



SecondBite Community Connect™

Enabling community access to local fresh surplus food

Australian Red Cross is working in partnership with SecondBite to deliver the Community Connect™ program across Victoria. With SecondBite's food rescue experience and the Red Cross' successful history in mobilising volunteers to work with Australia's most vulnerable people, we aim to markedly shift community access to healthy food and nutrition.

What is SecondBite Community Connect?

Community Connect is an innovative model of food rescue that facilitates the redistribution of surplus food from local food donors directly to local community groups. This sustainable program was created to further SecondBite's mission of making a positive difference to people by identifying sources of surplus fresh food that might otherwise go to waste, and coordinating its effective redistribution to people in need.

Community Connect addresses the issue of food waste, and increases access to fresh nutritious food for people living in disadvantaged circumstances in our community. It allows existing food programs in urban, rural and regional areas to access surplus food available locally. It enables agencies to redirect funds that would be used to purchase food for their food programs to other areas of need within their organisations. Rescuing food from landfill also has environmental benefits in terms of water, methane and energy saved. The 'connection' formed between a local agency and a local food donor is a positive engagement between the welfare and business sectors and strengthens communities over the long term. The model is simple and scalable, and includes a practical training tool for the community agencies and local stores in how to safely and efficiently set up a SecondBite food collection using local community resources.

Our vision is to help bridge the gap between surplus and need and in so doing have a positive effect in the community and on the environment.

SecondBite and Red Cross are working to ensure the redistribution of food takes place in the areas of highest need. This is done by targeting geographic areas, cross referencing socio-economic indices with available household food security data and the location of those demographics proven to have higher rates of household food insecurity. These demographic populations include asylum seekers and new arrivals, indigenous communities, and single parent families.

The role of Australian Red Cross

The rate of people who do not have regular sustainable access to safe, nutritionally adequate, affordable, and culturally acceptable food is increasing. Many of the groups with whom Red Cross work are affected by food insecurity and, as access to food is not only a basic human right, but a source for health, wellbeing and social inclusion, Australian Red Cross is taking action in this area. Partnering with SecondBite to deliver Community Connect is one way in which Australian Red Cross is working to address food insecurity amongst vulnerable people in Victoria.

Region-based Red Cross volunteers ("Volunteer Community Connect Facilitators") are engaged to support Community Connect agency-donor matches in their local community. Volunteer Community Connect Facilitators will assist both the donor and the agency in the early stages of the process and will be available for ongoing support. Volunteer Community Connect Facilitators will maintain contact with agencies and donors to ensure the program is running smoothly and will assist agencies to ensure they are able to meet their food collection and reporting requirements. Facilitators will also seek out new agencies and donors to be involved in the program.

Why SecondBite Community Connect?

We are aware that there are community agencies out there collecting donated food from various sources. Our challenge is to ensure this is being done in a safe and accountable way. SecondBite Community Connect has the potential to be a powerful change maker across the country as it will ensure that all organisations involved in the redistribution have food safety and human welfare at the top of the priority list and are covered with the relevant insurances. If ad hoc and unregistered food donations continue to grow, and we have every reason to expect they will, it is only a matter of time before the potential health risk is realised with devastating effect.

By providing a safe, accredited and regulated system for both food donors and recipient agencies, Community Connect has the potential to proliferate across the nation with significant social, health, environmental and economical impact.

Key points:

- Agencies are selected using established criteria and their food program is assessed. This guarantees that food reaches those who truly need it
- Food safety priority
- OH&S priority
- Risk Assessment
- Monitoring and Quality Assurance
- Tracking of volumes (recorded and returned to SecondBite)
- Ongoing evaluation and improvement
- Ongoing support and assistance to recipients and donors

Who Can be involved?

Any community group, emergency food relief agency, or benevolent cause with an organised community food program can be part of ***SecondBite Community Connect***. Food Programs, for example, may include community meals, an emergency food pantry, community kitchen or breakfast club.

Recipient agencies register with SecondBite, and are then provided with a guide that outlines the contact details of the food donor, the collection process, food safety and manual handling processes, and guidelines for recording the collections. SecondBite, with the assistance of Red Cross Volunteer Community Connect Facilitators, are responsible for engaging the food donor. Registered recipient agencies must be prepared to train their staff and volunteers to measure and record food volumes, and be able to commit to receive regular collections from the food donor. They also need adequate storage facilities and to understand food safety standards.

Food Recipient Registration

Each agency wishing to participate in SecondBite Community Connect is registered with SecondBite. Registration involves contact with SecondBite to detail the exact nature of the particular food program, the target group it provides food for, and all regulatory requirements (e.g., food safety plan, not-for-profit status). Where required, a site visit is conducted by a Red Cross Volunteer Community Connect Facilitator or SecondBite staff member to ensure all necessary protocols and procedures are in place.

