief efforts beyond food distribution towards strategies that promote social justice and address the root causes of hunger. You can get involved by <u>joining our email list</u> to get up-to-date information on member meetings, strategic working groups, regional networks, and more. By participating in <u>Next Shift</u> you are getting involved with Closing the Hunger Gap, too!

# Do I need my organization to commit before I can be part of the work as someone who works in the food system?

No! You have a valuable part to play as an individual in a larger community working to address inequities within our sector, and we hope that by participating you will find camaraderie and support beyond your organization with like-minded people in similar scenarios. You're very welcome to participate as an individual or an organization or collective.

### If I want to get involved in Next Shift, what is my first step?

Your first step is to sign the <u>Next Shift Personal Pledge</u> to show solidarity in building a just food system that ensures everyone's human right to nutritious food and dignity. This pledge is an opportunity to share your personal support for the goals of the <u>Next Shift</u> campaign as an individual, unaffiliated from your organization.

After you've signed the personal pledge, set aside ten minutes to look over the Organizational Readiness Assessment at the bottom of the toolkit. This tool will support you in determining where your organization, group, or community is in their understanding and/or alignment with the values that Next Shift is sharing.

Check out our calendar of events to stay informed about upcoming events and an emerging community of practice where you can listen and share your thoughts, experiences, ideas, challenges and inspirations for being a part of the Next Shift. Please share the campaign website with your friends, colleagues and community and spark conversations

And finally, you can reach out to us at <a href="mailto:nextshiftcampaign.@gmail.com">nextshiftcampaign.@gmail.com</a> if you're interested in staying involved but not sure what that looks like for you; we're here to help!

# What is a thriving wage, and why should all hunger relief organizations strive to pay staff a thriving wage?

If a living wage is the wage required for a person or family to have their basic needs met, a thriving wage is the wage required for a person or family to have their needs met with the flexibility to make choices in how to meet their needs and to pursue creative endeavors, relaxation, education, or whatever else they chose to do with their time and resources. We are asking for food access organizations to pay staff a thriving wage as a first step in ensuring everyone has the financial means to live a dignified life free from hunger. We believe internal practices need to reflect our mission and values.

# Why is the campaign focused on thriving wages, safe and fair working conditions, and the right to organize?

Economic injustice is one of the root causes of hunger and poverty and a major barrier to ensuring everyone's right to nutritious food. As food access and anti-hunger organizations, we have a unique opportunity to model our commitment to economic justice internally through our policies, practices, wages, worker supports and narrative strategies. By establishing thriving wages for all, ensuring safe and fair working conditions, and supporting workers rights to organize and unionize within our own "walls", we have the power to improve the lives of workers in our sector, shift the public narrative and leverage the power of our institutions to support the movement for economic justice as a key step towards ending hunger.

As people working in the food access sector, we have all heard the stories about wages, poverty, and self-worth—the idea that hungry people don't work or that "unskilled" labor is

valued less and should be paid less than positions that require degrees. We want to push back on these narratives by recognizing the inherent value of all humans. We believe everyone deserves to live a happy and healthy life. We know hard work isn't the problem-compensation and rampant unchecked capitalism is the problem. Racism, hunger, and economic exploitation are inextricably connected to each other as products of white supremacy and extractive capitalism. Organizations that claim to be working to end hunger that don't provide adequate wages and force their staff to decide between their personal safety and a paycheck is the problem.



#### Why shift the narrative around hunger to focus on root causes?

Chances are that if you care about ending hunger your personal values are already aligned with the aims and values of the Next Shift campaign. Unfortunately, the dominant narrative around hunger comes short of setting us up, as individuals and organizations, to actually ending hunger. Currently, the dominant narrative around hunger focus on an individual's lack of food as the problem and food charity as the solution. While meeting immediate needs in a time of emergency is important, this narrow "story" of hunger limits our understanding of, and ability to solve, the larger problem of hunger. If we shift the narrative to focus on the systemic problem of hunger and its interconnected root causes - like racism and economic injustice - we can more clearly see and invest in effective, systemic solutions to hunger. Being intentional about changing the dominant narrative (and more importantly our actions as individuals and organizations) takes us one step closer towards ending hunger once and for all. Changing hearts and minds creates the condition for our social change strategies to succeed. The stories we tell ourselves and each other about hunger and its solutions directly impact what we can imagine as possible and ultimately build together.

# What does it mean to be in "solidarity" with other food chain workers like farm laborers, truck drivers, grocery store workers and those who prepare and serve our food?

First and foremost, many of us actually are food chain workers (even if we haven't thought about ourselves that way yet)! If you work at a food bank, food pantry, soup kitchen, grocery store, restaurant, and more, then you are a food chain worker!

