

# Food, Inc. Ingredients for Change

Planning Toolkit



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## About the Film

In *Food, Inc.*, the hit documentary from Participant Media, River Road Entertainment, and Magnolia Pictures, filmmaker Robert Kenner lifts the veil on our nation's food industry, exposing the highly mechanized underbelly that's been hidden from the American consumer with the consent of government regulatory agencies. The documentary shows how the food supply is now largely controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihood of the American farmer, the safety of workers, and the environment. *Food, Inc.* explores how soft drinks and highly processed foods are responsible for America's expanding waistline, and why these foods are so much cheaper and more accessible than fresh produce and other nutritional food sources. It encourages audiences to vote with their pocketbooks to change that paradigm. Featuring authors Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*) and Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore's Dilemma*), along with forward-thinking social entrepreneurs, such as Stonyfield Farm's Gary Hirshberg, *Food, Inc.* reveals surprising—even shocking—truths about what we eat, how it's produced, and why it can make us sick. For film information and to view the trailer: [www.foodincmovie.com](http://www.foodincmovie.com).

## About the Campaign

The **Ingredients for Change Campaign** (IFC Campaign) uses *Food, Inc.* to raise public awareness of the U.S. food system and draw attention to how this system has had an impact on food access and obesity, particularly childhood obesity. The IFC Campaign will bring the film to communities throughout the country where healthy food options are scarce and obesity rates disproportionately high. At each site, Active Voice and Participant Media will help a leading community or public health group organize customized community-engagement screenings to address local nutrition-related health disparities.

Goals and objectives will be determined largely by the participating organizations and might include removing junk food from local schools, organizing local farmers' markets, or creating more affordable, nutritious food options in local stores – all practical steps that can help reduce rates of childhood obesity. The IFC Campaign is intended as a community-organizing event to help drive action plans forward. The IFC Campaign will provide each lead partner with direct support and tools to help sustain your intended outcomes. A representative from Active Voice will be on hand to assist with event planning and implementation as well as creation of a peer-learning network of all sites to build local coalitions and enhance the strength of food advocacy efforts nationwide.

Given adequate time and resources, it also may be nice to invite one or more local food growers to participate in the event and then allow them to set up a farm-stand in or outside the venue from which to sell subsidized produce to audience members as they leave.

Your organization was selected as a site partner in the Ingredients for Change Campaign because of the valuable work you are doing in your community to address food-related issues. We're aware of how busy you are, and the goal of this toolkit is to streamline the event planning as much as possible. Please consider Active Voice a ready resource as you move your event forward and aim for its greatest possible success.



## Getting Started With Your Event

Every event should begin with a small planning screening at least four weeks prior to the central community screening to allow ample time to make any necessary changes to the agenda, reserve a venue, confirm panel discussion participants, and finalize any other arrangements. The planning screening is a chance to invite a small group of local stakeholders (community leaders, healthcare practitioners, policy-makers, etc.) to see the film and discuss how it best can be used to spark discussion of food access issues, obesity, and nutrition-related health disparities; increase the visibility of your organization's work on these fronts; galvanize other endeavors in your community; and create and/or strengthen alliances. It's also an opportunity to discuss key objectives and how the event can help further your organization's action and advocacy efforts.

### Define Your Objectives

Figuring out your objectives is a key step in planning a successful event. Think about what you'd like to get out of the event, how it can best benefit the community you serve, and what outcomes are most realistic. The objectives you might consider include the following (these are not mutually exclusive):

- Heighten public awareness of the causes and impact of obesity (particularly among children) and other nutrition-related problems in your community and nationwide.
- Highlight the need for local policies (and/or institutional changes) to help address the nutritional needs and health of people at risk in your community.
- Mobilize community members to take action by suggesting tangible goals and ways to get involved actively in creating healthier environments and advocating for increased access to affordable, healthy food. Collect audience feedback and contact information and have a plan for following up expeditiously, so as not to lose momentum.
- Build coalitions with new allies, stakeholders, and leaders, especially those "beyond the choir" who can strengthen your organization's efforts.
- Spotlight the work of your organization, recruit new members/volunteers, attract donors, and generate press attention.

### Hammering Out the Details

The planning screening is the time to decide a number of critical details about how your event will run. Some questions to consider:

- Who is the appropriate audience to invite? How will you reach out to them most effectively?
- What's the concrete plan for motivating community action that you will share with your audience? How will you engage them in this plan?
- How long should the event be and how will you break down the different elements within that time period?
- Who will be the main event facilitator(s)? (Think of who will be best at engaging and energizing both the audience and the panelists.)
- Should there be panelists or just facilitators and speakers? Who should be the panelists? (Think about which figures can best engage and inform the audience.)
- Will you provide additional materials, resources, and/or refreshments?
- Will you provide childcare?

