



# TACTICS TO TRY FOR EMERGENCY FOOD PLANNING: A Roadmap for Creating Your City's Emergency Food Response And Recovery Plan

The Tactics to Try series of case studies was created to complement the Emergency Food Planning webinar series presented by Food Cities 2022 Learning Partnership. Tactics to Try highlight proven emergency food responses in a format that offers practitioners the most essential points for trying something similar in their own city.

## Objective

The final Tactics to Try in our series synthesizes key learnings from the webinar series and resources curated for the [Learning Platform](#). We have organized them into a 'roadmap' for city leaders—to catalyze their journey towards creating their own emergency food response and recovery plan. It is offered as a starting point. Cities will need to seek out additional resources and expertise to make their plans a reality.

## Emergency Food Planning Guidance

### 1. Gaining 'Authorisation' and Coalition Building

- Some cities—especially those that have not recently experienced a food crisis—may need to start by building a case, or value proposition, for an emergency plan centered around the provision of food. The following considerations may be used for justification:
  - Planning for emergency food needs to happen at the local level and should be supported by and coordinated with national government planning.** National emergencies, disasters and conflicts still require local actions for local interventions to address chronic food insecurity, malnutrition and the need for emergency food. During a crisis, national governments are generally overwhelmed and lack the capacity and resources to effectively engage at the local level. Local authorities and organisations also have the best knowledge of the situation and relationships for implementing interventions.
  - Acting early and quickly is critical when responding to any emergency crisis.** During a massive crisis, government authorities will be overwhelmed dealing with response and recovery for multiple sectors (transportation, housing, etc.). Without an emergency food plan in place, government leaders will be forced to scramble and provide inequitable, inefficient solutions.

- **Emergency food situations are increasing in duration, lasting months and years, not days or week.** To prepare, city leaders need to plan for providing food aid both immediately and for the long term, which involves a complex mix of policies and strategies. All urban systems, including food, will be stressed.
- Local authorities are unlikely to have the capacity to ‘go it alone.’ They will not have the resources to fully address a food crisis in the midst of a massive disaster. They will need to rely on the voluntary sector (international aid organisations as well as national and local charitable organisations) to both address the crisis and to signal when one arises, since charitable organisations (local nonprofits) have daily connections to any city’s vulnerable populations. Likewise, voluntary organisations will need critical support and resources that only the government can provide. Consensus among government and aid agencies on how residents should prepare for disasters is also a crucial aspect of emergency preparations.
- In addition, it is critical when addressing food situations that governments also partner with private businesses, since they are the backbone of food systems. Public- private partnerships can leverage assets to invest more and create outcomes with greater impact.

## 2. Establishing Ownership and Leadership

- To ensure a rapid, robust emergency food response, the local authority should establish a dedicated, government Food Team that will be able to quickly mobilize government resources, establish help lines and online help portals, act as the primary contact for other sectors and collect critical data and information city-wide. This team will bring together key staff from various departments that will be needed to respond to food system crisis (e.g., public health, transportation). Some staff should be permanently deployed to the Food Team to manage it during non-emergency times.
- For refugee situations, establish a dedicated migration office in city government. This office will play a key role in implementing the emergency food assistance for refugees and coordinating within government and with aid associations. A large refugee crisis generally brings support from numerous aid agencies. Involve aid associations in the planning to help define the short and long-term support they will be able to provide.
- To prepare for catastrophic disasters, emergency food response and recovery plans need to be aligned with broader government emergency management plans and prioritized within those plans.
- The government team should also seek input, or include, relevant non-profit and private sector stakeholders who are critical in assessing need and delivering food resources, such as food banks, the Red Cross/Red Crescent, relevant food manufacturing and retail trade associations, and in the United States, state or local Voluntary Organisations Active in Disaster (VOAD).
- Emergency food plans should clearly identify the voluntary organisations with the capacity and resources to manage an emergency food distribution hub (with current contact information). Consider food charities with extensive food distribution expertise as well as those not currently focused on alleviating food poverty but that have the capacity to lead a city-wide initiative.
- Grocery stores also need solid emergency plans, not just generators. Even national chains should be required to submit their response and recovery plans for review. Generators, fuel reserves, transitioning to more shelf-stable products, workforce considerations and alternative payment systems all need to be considered in the plan. Stores may be without power for months, not days. National or international grocery stores will not always have the resources (or the incentive) to re-open their stores immediately. They will also be relying on emergency aid. Smaller grocery stores may be more nimble and more committed to their community, but may not have the capacity or resources either to re-open.

### 3. Building Communication and Monitoring Infrastructure

- The voluntary sector can, and typically does, self-coordinate in response to any crisis. However, to formalize the coordination with the local authority, a communication and coordination platform should be developed before the next crisis, if one does not already exist. The platform will allow the voluntary sector and the government's Food Team to strengthen their relationship and provide a means for quickly amplifying food crisis concerns as they arise.
- Establish a plan for rapid assessment of need and response that is independent of telecommunications. It is critical to have a fully developed plan that has been communicated to key stakeholders throughout your city and that will be implemented without communication. Cities will need to be broken down into areas small enough to canvass physically. Key liaisons for each area should be established. Create a database of vulnerable community members (relying on food assistance and healthcare providers) and plan to provide shelf-stable food assistance immediately to them in the event of a disaster.
- Objective and reliable data, collected at local levels, is needed to accurately monitor the location, severity and scale of food insecurity. For some countries, especially those overwhelmed by natural disasters, economic collapse or conflict, they may need the additional capacity and technical expertise of international organisations. Planning should include how best to support and engage in networks such as IPC or FEWS NET. These connections are especially important during disasters or conflict when countries may need to rely on external sources of data because of barriers to data collection.

