



WHY's Top 10 Ways to Create Empowerment and Self-Reliance

1) Ensure Your Clients Receive Their Eligible Government Benefits

-Clients are often eligible for food stamps, child nutrition programs, WIC, TANF, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and a host of other programs, yet many low-income people do not receive them. Make sure they do! It can be a huge relief on them and on your program's resources. Give them brochures with application information for social services, phone numbers for government offices, and contact information for any organizations that help people sign up for or negotiate benefits. WHY's National Hunger Hotline (866-3-HUNGRY), your local Community Action Agency, or the county Department of Social Services office will often have this information.

2) Provide Clients with Nutrition Education or Offer Cooking Classes

-Educating clients about proper nutrition and ways to prepare meals can be an incredibly effective way to encourage healthy eating habits. Emergency food is often not healthy and statistically low-income people are more likely to have diet-related health problems. Simply including a handout or flyer on nutrition tips or recipes in a pantry bag or offering a cooking class can provide useful information that can help your clients make healthier choices. Work with local restaurants, cooks, or nutritionists to develop a nutrition or cooking program. WHY has a [Tasty, Healthy Recipe Booklet](#) that you can provide to your clients.

3) Help Your Clients Become Advocates for Themselves

-Develop Advocacy campaigns on political issues like hunger, nutrition, or housing which affect your clients and your community. Let the clients pick the issue. Advocacy can be as easy as inviting a town council member to your organization or as involved as taking part in an advocacy day at your state capital. Just speaking to officials and politicians can have a huge impact. WHY has an



excellent grassroots [Advocacy Toolkit](#) and can connect your agency with a model organization that excels at advocacy work to help your program.

4) Create a Job-Training Program or Refer Clients to One

-Getting a job is becoming harder and harder and people need all the help they can get. Programs which give people the skills they need to get a job while supporting a sustainable economy are vital to ending poverty. There are excellent and innovative grassroots job-training programs that can be replicated in your communities. Have a list of job-training programs with contact information for your clients. The National Hunger Hotline and WHY have great information on these programs, including WHY's Model Program Guide, "[Going Beyond Emergency Food: A Job Training Guide For Non-Profits](#)," which provides profiles of successful job-training programs and other great resources. Contact us if you are looking for programs in your area.

5) Incorporate Local Agriculture and Produce into Your Programs

-If you have a food program, connecting with a local farm or community garden can create new opportunities for your clients to grow their own food or for your program to receive local, healthy food. Many organizations have also created enormously successful youth leadership and entrepreneurial programs out of a farm, employing youth to manage and run a farm or community garden and sell the produce. Connecting to local farmers and gardens also builds community and a strong support network for people. Create a contact list for community gardens, food buying clubs, and community supported agriculture programs (CSAs, where people buy shares in a farm before the growing season and then pick up produce throughout the year) in your area. WHY publications like "[Serving Up Justice](#)" and WHY's database of organizations working on this subject are very helpful! [WHY's Food Security Learning Center](#) also has lots of useful information on [community gardens](#) and [CSAs](#).

6) Create Youth Development and Leadership Programming

-Programming for children and youth is crucial to keeping kids in school, giving them skills and self-confidence to be creative and engaged with the world. Some

WHY is a leading advocate for innovative, community-based solutions to hunger and poverty. WHY challenges society to confront these problems by advancing models that create self-reliance, economic justice, and equal access to nutritious and affordable food.
www.whyhunger.org



potential youth programs can be food and gardening entrepreneurship programs like the ones mentioned above, after school homework help, art or technology classes, media and music production classes, youth advocacy programs (where youth organize around issues important to them and act to make policy changes), mentoring with older people in the community, or community service projects. Create one of these programs or create a contact list of after school and summer programs for kids in your community to refer your clients to. WHY has excellent model organizations doing youth development work that we can connect you to, and America's Second Harvest Food Banks across the country provide assistance and excellent information to help start a [Kids Café](#), a feeding program for kids.

7) Offer Financial Literacy Classes or Individual Development Accounts

-Offering classes in budgeting, investing, saving, and how to restore credit can be enormously helpful for your clients. Reach out to local accountants, banks, or credit unions to volunteer their time and knowledge to help people learn some basic financial information. Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are small savings accounts that reward saving money by matching the amount deposited into the account. To create an IDA, try to partner with a local credit union or bank. WHY can connect you to great organizations offering IDAs to their communities so that you can learn about how it is done.

8) Help Your Clients Start a Business or Learn Entrepreneurial Skills with a Collaborative Kitchen

-Communities benefit when their economies are supported by local businesses, and individuals benefit because local businesses create jobs and income. Local business leaders can volunteer their time to teach clients and participants how to start their own small business. Organizations can invest in certain kinds of infrastructure to make it easier to start businesses. An example of this is a Community Kitchen, a commercial kitchen available to the public which many people can use to create food products to sell. The DC Central Kitchen's [Campus Kitchens Project](#) is a national project to replicate Community Kitchens.



**FINDING ANSWERS
FOR HUNGER
AND POVERTY**

505 Eighth Avenue
Suite 2100
New York, NY 10018
Tel: 212.629.8850
Fax: 212.465.9274
Tristan@whyhunger.org

9) Strengthen Your Local Food System by Encouraging Schools to Serve Local Produce

-Many organizations, schools, concerned parents, counties, and even state legislatures are creating Farm To School programs, connecting local growers and farmers with schools and other institutions, like hospitals, cafeterias and prisons, so that they are supplied by local produce. This supports the local farm economy, ensures that people get healthy food grown locally, and keeps money and income within a community. Many schools also use their connections to a local farm to educate children on growing, cooking, the environment, and nutrition. [The National Farm To School Network](#) can provide an excellent starting point for bringing Farm To School to your community. WHY's "[Feeding Our Future: A Farm to School Program Guide](#)" highlights organizations that have used this model successfully and our [Food Security Learning Center](#) is also a great resource on this topic.

10) Conduct English as a Second Language, Technology, or GED Classes

-Many clients are without basic education. Finding a job and feeling empowered require a solid skill base. These classes can have an enormous impact on someone's ability to find employment and further their education. Partner with a school to explore the possibility of holding these kinds of classes. If your organization cannot offer classes, refer your participants to local classes.

If you are **interested in creating these programs at your organization**, email Tristan Quinn-Thibodeau at tristan@worldhunteryear.org or call 212-629-8850 ext. 18, to learn about working with a mentor organization through the **Mentor Project**.

For more information on these programs, visit http://www.worldhunteryear.org/info_center/why_pubs.asp to read our publications and resources and explore our database of grassroots organizations around the country.

WHY is a leading advocate for innovative, community-based solutions to hunger and poverty. WHY challenges society to confront these problems by advancing models that create self-reliance, economic justice, and equal access to nutritious and affordable food.
www.whyhunger.org