Unfortunately, workers along the food chain disproportionately face hunger and poverty compared with workers across other sectors of society. Faced with low wages, unsafe working conditions and little opportunity to organize or unionize, the people who grow, pick, process, transport, distribute, and serve our food often cannot afford to nourish their own families. Food chain workers, from farms to food banks and beyond, are among the most food insecure people in our society despite working long hours, sometimes multiple jobs, and being closest to the actual food itself. Recognizing that the anti-hunger and hunger relief sector is a vital part of the larger food system, Next Shift offers an opportunity to implement strategies that promote racial and economic justice within our own organizations as a step towards achieving justice for all of us across the food chain. We cannot build a just food system that ensures everyone's human right to nutritious food and dignity without true solidarity across the food chain.



# Why is it important for organizational structures to center racial equity and shift leadership and decision-making power to center people impacted by racism, hunger and economic exploitation?

Racism, hunger, and economic exploitation are inextricably connected to each other as products of white supremacy and extractive capitalism. Power structures that are built within organizations are reflections of the wider whole of society, which means leadership in the anti-hunger sector has largely been held by white people and people who have not experienced hunger and economic disenfranchisement. After 40 years of institutionalized food banking in the U.S., we are still seeing hunger rates hover around 10-12%<sup>4</sup> of the population. We have not made a significant dent in hunger in America with a business as usual approach. We believe that a shift in leadership, strategy-setting, and decision making in our sector that values and centers people impacted by racism, hunger and economic exploitation will have a transformative impact in creating a just, food secure world. We recognize that my liberation is tied to your liberation.

# Why is it important to build collective power amongst volunteers and employees within the emergency food access sector?

Many, if not most, anti-hunger, food access and hunger relief organizations in the United States are modeled after corporate organizational structures that hoard power at the top and leave workers with little to no decision-making power. This leads to suppressed wages and lack of benefits for workers, while the organizational structure puts greater focus and resources into fundraising rather than mission and employees. This structure and the culture that comes with it, often results in retaliation against workers who challenge the status quo.

Shifting organizational practices and structures in the anti hunger, food access and hunger relief sector will not happen on its own. Staff and volunteers must come together to collectively demand change from leadership. There is power in unity, and power in unions. Worker solidarity, unions, and democratized organizational structures give collective power back to workers. When workers exercise collective power, they are central in the organizational decision-making process. Not only do the workers benefit from this by ensuring thriving wages and fair working conditions for themselves, this can also lead to greater focus and impact towards achieving the organization's mission.



#### Source

4. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/key-statistics-graphics/#:~:text=10.5%20percent%20(13.8%20million)%20of,from%2010.5%20percent%20in%202019

# ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT

The organizational readiness assessment is designed to support you in determining where your organization, group, or community is in their understanding and/or alignment with the narratives we are sharing as Next Shift. This is not a moral judgment or intended to place any organizations along a good vs. bad trajectory. Instead, we offer you suggested next steps and tailored support for your participation in Next Shift based on the realities of your circumstances and the environment you are in. To use this tool, read each statement and determine if that statement aligns with the current state of your organization. Mark the score in the tally boxes and at the end, compile your total score. In the following section, Action Steps, we have recommended next steps with accompanying resources to help support you.

Statement	N/A (O)	Disagree ( <b>1</b> )	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
My org can clearly articulate the connection between economic justice and food access.				
My org offers thriving wages to all staff.				
My org practices anti-racism in all decisions, big and small.				
Everyone at my org takes vacation time and weekends. *				
I feel comfortable expressing my needs or concerns without fear of retribution or punishment.				
My org regularly engages in org-wide value reflection. *				
My org has positions of leadership and decision-making power that center people impacted by racism, hunger, and economic exploitation.				
My org understands that hunger is not separate from other issues (such as economic justice and racism).				
My org is actively working to address the root causes of hunger.				
My org fosters a supportive and inclusive environment that allows for people to have hard conversations and challenge existing assumptions.				
My org believes nutritious food should be a human right.				
The daily practices and efforts of my org reflects our stated and shared values and beliefs. *				
Every person at my org understands how they individually contribute to the efforts of the whole.				
My org prioritizes the physical, mental, and emotional safety and well-being of every person in our org and community.				
My org makes changes or adjustments based on feedback and can admit when it has committed harm or wrongdoing.				
TOTAL				

<sup>\*</sup> The starred statements were adapted from the assessment tools in adrienne maree brown's book, Emergent Strategy.

### 0-15: Plant the Seed

You are in a setting where these concepts have likely never been discussed or at least aren't a core part of your organization's values and practices. That means there is a lot of room for you to explore what existing assumptions dominate your organization's narratives and to begin planting the narrative seeds that will challenge those assumptions. You get to be at the ground floor of organizational transformation!