### 4. Securing Resources

- Emergency food response is very resource intensive. Being prepared for the next crises requires having the funding in place to adequately support the response being planned. Identify potential sources of public and private funding to support capacity building within the voluntary sector during an emergency food crisis and to purchase bulk food (instead of relying on uncertain food donations).
- Voluntary sector organizations will need more staff, instead of relying strictly on volunteers, especially for prolonged emergencies. The emergency food hub will need specialized equipment for moving, storing, packing and distributing food. Purchasing food is more efficient, more reliable and allows more control to ensure emergency food is high quality and culturally appropriate.
- The local authority needs to set up contracts for procurement so they can act quickly because complex government procurement channels can be cumbersome. Local authorities will need to advocate for food justice and the right to food at all times to secure more funding from the national government. Local authorities will not be able to afford funding for the voluntary sector without national government and private sector contributions.
- Identify public and private buildings that could serve as emergency food hubs. They will need to have enough capacity and infrastructure for food storage as well as accessibility for distribution. Develop emergency use agreements for the space for the duration of any crisis to prevent operation disruptions due to moving.
- Cash assistance programs are gaining in popularity among humanitarian aid organisations because of their numerous benefits. This will increase and change demand at local markets. Do their supply chains have the flexibility and capacity to adapt? Which local banks will participate in such programs and do they have the capacity to set up a system quickly? Are social services and the voluntary sector prepared for the intake and monitoring of refugee needs and supplying adequate food if it is not available at local markets?
- For catastrophic events that capture the world's attention, critical donations of supplies and money often follow. Establish or identify charity (grant-

## Additional Information

### FOOD CITIES 2022 Learning

**Platform:** For access to the entire series, all Tactics to Try and accompanying resources click the Emergency Food Planning tab on the Learning Platform.

<https://www.bit.ly/FC2022>

### Milan Urban Food Policy Pact:

<https://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/>

### RUAF:

<https://www.ruaf.org/>

**C40:** <https://www.c40.org/>

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The mission of the Feeding Cities Group is to create equitable and resilient urban food systems—globally. To learn more, please visit our website:

[www.feedingcitiesgroup.com](http://www.feedingcitiesgroup.com)

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making) organisations that have the capacity to manage the donations and redistribute donations.

- Food banks will play a critical role. Review your food bank's capacity to support the storage and redistribution of food aid and donated funds to purchase food. What criteria will be used and what are the logistics for food distribution? New storage facilities, equipment and experienced workers will be needed to handle the food distribution. They may be needed now, especially if the food bank is located in areas at risk of impact, in sub-standard facilities. Plan how to fully leverage support from [The Global FoodBanking Network](#).
- Review the national government's emergency food plans for your city. Are sufficient resources for a catastrophic event accessible? Set up warehouse facilities with enough rations of nutritious, shelf-stable food items to distribute in the event of infrastructure failure. Have plans in place for temporary cold storage of perishable food items. Most plans involve moving resources from unaffected areas to those hardest hit. What happens when the entire region or country is decimated?
- With climate change, natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity. The storms are massive in scope. Plans also need to account for multiple natural disasters, which deplete resources. Emergency management leaders should also plan to engage with local food banks in the development of their emergency food plan, so they can leverage the food bank's distribution network for staged supplies.

## 5. Planning and Investing for the Long Run

- Manage the immediate crisis but plan for the long-term at the outset. [For example, most refugees stay in their host country for more than five years](#) (in some cases longer than 20 years). Review the emergency food plans of national disaster response agencies and the relevant international aid organisations that will be mobilized to respond to the crisis. Plans should include mapping all potential food sources (food assets). To prepare for catastrophic disasters, plans need to leverage all food assets to ensure residents will have access to food over an extended period—months if not years.
- In the example of refugees, consider whether they should be allowed to settle outside of refugee camps, allowing them to become self-sufficient and integrated into the local economy (driving economic, not just population growth) and relieving food insecurity.
- Assess whether local food production has the capacity and flexibility to meet the demand of a large refugee population. Invest in greater food self-sufficiency and/or diversifying food supply chains, as well as possibly creating an emergency food stockpiling scheme for critical commodities. What is the relative cost of locally produced food, versus imports? This will signal where aid associations will source their food aid. Imported food may erode local agricultural production.
- In addition to investing in farms and fisheries, investing in food start-ups and women-owned food businesses can be important long-term investments that address both chronic food shortages, malnutrition and unemployment/low income levels (an underlying cause of food security). The food sector is often one of the most resilient because it provides a basic human need. During a conflict, it may be one of the few strong sectors that can be leveraged by the government.



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