

LET'S TALK

A Guide to Conversations with Colleagues/Employees, Board Members/Leadership, & Partners

Colleagues and Employees

Talking to colleagues, friends, community organizers & co-workers about **Next Shift** can be a formal or informal conversation, depending on what you feel is appropriate. In general, it's best to start by identifying any potential allies that you might have. Who are the people you've had good conversations with before, who have expressed the willingness to push against dominant narratives or at the very least are respectful and open minded?

Use any of the prompts below if you need ideas for what to say exactly, or use them as inspiration for formulating your own questions. Take a few minutes to look through the [Next Shift Toolkit](#) and [Intentional Conversation Guide](#) to think through your conversations and map out a plan.

Power dynamics

Consider the power dynamics of who you will be engaging with to have these conversations. If you are in a position of power, like a manager, you might consider that employees who report to you may not be forthcoming with their true opinions or ideas and there is a power dynamic at play that might prevent an open and honest discussion. Conversely, if you are talking to someone who has input about the status of your job, you might first gain support from others who cannot directly affect the status of your job before discussing the topic with a manager.

Choose the right moment to talk.

Be mindful of where and when you have these conversations. If possible, choose a place where you and your colleagues will feel comfortable enough to talk freely.

Keep an open mind and an open heart with yourself and others.

Challenging assumptions about food insecurity is a nuanced discussion, so remember to be patient. Challenge yourself to release the notion of being "right or wrong" and invite dialogue. Be okay with not resolving anything in one conversation. These are important discussions that will create a groundswell to shift from charity to solidarity, but not all at once or overnight!

Get support

Look through the [Next Shift toolkit](#) for materials and guides for inspiration and support. Join an upcoming [Next Shift Community of Practice Meeting](#) to connect and share the challenges and roadblocks you're facing. This will also be a space to get some advice, support or just cheerleading if you need it.

About Next Shift

Next Shift is a narrative change campaign born out of Closing the Hunger Gap, a network of organizations and individuals working to expand hunger relief efforts beyond food distribution towards strategies that promote social justice and address the root causes of hunger. As workers and volunteers at food access organizations, we are committed to building a just food system that ensures everyone's human right to nutritious food and dignity - and that starts with us.



DIGGING IN

Prompts

Here are some thought provoking questions you can use to start conversations:

- Do you see hunger as separate from other issues such as housing, health, education, economic justice, mass incarceration, racism and human rights?
- What do you think the role of the emergency feeding system should be? Is it to feed people now and other sectors should deal with the reasons people are poor?
- Do you think if we just provided more food banks and food pantries (the charity model) that we could eliminate hunger?
- As a part of the **Next Shift** Campaign, we believe that living wages, safe and fair working conditions can help end hunger and the chronic need for food banks. What do you think about this? What challenges does this pose, if any? If this is true for you, what do you think needs to happen to see this in your world (at your workplace)?
- **Next Shift** is asking the food banking and anti-hunger community to look internally at our own systems and practices in the anti-hunger sector. Do you see areas where improvements can be made in y/our workplace, especially when it comes to accomplishing a thriving wage for all of our colleagues and co-workers? Make a list together of where you would like to see improvements and what those improvements could look like. Dream! Don't worry about the real life barriers yet; first imagine.

REMEMBER TO:

- Stay genuinely curious
- Allow for nuance and complexity (“yes, and..”)
- Welcome differing viewpoints, interests and approaches
- Take some deep breaths and get yourself in a good headspace before you have these conversations
- Remember you don't have to solve anything in any one conversation



Ok, I've had a conversation (or many), what's Next?

- Join the **Next Shift** community of practice to stay engaged and find support and inspiration for how to move the conversations along.
- If you are seeing interest and gaining support in your conversations at work, consider planning a Lunch & Learn for other departments or for your staff meeting or community group to further explore the issues together.
- If you are not gaining momentum or your attempts have fallen on deaf ears, make sure to let us know! Reach out on social media for support or look at the calendar for the next [Community of Practice Meeting](#). You are not alone, you have this whole community with you!
- If your food bank or pantry is not a part of [Closing the Hunger Gap \(CTHG\)](#), [consider becoming a member](#) to build community and learn from and share with your peers. All are welcome, you can join as an individual or as a part of your organization.
- Consult CTHG's Narrative Change Task Force [8 point checklist](#) to your program or organization and make a plan together to address the areas that are in need of improvements
- Take a look at the [Next Shift website](#) for more resources for more actions you can take as a group to help your own organization create the **Next Shift**!