### Recruit Partner Organizations (for both the planning event and community screening)

It's essential to invite other organizations and influential individuals to partner with you on your event – both to make the event as successful as possible, and to ensure positive change in your community. Moreover, the planning process is an excellent opportunity for relationship building. We strongly suggest inviting representatives from some of these groups to be involved early on rather than just having them attend the event itself. Such partners can help broaden your reach while contributing valuably to your planning (e.g. suggesting panelists, lending publicity, etc.). In some instances, event-based partnerships pave the way for longer-term collaborations that will benefit your mutual efforts.

Partners can get involved in a range of ways depending on their interest and capacity. At the very least, they can help spread word about the event on their listservs or websites, but some partners might be able to get more actively involved and contribute ideas, time, resources, and/or panelists for the event.

### Types of organizations to consider including:

In addition to tapping organizations directly involved in food access and health issues, we encourage you to think outside the box about other groups and individuals who can play an influential role in the health of your community. For example, city zoning and transportation agencies make decisions that can determine where a grocery store opens or whether a neighborhood has safe sidewalks or bus service to get to that store. Or think about groups and individuals involved in urban planning or marketing and the perspective they could bring to the discussion. It's the less obvious partners that especially will help you reach new potential supporters and bring your messages to new audiences.

We also encourage you to be ambitious in whom you invite. Don't hesitate to contact influential leaders and decision-makers in your community. It's a great opportunity to attract their attention and get them more interested in the work you are doing.



### Local town/city/county departments and organizations:

- Health, planning, police, transportation, & economic development
- Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions clubs
- Local education officials and PTAs
- Health-related organizations
- Local garden clubs, farmer associations, or farmers markets
- Medical schools and schools of public health
- Faith-based organizations
- Libraries, museums, and media/film centers
- Community foundations
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- YMCAs
- Local businesses

### Some tips for reaching out to groups that you've never worked with:

- **Offer background and context.** Send along a link to the **Food, Inc.** website ([www.foodincmovie.com](http://www.foodincmovie.com)). Include a brief description of the film so they'll immediately know what it's about.
- **Make your pitch relevant.** Highlight elements of the film that are most relevant to their interests. For example, a local farmers market will appreciate that the film encourages buying local foods.
- **Highlight the partner benefits.** Getting involved in your event can be a good opportunity for other groups to raise their own visibility and reach new audiences.
- **Remember that groups have different capacities, so involvement will vary.** Some will simply send your email blast to their listserv; others may assist with logistical planning or contribute funds. Be mindful of what your partners are capable of and make sure you're not asking them for too much (or too little!) as you plan your event.



## Identify Your Target Audience

Once you define your objectives, you'll have a better sense of your target audience. Keeping this audience in mind will be helpful in strategizing publicity and outreach.

Some questions to consider:

- Which audiences do you need to reach to meet your objectives? Which audiences can you access directly (e.g. your current constituents) and how can you build upon those?
- Which new audiences can you engage to broaden your reach, strengthen your work, and build new allies?

## Determine What You Will Show

**Food, Inc.** addresses a wide range of issues related to food and the food industry – from the industrialization of food, to U.S. food policies, to nutrition and health. They are inherently connected to food access and obesity, but you can decide whether to show the film in its entirety or just the specific chapters that more directly address your work and the issues in your community. Please see the accompanying Community Action Guide for suggestions on how to execute either format.

## Determine Your Venue

Where you hold your screening and discussion depends on your budget, the expected size of your audience, and the impression you want to give. While the venue may have been chosen by your organization prior to the planning screening, it may be helpful to discuss this decision with stakeholders in attendance. It's best to have your screening event in a venue that is easily accessible to the community you intend to reach, has the necessary audio-visual capabilities (**triple-check this!**), can accommodate your anticipated number of people, and has the space/configuration appropriate for a panel discussion and reception (if applicable). Also consider how most attendees will get to the site (e.g. think about parking availability and public transportation access). In most cases, having the screening in a community center, local school auditorium, or chapel is more effective than having it in a conventional movie theater, where time and space are often more limited and travel distances may be farther. Additionally, consider childcare needs and other issues that could affect people's ability to participate.

# Templates and Materials

Active Voice has created an online site offering a range of customizable materials intended to help with your outreach.

### They include:

- An event flyer template
- IFC Campaign and film logos/images
- A press release template
- A sample letter to the editor

### To access these materials:

- Go to: <http://drop.io/ingredientsforchange>
  - Enter password: foodinc
- If you prefer, we can send you a CD with all of the materials.