Through this detailed application process and thorough understanding of the broad range of food programs in the community, SecondBite is well placed to ensure that all agencies collecting food via the Community Connect model are able to do so safely, that the food will find its way to those who need it most, and that risks are therefore minimized for the food donor and sector in general.

Food Recipient Training

Food recipients are given information and training on the step-by-step collection process, including the agreed time and place, the importance of being reliable and safety protocols. Pictures are included in an 'Agency Pack' to depict what different food types should look like if they are of the right quality standard.

The food recipient is responsible for recording the amount and type of food donated, and for sending this data back to SecondBite on a regular basis. This is critical data for SecondBite to collate in order to evaluate the Community Connect model, and is often something that the food donors themselves request.

Who donates the food?

SecondBite has established relationships with the major retailers, local independent stores, market stalls and general food businesses. It is also the role of the Volunteer Community Connect Facilitator to continually seek out new prospective donors for the program.

The type of food donated varies according to the type of food donor, but in all cases SecondBite's focus is on fresh food and an attempt to ensure that the food available will meet recipient agency needs as far as possible. The quantity of food that is available for collection from the food donor can also vary due to frequency of collection and seasonality, yet results from our rollout with the major retailers alone shows that on average 30kgs of fresh produce is available per collection, this equates to 60 hearty nutritious meals for the community.

Food Donor Training

Food donors are approached by either the Volunteer Community Connect Facilitator or SecondBite staff to establish the purpose of Community Connect and what the food donor staff will need to do.

The SecondBite team can establish a collection time and place that is convenient for food donor staff, and educate staff on the correct practice for collections. Key components to the training include confirmation of what food should and should not be donated; how boxes for donation should be packed (e.g., maximum weights and type of box); the standard of food quality that is expected, and the volume of food that can be collected based on the food recipient's resources. Tools are provided to help the food donor train their employees.

The food donor is also given information about the recipient agency/ies that collect the food, and about the positive impact the surplus food can make on the people who the agency/ies supports in the community.

Red Cross Volunteer Community Connect Facilitators

Upon registration with the SecondBite Community Connect program agencies will be assigned a *Volunteer Community Connect Facilitator (VCCF)*. The VCCF will then become the key local contact for matters relating to participation in the program going forward.

Initially the VCCF assists the agency (and donor) during the set up stage of their involvement in the program and will:

- Discuss how the agency plans to conduct their food collections
- Assist agencies with the recruitment of volunteers for the food collection role (should volunteers be required by the agency)
- Explain the Community Connect food collection process to volunteers (should volunteers be engaged in the food collection role)
- Attend the first food collection
- Ensure the agency understands how to record accurate statistics for each subsequent food collection.

Beyond the set up phase, the VCCF will be available for agencies and donors to contact should any issues or questions arise. VCCFs will also conduct regular courtesy calls to both the agency and the donor to ensure the Community Connect program is running smoothly.

Who are the volunteers?

VCCFs come from all walks of life and a variety of life circumstances. They may be a mum who's children have grown up and who works part-time from home, or they may be a student with an interest in community programs. Our volunteers however, share some common traits – in particular, they share an interest in supporting community food programs. We require our volunteers to have local knowledge, strong organisational and time-management skills and highly developed interpersonal and communication skills.

How are volunteers recruited and trained?

Red Cross and SecondBite require all applicants to participate in an interview and to successfully complete the full Volunteer Community Connect Facilitator training program. This ensures volunteers are clear about their role and responsibilities and are informed about all aspects of the Community Connect program. Community Connect volunteers will need to complete a police check, a working with children check and reference checks.

The SecondBite Drop Off Model

In some regions SecondBite supplements Community Connect with a delivery of surplus food from the SecondBite warehouse in Melbourne. The Drop Off model operates alongside Community Connect and is aimed at providing *additional* surplus food where local supply cannot meet local demand.

How the Drop Off model works

A lead agency is identified to act as a host to receive a large delivery of surplus food by SecondBite from Melbourne.

Prior to the food delivery, recipient agencies register with SecondBite to be a part of the program.

A regular day and time is established for when the food drop off will occur and when agencies can attend to collect their food (e.g. every Tuesday 11 am – 12 pm).

Each week participating agencies submit an order for the quantity of food they require. This ensures SecondBite know how much food to deliver and to ensure the food is shared equitably amongst participating agencies.

Agencies participating in the Drop Offs do not need to be participating in Community Connect, however they do need to have registered with SecondBite.

Want to be involved?

We welcome enquiries from prospective **agencies, donors and volunteers.**

Please contact

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