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead



Other Tools to Check out

- [Next Shift Toolkit](#)
- [8 Point Check list](#)
- [Intentional Conversation Guide](#)

NEXT SHIFT
CHARITY TO SOLIDARITY

GOING DEEPER

Board of Directors

Approaching the Board of Directors to engage in a conversation about the Next Shift campaign should be done strategically and with consideration for the power dynamics, signals that the Board is open to such a discussion, and analysis about who on the Board would potentially align with these ideas.

Power Dynamics

As we know, the Board of Directors holds power over organizations as a whole, which makes them a very effective place to create the **Next Shift**. On the other hand, ramifications resulting from this discussion could be serious if they are interested in maintaining the status quo, resulting in censoring or termination.

If your organization largely aligns with the [8 pt checklist](#) and the Board has demonstrated their willingness to engage in open conversation about addressing the root causes of hunger, then you may want to introduce the **Next Shift** campaign and ask them to consider signing on. While there is never any guarantee of the outcome of these conversations, you and your colleagues should be realistic about the possible consequences before deciding to approach the Board.

Finding an ally

Prior to requesting time at the next Board meeting, it could be beneficial to introduce some of these ideas to a Board member that you or a colleague has a personal relationship with first. Sharing one of the articles in the [Next Shift resources](#), or having a phone call or meeting for coffee to discuss the general ideas in order to gauge their buy-in would help you set the stage for a successful presentation to the Board.

Plan for your meeting

Use the [Intentional Conversation Guide](#) and review the [Next Shift Toolkit](#) materials to create a plan for what your goals are and how you'd like to present the information. Use the **Next Shift** slides or prepare your own presentation using your own organizational examples. Be sure to lay out how this impacts your work and the mission of your organization.

“Asks” for your Board

Know what it is that you'd like to achieve by engaging your Board. Here are some ideas of what to aim for:

- Do a salary analysis of all employees at your organization and commit to implementing thriving wages for all.
- Implement strategic planning which centers thriving wages for employees and addressing root causes of hunger.
- Schedule a budget meeting.
- Suggest using the [Next Shift Toolkit's Organizational Readiness Assessment](#) process to make improvements towards economic justice in the workplace.
- Sign the **Next Shift** Organizational Pledge to take action.

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Partners

Engaging with partners about the Next Shift campaign and addressing root causes of hunger in your anti-hunger work will hold you accountable inside your own organization as well as create a groundswell for the movement from charity to solidarity.

Invite your partners and build a shared analysis.

- Organize an event, lunch, meeting or gathering to discuss the **Next Shift** campaign. Present and discuss the [8pt checklist](#) together and create an open dialogue.
- Acknowledge the successes you've had towards addressing root causes of hunger and creating a thriving wage for all at your organization. Recognize and examine the challenges and barriers your organizations face towards creating the **Next Shift**.
- Pool your strengths and stay focused on what can be made possible when we work together.

Create your own community of support.

- Be a "go to" for your partners so they have somewhere to turn for support.
- Create a pledge or goal to work towards together.
- Consider forming a coalition that can grow in your community that works towards these efforts.
- Check out the way these organizations have partnered together to make changes.
- Join a **Next Shift** Community of Practice meeting. [Check the calendar](#) for the next meeting to connect and share your experience.

Power Dynamics

Just like when we talk peer to peer, there are also power dynamics at play amongst partner organizations. Organizational structure, available resources, geographic location and demographics are all informing funding and clout that any one organization may have. Some organizations may face serious consequences from their Board or community if they band together around a campaign supporting higher wages for staff, so it's important to be supportive by giving each partner the space to and make decisions about participating based on what works best for them.

Imagine a future where everyone has access to nutritious food and can eat in peace, without the threat of unstable housing, lack of adequate healthcare, criminalization, abuse, or deportation.