### Event Materials List:

- DVD player, large screen, and projector
- Microphones
- Whiteboard or sandwich board
- Pens and paper

## Getting the Word Out

We recommend multiple avenues for getting the word out about your event:

- Ask other organizations to help publicize and recruit members to attend
- Use electronic/viral outreach
- Spread the word through larger community networks
- Post flyers
- Reach out to local media

### Electronic/Viral Outreach

- **Email blasts:** The most basic thing you can do electronically is to create an email announcement and send it out widely via various listservs, encouraging all recipients to pass it on to their contacts. Check out our online document site for an email/flyer template you can adapt. We recommend you send out the email twice: two weeks before, and then a reminder the day before your event. If applicable, Active Voice will also send this email to our personal contacts in your area.
- **Web postings:** If you have the capacity, it's a good idea to include information about your event on your organization's website. Our online document site has images and a web banner template that you can easily post on your site. You may even consider paying to post web banners on local blogs or websites. If your organization has a blog, Facebook page, or Twitter account, it's a good idea to post the event in these places as well.

### Community Networks

Spread word about your event further through any relevant community networks, listservs, or online discussion forums with which you're connected, even ones that don't directly relate to food access and public health issues.

### Flyers

The IFC Campaign's online document site offers flyer templates that you can easily adapt for your event. Make copies (in color if your budget permits) and post them in high-traffic areas in your community, such as community centers, shopping malls, and grocery stores. If you belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque, or recreation center, make sure to post there, too.





## Local Media

If you or one of your partner organizations has a communications point person who can take the lead on contacting press, involve that individual right away. If your organization has had less experience working with local media, below are some basic resources and tips that may be useful for generating newspaper, radio, and television interest in your event. Always feel free to contact Active Voice for additional ideas and support regarding media exposure. The **SPIN Project**, (Strategic Press Information Network) also offers a full tutorial on news releases, including a diagrammed press release template: <http://spinproject.org/article.php?id=115>.

Before you make complicated plans about how to promote your event, spend extra time thinking about what your target audience listens to, watches, and reads, because that's where you're most likely to get the best coverage. With food and food access issues making major headlines recently (think Michelle Obama's White House garden), you could take advantage of this coverage by casting a wide net to local news publications and outlets. Just make a clear connection between your event and current news topics. Pitch the uniqueness and importance of this screening and community discussion, especially given your community's prevalence of obesity and health issues related to food and food access.

### **Basic tips for your media outreach:**

- In your press release, make sure to emphasize any local hooks (e.g. community initiatives to increase access to healthy foods in schools or stores, campaigns to get junk food out of school cafeterias, or community efforts to increase physical activity). Include a summary description of each of the film issues relevant to your event as well as statistics on local nutrition-related issues (e.g. obesity rates or diabetes prevalence). Highlight all partner organizations and any prominent panelists or guests from the film.
- A month before the event, check submission deadlines for calendar listings for your city's daily and weekly publication(s). Send the release to these listings, as well as online community websites, in advance.
- Ten days before the event, issue the release to a wide range of mainstream media, as well as alternative media, specialty publications, online publications, and local bloggers. Target – through the release and a follow-up email or call – reporters who cover topics related to health, food, agriculture, or social/environmental justice.
- In addition to sending your release to broadcast outlets, call local television and radio programs a week prior to the event, including local news, public affairs programs, talk radio, and pop radio (Active Voice has a broad nationwide media database and can offer media relations support for your event). It is generally a good idea to find specific relevant reporters or editors, and to contact them 10 days prior to the event. Let them know about your event and be prepared to provide contact and title information of local experts or advocates who can be available for interviews. Who to contact:
  - Local TV news: assignment editor
  - Public affairs programs: producers
  - Talk radio: producers or hosts

It's critical to follow-up with these media sources several days before the event and encourage them to attend.

### **Note:**

#### **Rounding Up RSVPs**

If you are collecting RSVPs, make sure there is a single point person or defined system so you have an accurate headcount at all times. Know that some people may not come despite their response – and others will simply show up at the door! The best way to handle this is to keep a running list of everyone who RSVPs after the seating limit has been reached and inform them that a limited number of seats **MAY BE** available the day of the event. At the event, add anyone who shows up without an RSVP to the end of the list and then let in as many as can be accommodated just before the screening starts. (Make sure to let **EVERYONE** who RSVPs know that you will only hold their seat until 15 minutes before the event starts!) Finally, send out a reminder email or phone call to confirmed attendees the day before the event.

