

# Garden of Eatin' Organizational Information

## Mission Statement

Garden of Eatin' believes everyone deserves access to nutritious, healthy food. Our mission is to reduce food insecurity in San Antonio by providing free meals to individuals experiencing homelessness and food scarcity through food rescue and repurposing.

## Vision Statement

Our vision is a community where no one goes hungry. We strive to make nutritious meals accessible by delivering food directly to those in need, especially the unhoused, while reducing food waste across the hospitality industry.

## Organization Overview

Year Established: 2023

EIN: 92-2988921

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## Community Impact Overview

### Feeding the Hungry in San Antonio

San Antonio's homeless population exceeds 3300, with over 800 individuals unsheltered.<sup>1</sup> Access to nutritious food is a basic need and a fundamental human right. Without adequate nutrition, it becomes challenging for individuals to focus on other forms of assistance, such as healthcare, housing, or employment. Addressing hunger through regular, nutritious meals creates a foundation that allows individuals to pursue other services and stabilize their lives. Additionally, our partnerships with local grocers and restaurants enable us to repurpose surplus food, reducing waste and directly combating food insecurity in our community.

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<sup>1</sup> [sanantonioreport.org/san-antonio-homeless-population-point-in-time-count-2024/](https://sanantonioreport.org/san-antonio-homeless-population-point-in-time-count-2024/)

## **Serving People with Dignity and Respect**

Many lack reliable transportation, making it difficult to reach traditional food distribution points. Garden of Eatin' eliminates this barrier by partnering with local agencies and hosting pop-up meal distributions across the city, bringing nutritious food directly to areas where individuals gather. By going to those in need, rather than having them come to us, we ensure that accessing food is convenient, respectful, and barrier-free.

## **Sharing Resources**

In collaboration with community partners, we distribute more than just food. At each meal distribution site, we provide pamphlets and guides to local services, including shelters, healthcare, mental health services, and job training programs. This helps create a bridge to further support, offering individuals immediate assistance and information about the resources available to them.

## **Growing Social Capital**

Our regular presence at pop-up events and distribution sites fosters reliability and familiarity within the community. Garden of Eatin' strives to create positive, consistent interactions that build trust over time. With each meal, we include a small note of encouragement, reminding recipients that they are valued and supported. These personal touches help to brighten their day and foster a sense of belonging. This trust-building approach encourages individuals to seek additional support and engage with other services, reinforcing their connection to the broader community.

## **Project Proposal and Phased Growth Plan**

To increase the number of meals served and extend our reach without the immediate cost of a food truck, Garden of Eatin' proposes expanding operations through a series of pop-up events and partnerships with local organizations. By collaborating with shelters, parks, other nonprofits, churches, and community centers, we aim to reach more people and meet them where they are, without requiring them to travel to a fixed location.

## **Strategic Growth Plan**

Currently, Garden of Eatin' operates with a small team of dedicated volunteers. We prepare and deliver meals directly to individuals experiencing homelessness in San Antonio, working primarily with surplus food donated by local restaurants and grocers. We currently partner with Harlandale Sunshine Pantry. This allows us to serve approximately 2,500 meals annually, but we aim to increase this number as we expand.

- 1. Short Term (6 to 9 Months): Expand Meal Delivery with Volunteer Support.** We aim to increase meal delivery from 2,500 to 3,500 annually by recruiting additional volunteers, establishing set delivery days and routes to consistently reach more areas with high need.
- 2. Mid-Term Goal (12 to 24 months): Rent Shared or Commercial Kitchen Space.** We currently use donated/reciprocity kitchen space which can be unreliable or unavailable at times. We plan to transition meal preparation to a shared or commercial kitchen space. This step allows for increased production capacity and meets health regulations for expanded meal service. A larger kitchen space will enable us to prepare 5,000 meals annually, supporting more substantial community impact and partnerships.
- 3. Mid Term Goal (12 to 24 months): Hire a Part-Time Kitchen Coordinator:** As meal demand and kitchen needs increase, hiring a part-time Kitchen Coordinator can streamline operations, handle food safety compliance, and manage volunteer shifts. This position will ensure efficiency in meal prep and delivery, helping us to grow in a consistent and sustainable manner.
- 4. Ongoing Goal: Build Community Partnerships for Ingredient Supply.** We continue to cultivate new partnerships with local restaurants, grocers, and community organizations to increase the amount and variety of surplus food donations. Regular donations will lower ingredient costs, supporting financial sustainability and reducing food waste in the local hospitality industry.
- 5. Long-Term Goal (5 Years) Invest in a Mobile Food Vehicle.** Once we have a stable kitchen operation and consistent donor base, the acquisition of a mobile food truck will expand our reach significantly. With a food truck, Garden of Eatin' can establish a daily presence in high-need areas, delivering fresh meals and essential resources to individuals across San Antonio.

## Projected Impact and Benefits

- **Improved Access to Basic Needs:** By bringing food directly to high-need areas, we eliminate transportation barriers, making nutritious meals readily accessible to individuals who might otherwise go without.
- **Enhanced Resource Awareness through Partnerships:** Through pamphlets and guides, we share information on additional resources, empowering individuals to seek the support they need.
- **Foundation for Positive Change:** With basic needs met, individuals can focus on long-term goals such as finding housing, securing jobs, and pursuing healthcare, making food access the starting point for greater stability.
- **Reduced Food Insecurity and Waste:** By repurposing surplus food from the hospitality industry, we actively reduce food waste in our community while meeting the immediate nutritional needs of individuals facing food insecurity.

## Data and Measurable Outcomes

To demonstrate our impact, Garden of Eatin' tracks the following metrics:

- **Total Meals Served:** We monitor the number of meals distributed at each event and delivery route to assess reach and capacity.
- **Pounds of Food Rescued:** We measure the amount of surplus food collected from local restaurants and grocers.
- **High-Need Areas Served:** Record the number and variety of locations served to ensure we reach a broad range of high-need areas.
- **Recipient Feedback and Testimonials:** Collect testimonials and feedback to capture the human impact of our work and inform improvements in service delivery.
- **Volunteer Service Hours:** We collect records of the number of hours our volunteers dedicate to community service through Garden of Eatin'.