



# Start a *Shares* Program

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Chicago Shares

**Share compassion. Share comfort. Share vouchers.**



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# 1 Getting Started

From time to time we receive requests for information from people in other communities in Chicago and across the nation for information on how they can establish an organization similar to Chicago Shares in their local community.

In response to those requests, we have developed the following “Chicago Shares Start-up Manual”. While it is based on how we did it here on the near north side of Chicago, we hope it is helpful to you. Obviously, some procedures will have to be adapted to meet the needs of your community. If we may be of further assistance, please leave a message on our website or call us at 312-573-4469.

NOTE: Individuals located in the Chicago area who want to establish a program like Chicago Shares in their local community may choose to become affiliated with Chicago Shares instead of forming a separate organization. In such cases, most of the organizational components described below need not be duplicated. Please call Chicago Shares at the number shown above or e-mail us for information.

## What is Chicago Shares?

Chicago Shares is a unique, non-profit, non-denominational corporation that, with the help of merchants, churches, synagogues and a team of volunteers, is able to help feed the city’s hungry through a voucher system. Very simply, Chicagoans can purchase these vouchers at area churches and synagogues or through the website and distribute

them to needy people they encounter on the street. The voucher recipients may redeem these vouchers at participating stores and restaurants for food and other basic necessities, but never for alcohol or tobacco. The Chicago Shares Program reimburses all participating stores and restaurants for the vouchers on a monthly basis. Funds accumulated from unredeemed vouchers or direct donations are periodically donated to other organizations that help feed the city’s hungry

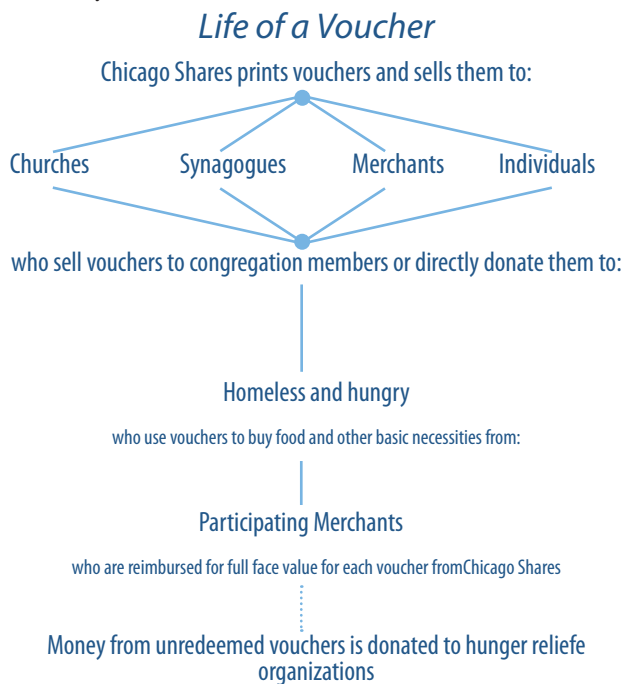
## History of the Program

Inspired by a similar program originating in California, Chicago Shares was launched in January of 1993 at Holy Name Cathedral and now helps to procure thousands of small meals for the city’s needy each year. Since its inception, Chicago Shares has been an entirely volunteer program, with some support for occasional meetings from Holy Name Cathedral. The co-directors, account representatives, treasurer and voucher coordinator all work in a virtual environment through email and telephone contact. Account representatives also promote good customer relations by making personal visits for their dealings with the merchants.

# 2 About the Program

## The Life of a Voucher

It is important to understand the entire process of the voucher program from start to finish. The diagram below illustrates the different routes a voucher may take:



## Process Explanation

Once your organization decides to go ahead with a

“Shares” program, contract to print \$5.00 booklets of \$1 vouchers on special bank paper that cannot be photocopied. These booklets are sold at face value to churches, synagogues, merchants and individuals. (Payment is made prior to, or upon, distribution of the vouchers.) Those organizations then sell them at face value to their members or customers at pre-designated times each month or through another system. Individual purchasers carry the vouchers with them and when asked for “change” on the street, offer them instead of opening their wallets to the hungry and homeless.