## Framing Your Event

### Organize a Panel Discussion

Panelists can help put the film in context, whether by providing background information about obesity and how it's linked to the industrialization of food and problems of food access or by connecting the film's themes to what's happening in your community. It's always a good idea to have a range of perspectives represented – possible panelists might include a public health official, community leader or activist, farmer/community gardener, community member, and/or school leader. See the next section for more detailed tips on how to run a successful panel discussion and audience Q&A.

### Present Your Work

Save some time after the screening for you and/or your partners to give a brief presentation about the work you do and how audience members can support it and/or get involved with you. If you have access to a LCD projector, you might want to show some visuals during your presentation to help audience members better understand what you're talking about (see the Community Action Guide for some of the suggested web resources for graphics). You and your partner organizations can also display literature outside of your screening venue so that audiences can learn more about your work. And there's nothing wrong with making a funding pitch at the event, especially if your audience includes potential long-term donors.

### Highlight Best Practices

Showcase examples of success stories around the country in which individual communities have taken proactive steps to reduce rates of obesity by significantly improving access to affordable, nutritious food and implementing other environmental or policy changes that encourage health and wellness.

### Action Steps and Follow-Up

As part of your community conversation, clearly convey a set of realistic, tangible goals that your organization and your partners intend to accomplish with the active support and participation of community members. Offer feasible ways for audience members to get directly involved. Be sure to get audience contact information (e.g. e-mail addresses, primary phone numbers) and follow up soon thereafter to maintain momentum.

### Distribute Materials and Resources

Active Voice will provide IFC Campaign customizable postcards and flyers, a Community Action Guide, and other materials. These will be available electronically on a file-sharing site that you can access. We encourage you to provide your audience with ancillary resources that address dynamics specific to your community. Some informational resources to consider:

- Fact sheets on local nutrition-related health statistics such as obesity and diabetes.
- Information about nearby sources of affordable fresh food, such as examples of school lunch menus that offer these options, and quick-and-easy nutritious recipes.

### Host a Reception

A post-screening meet-and-greet will allow opportunities for networking and continued discussion. Refreshments are always a good idea. See if a local health food store might donate for the event.

## Tips for Post-Screening Discussion

Social-issue films like *Food, Inc.* can raise a range of emotions, questions, and/or concerns from the audience. These should be addressed during the post-screening discussion. Below are some tips and ideas for framing the discussion, keeping the conversation moving, and focusing the audience on important topics.

### Panelists

Your post-screening discussion will vary depending on your event objectives, but it's often a good idea to have a short panel discussion with a range of perspectives represented.

- Your partners are great resources for identifying potential panelists for the discussion. (They'll also have more incentive to promote the event if they're represented on the panel.)
- Three to five panelists generally make for a good discussion. With too many participants, the conversation gets easily diffused.
- Try to have the panelists attend the planning screening. If they are not available, or have not been selected at that point, arrange for them to see the film prior to the community screening so they can adequately prepare their remarks.
- It's highly recommended that you find an experienced moderator for the event, or at least someone who is well-versed in local food issues and is comfortable speaking publicly.
- Allow about 20 minutes, depending on the number of panelists, for their remarks and discussion. Then allow ample time for audience Q&A and participation in the conversation.
- Give your panelists an idea of who will be in the audience so they can tailor the discussion to the audience's needs. For example, if you anticipate a general audience, ask panelists to tone down any specific jargon.
- Encourage the panelists to link their comments to specific scenes from the film.
- Arrange for a translator to attend if you expect enough audience members with limited English proficiency.
- Make sure there are working microphones!





### Using the Discussion to Meet Your Objectives

- If you want to raise your organization's visibility, then it is important to showcase your work and its benefit to the community. It's also generally a good idea to invite key people to attend, including press, potential funders, and influential decision makers.
- We've said it before, but to reiterate, it's very important to offer your audience ways to get involved and actions they can take after the meeting (there are lots of community examples in the Community Action Guide). Be sure to mention upcoming events and/or developments and how you'll keep them informed. Focus on what needs to be done, how to facilitate action, and how various community sectors can contribute.

### Q&A

- A good Q&A lasts around 30-45 minutes, but leave as much time as possible. We recommend that about half of the post-screening time be allotted for audience questions.
- The facilitator might consider prompting the audience with an opening question such as: "What jumped out at you in the film?"
- Ask audience members to keep their questions short, so that many voices may be heard.
- Decide whether you'll have microphones to pass for audience members asking questions or whether they'll come to microphones set up in the aisles.
- If your audience seems interested in talking even after the Q&A time ends, invite people into the lobby or a nearby restaurant or public space to continue the conversation.
- Be prepared for negative comments or criticism of the film or speakers. That's part of an honest dialogue! For example, there may be audience members who consider the film very slanted and against conventional agriculture. A skilled moderator can help ensure a civil, productive conversation in which many perspectives are heard.