Focus on:	Relationship and trust building, introductory conversations and shared learning, finding allies and collaborators
Existing narrative assumptions:	A food bank's place is to feed people, not work on systemic change.
Ways to reframe:	Hunger is a symptom of systemic inequities. If our goal is to end hunger, we have to look at the systemic inequities that create the conditions of hunger in the first place.

## 16-30: Build the Base

You are in a setting where folks have already begun having some version of these conversations, but may not have reached the point of understanding how your organization fits into it all. You may have a feeling that while your organization is talking the talk it isn't walking the walk. Now is a good time to build on established relationships to formulate actionable changes to move your organization in alignment with its values.

Focus on:	Organizing colleagues around shared values, pushing institutional changes at the executive leadership and board level, engaging with external partnerships and coalitions
Existing narrative assumptions:	People who work/volunteer at our organization are mission driven and don't need incentives like pay or benefits.
Ways to reframe:	The anti-hunger sector has to address how the systemic inequities that create the conditions for hunger play out in our organization - and that includes ensuring everyone has a thriving wage.

### 31-45: Be the Change

You are in a setting where folks know the connections between economic and food justice. Talking about equity is second nature for your organization. Your organization has made strides and significant changes to adjust power and decision-making practices internally. Now is the time to build check-points and systems of accountability to make sure these changes are continuously updated and improved. This is also a time to reflect on the strides you have made and offer your lessons learned to colleagues around the country.

Focus on:	Offering support to peers and peer organizations, build coalitions, assess your position of power, communicate narratives externally
Existing narrative assumptions:	We've done the work, there's nothing more we need to do.
Ways to reframe:	We can start by addressing how these inequities play out within our organization and community. My liberation is tied to your liberation.

# ACTION STEPS

To support you in getting started, we pulled together a list of potential actions you and/or your organization can take, as well as accompanying resources that can help you accomplish them. Each category is divided into immediate actions, steps you can take in the short-term, and long-term lifts. We encourage you to consider looking at ways you can engage with Next Shift in the next ten minutes, the next ten weeks, and the next ten months.

Keeping in mind that this list is not, nor could ever be, complete, we have provided you with a section at the bottom to dream up actions that are unique to you and your circumstances. You can always bring these ideas to

Next Shift meetings or share them among your colleagues or peers— you never know what ideas you have that could land with other people!

# INTERNAL CONVERSATIONS & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Lift	Action	Resources	
Immediate	<ul> <li>Identify colleagues and staff who may be interested in learning more/ joining</li> <li>Start the conversation within your org/sphere of influence</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Conversation guides</li> <li>Storytelling tools from CSS</li> </ul>	
Short-term	<ul> <li>Have internal discussions regarding wages and working conditions</li> <li>Discuss the issue with colleagues/ partner organizations in linking stages of the food system (suppliers, etc.)</li> </ul>	Talking points	
Long-term	<ul> <li>Use the CTHG 8 Point Checklist to assess and change areas in your organization</li> <li>Schedule a budget meeting to plan for desired shifts in wages</li> <li>Influence your organization's strategic plan</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Unionize</li> <li>CTHG 8 Point Checklist</li> <li>Unionizing one-pager</li> </ul>	

SPREAD THE NARRATIVE			
Lift	Action	Resources	
Immediate	<ul> <li>Commit to using the language of Next Shift in your organizational materials and messaging</li> <li>Post on social media</li> </ul>	Conversation guides     Storytelling tools from CSS	
Short-term	<ul><li>Use your media connections</li><li>Schedule a lunch &amp; learn</li></ul>	Talking points	
Long-term	<ul> <li>Invite community to a film screening</li> <li>Hold local convenings (virtual or in-person) about the issue, with peer organizations</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Unionize</li> <li>CTHG 8 Point Checklist</li> <li>Unionizing one-pager</li> </ul>	

OFFER SUPPORT			
Lift	Action	Resources	
Immediate	<ul> <li>Commit to personal/ organizational engagement in the campaign</li> <li>Become a "buddy"; ensure workers engaged in the campaign have the resources they need</li> <li>Offer to be a "go to" organization that others can contact for realistic discussions of what it takes to make the next shift</li> </ul>	Personal Pledge     Community of Practice	
Short-term	<ul> <li>Share case studies and real world examples</li> <li>Write letters of support for unionizing orgs</li> </ul>	Case Study Example     Union Letter of Support Template	
Long-term	Put money and resources toward supporting mutual aid and relief work (outside of the 501c3 sphere)	CTHG 8 Point Checklist	

SPACE TO DREAM			
Action	Timeline	Resources Needed	
		Ö	



Economic Justice, and it starts with me and you.

