

## Building Partnerships

Building partnerships with other community organizations can create opportunities for your congregation to serve. Establishing a culture for serving outside the walls of the congregation within the community helps keep congregations engaged and accustomed to serving outside of a disaster. When congregations are actively engaged in serving their community, they are better prepared to respond during and after a disaster.

Here are a few recommendations on how you can find local community organizations and form strong partnerships with nonprofits and charities already doing great work in your community.

### 1. Ask Individuals Within Your Congregation for Recommendations

Even if your congregation does not have an official partnership with a charity or a nonprofit, some members may already volunteer with charitable organizations and can help get you connected. For example, members who regularly volunteer at a soup kitchen or a food pantry may be able to introduce you to the agency's leaders to talk about working together. This may lead to an informal or formal relationship in which your congregation mobilizes volunteers to support that agency's disaster response through donating food, funds, or distribution.

### 2. Do Online Research on Nonprofits in Your Area

A simple internet search can help you find local charities and nonprofits. You may find helpful search tools like GuideStar, [www.guidestar.com](http://www.guidestar.com), which has a full directory of more than 1.8 million IRS-recognized charities and nonprofits. You can search by category and find nonprofits in your area doing disaster response work that your congregation can support.

Examples of nonprofits you might search:

- After-school youth programs
- Soup kitchens and food banks/pantries
- Homeless shelters
- Drug recovery and rehabilitation organizations
- Tutoring and educational support organizations
- Support for domestic violence and abuse survivors
- Environmental organizations
- Halfway homes and post-prison rehabilitation centers
- At-risk youth support organizations

Take some time to think about your congregation, your resources, and your vision for transforming your community to help select organizations that best align with your congregation. Then, begin exploring partnerships with these organizations.

### **3. Reach Out to Nearby Public Schools**

Public schools provide an excellent opportunity for your congregation to serve, especially in under-resourced areas. Each school will have different needs. We recommend that you and/or an appropriate congregation staff person consult with a school's superintendent, principal, or school board member to learn more about their needs and challenges and to explore the possibility of partnership.

For example, if a school needs school supplies, organize a supply drive for parents to donate backpacks, notebooks, and other school essentials for students in need.

### **4. Network with Other Ministers and Congregational Leaders**

If you are struggling to find an organization to support or to mobilize enough volunteers to help with a project, consider reaching out to other local congregational leaders, pastors, and ministers. If they already partner with local organizations, you may be able to partner with them, bringing even more volunteers and/or financial support to maximize the organization's effectiveness.

### **5. Contact Local Hospitals and Extended Care Facilities**

Medical facilities, nursing homes, and other similar organizations are often willing to work with faith-based organizations. Congregations often volunteer to visit and care for residents or to help with the maintenance of buildings and grounds.

Another great way to serve your local community is to organize a health screening at your location. This can be especially helpful if you are located in an area that lacks medical resources or has many residents unable to afford adequate health insurance or care.

You can work with a local hospital to set up a basic health screening facility and invite members of both the congregation and larger community. It could even turn into a long-term partnership with annual events.

**Do some research and start planning your next partnership!**