## Planning Checklist

### Preliminary planning – at least 4 weeks prior to the community event

- Book the date and venue for your planning screening session. (Arrange this planning screening for a date that is at least one month before the actual community screening. Invite key stakeholders to attend.)
- Recruit local organizational partners to broaden your reach and, in consultation with them, help identify roles - such as publicity, panelist coordination, and reception planning.
- Begin contacting and confirming appropriate speakers, panelists, and a moderator after input from your partners.

### Logistical planning and initial outreach – 3 to 4 weeks prior

- Create a flyer to publicize your screening (use template provided by Active Voice).
- Prepare media news release.
- Confirm the appropriate format for your screening (most likely DVD).
- Secure food for reception (if applicable).
- Draft event agenda and vet with partners.

### More logistical planning – 3 weeks prior

- Contact media. See “Getting the Word Out” on page 6 for more information. Be aware of press calendar submission deadlines.
- Send out media news release to all applicable outlets (e.g. calendar listings and long lead publications).
- Test screen your event equipment to make sure there aren’t any glitches.
- Contact community calendars about your event.
- Finalize your agenda.
- Create an email blast to publicize your event electronically (template provided by Active Voice). Again, send one announcement two weeks prior and another several days prior.

### Media outreach – 10 days prior

- Contact news media for day of event coverage and send out news release.
- Make calls to local television and radio programs.

### Final planning – several days prior

- Test screen your DVD once again to make sure there aren’t any glitches.
- Follow up with press who expressed an interest in covering the story. It is recommended to call television and radio programs the day of the event as well.
- Send finalized agenda to all panelists.
- Make copies of handouts to distribute at the event.

### At the event itself

- Test screen your DVD and event equipment one last time to make sure there aren’t any glitches. (This is getting monotonous, we know! But better safe than sorry.)
- Gather panelists together at least 30 minutes before the event begins to answer questions, get the microphones set up, and address last-minute changes. It is recommended to call television and radio programs the day of the event as well.
- Take photos! (We will provide you with more information about any specific images we might need for reporting purposes.)
- As people arrive, ask them to sign up to receive updates from your organization as well as from the IFC Campaign.
- Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their assigned speaking time.
- Have materials available so that attendees can follow up and/or follow through with specific actions after the event.
- Let audience members know that they can learn more about the film at [www.foodincmovie.com](http://www.foodincmovie.com), and that the DVD will be released as of November 2009.
- Tell your audience that a free download of the film’s classroom curriculum is available in English and Spanish on the film’s website.



### A Note To Our Partners

Thank you so much for volunteering to host an Ingredients for Change Campaign event. We understand that it adds to your already full agenda and we greatly appreciate your participation and leadership. The local work you are doing is extremely important, and we believe that convening the community around a compelling film to address an urgent problem like childhood obesity can further the impact of your efforts and greatly increase visibility. Childhood obesity is entirely preventable, and the committed work of organizations like yours is key to reversing the obesity epidemic.

## Acknowledgments

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Active Voice uses film, television, and multimedia to spark social change from grassroots to grass tops. Our team of strategic communications specialists works with mediamakers, funders, advocates, and thought leaders to put a human face on the issues of our times. We frame and beta-test key messages, develop national and local partnerships, plan and execute high profile, outcome-oriented events, repurpose digital content for web and viral distribution, produce ancillary and educational resources, and consult with industry and sector leaders. Since our inception in 2001, Active Voice has built a diverse portfolio of story-based campaigns focusing on issues including immigration, criminal justice, healthcare, and sustainability. [www.activevoice.net](http://www.activevoice.net)



Participant believes that a good story well told can truly make a difference in how one sees the world. Whether it is a feature film, documentary or other form of media, Participant exists to tell compelling, entertaining stories that also create awareness of the real issues that shape our lives.

The company seeks to entertain audiences first, then to invite them to participate in making a difference. To facilitate this, Participant creates specific social action campaigns for each film and documentary designed to give a voice to issues that resonate in the films. Participant teams with social sector organizations, non-profits, and corporations who are committed to creating an open forum for discussion and education, and who can, with Participant, offer specific ways for audience members to get involved. These include action kits, screening programs, educational curriculum and classes, house parties, seminars, panels, and other activities, and are ongoing "legacy" programs that are updated and revised to continue beyond the film's domestic and international theatrical, DVD, and television windows. To date, Participant has developed active, working relationships with 112 non-profits reaching over 60 million people. [www.participantmedia.com](http://www.participantmedia.com)