Some groups, such as Catholic Charities, or churches distribute the vouchers directly to those in need instead of, or in addition to, selling them to their affiliate members. The voucher bearer can use the vouchers as cash, redeeming them for food or other basic necessities (including in some cases prescriptions) at participating stores or restaurants.

A list of these merchants is typically printed on a handout, available at the voucher purchase point and handed out with the vouchers. The vouchers have the same value as cash, and the voucher bearer should receive actual change (less than a dollar) if the price of the purchase falls below the value of redeemed vouchers. The participating grocery stores and restaurants retain the vouchers for a given time, typically about a month. A volunteer assigned to that location will pick up the vouchers and send them to one of the co executive directors who disburses the monthly checks to merchants for full reimbursement of the face value of vouchers.

## The Organization

The various roles of Chicago Shares volunteers are outlined below. The number needed for your program will vary, based upon how many merchants you intend to enlist, how many vouchers you hope to print/sell, and even how far along in the start-up process you are. More hands will be needed for the start up and launch of the program than when it is actually in operation, at which time a simple 'maintenance' status should be in place.

## Structure

See figure below.

## Job Descriptions

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** - Establishes, policy for the organization, appoints COUNSEL, treasurer and executive director(s).

**COUNSEL (legal)** Ensures legal integrity of the organization and resolves all legal matters; takes action to incorporate the organization as a not-for-profit corporation under state law and as a tax exempt organization under 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

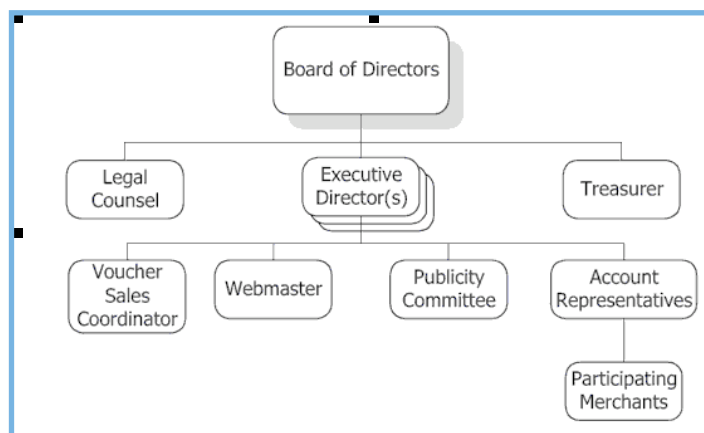
**TREASURER** - maintains the organization's financial records, prepares and submits financial reports to the board of directors and the executive director(s), determines amount, if any, of funds available for donation to other organization(s) whose mission is also to feed hungry people. Invests the organization's funds in certificates of deposit and/or money market accounts, opens checking and savings accounts.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR(S)** Responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization, appoints, trains and coordinates the work of all volunteers who do not report directly to the board of directors, issues payments to merchants for redeemed vouchers and to other parties for miscellaneous expenses (postage, stationery, envelopes, brochures, voucher printing [if not donated] and other miscellaneous expenses). Contacts new merchants and nurtures existing participants, organizes meetings of volunteers, etc.

**VOUCHER SALES COORDINATOR** - Maintains the organization's supply of vouchers, responds to requests for vouchers from churches, synagogues, other organizations and individuals, tracks distribution of vouchers, deposits proceeds of voucher sales into organization's checking account, distributes updated 'Vouchers Sold Here' signs, prepares periodic reports on voucher sales.

**WEBMASTER** - Develops and maintains organization's website.

**PUBLICITY COMMITTEE** Markets and communicates the organization's mission and accomplishments through press releases to city media, including community newspapers and magazines, radio and



television. Responds to media requests for information about the organization, prepares brochures describing the organization, looks for other ways to publicize the organization.

**ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES** Volunteers who recruit new merchants/restaurants to accept the shares and new places/churches/synagogues to sell them to the public. Maintain personal contact with merchants/restaurants by picking up redeemed vouchers and requesting and delivering checks, answering any questions and resolving any problems the merchants/restaurants may have.

# 3 Implementation

## Getting Started

### A. SELECT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Consider selecting people who will be instrumental in getting this type of organization up and running.... business owners, church leaders, members of community merchant associations, lawyers, accountants, public relations specialists, members of media, web designers, printing company owners, etc.

Initial start-up cash may be solicited from members of this group.

### B. NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPOINTS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR(S), LEGAL COUNSEL AND TREASURER

\*Executive Director(s), Treasurer and Attorney report only to Board of Directors

### C. SELECT NAME OF CORPORATION AND POSSIBLE LOGO/SLOGAN D. SECURE NOT-FOR-PROFIT STATUS

### D. RECRUIT/HIRE GRAPHIC ARTIST TO DESIGN LOGO/VOUCHER

### E. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR(S) APPOINT VOUCHER SALES COORDINATOR, WEBMASTER, PUBLICITY COMMITTEE, MERCHANT ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES

\*Voucher Sales Coordinator, Webmaster, Merchant Account Representatives, and Publicity Committee report only to Executive Director(s).

G. PUBLICITY COMMITTEE WORKS WITH GRAPHIC ARTIST TO DESIGN AN INITIAL FLYER explaining the program to interested churches and synagogues and restaurants/grocery stores, also originates a 'blurb' available for churches/synagogues to insert in their bulletins, to briefly describe the program and help guide church members to a sales table after services

### H. RECRUIT OR HIRE PRINTER TO PRINT INITIAL ROUND OF VOUCHERS/FLYERS

I. ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES FIRST USE FLYERS AND THEN MERCHANT AGREEMENT TO REDEEM VOUCHERS TO ENLIST RESTAURANTS/GROCERY STORES TO ACCEPT THE VOUCHERS. (Merchant Agreement to Redeem Vouchers document is attached.) Then, when you have a good base of participating merchants, work to help enlist both churches and synagogues to sell the vouchers to members of their congregations/temples. In a

densely populated community, five stores accepting vouchers and three places selling should be sufficient to start the program. However, a variety of kinds of stores is desirable – neither all restaurants nor all grocery stores. In a sparser community, location of stores might be a factor; if a person receiving a voucher has to walk two miles to redeem it, he probably won't bother.

J. Once program is operational, excess funds may accumulate due to unredeemed vouchers. (In the year 2002, 80% of Chicago Shares vouchers were redeemed). Those funds should be donated to organizations whose mission is to feed hungry people

## Day-to-Day Operations

### Reimbursement Procedure

- 1) Visit the store/restaurant once each month to obtain the redeemed vouchers
- 2) Count the collected vouchers in the presence of the merchant and/or his/her representative
- 3) Complete the Pick Up sheet (see attached).
- 4) Call the Chicago Shares hotline to request a payment check for the merchant.
- 5) Deliver the check to the merchant
- 6) Deliver or mail the redeemed shares and the

Pick-up sheet to Chicago Shares

### Helpful Forms

SEE ATTACHED FOR:

- Merchant Agreement to Redeem Vouchers
- Pick Up sheet
- Sample Voucher
- Voucher Distribution Receipt



Sample Voucher

## Pointers

### First Batch of Vouchers

Initially print 25,000 vouchers, numbering each one and starting with a letter (i.e. A 000100). In addition to the number (and logo), the vouchers must contain the dollar value (\$1.00), and should be of a size to fit easily in a wallet. Ours are about 2” wide by 2” high. It has worked well having \$5 booklets (5 - \$1 vouchers). When getting the vouchers printed, have them *printed on special bank paper* that cannot be copied. Also, instruct the printer to cut and staple the booklets. Do not print the merchant list on the back of the vouchers because the merchants may change frequently.

### When to Sell Vouchers

Churches/Synagogues will need to decide how often to sell, i.e. one Saturday/ Sunday a month after every service. Get notice in previous week's bulletin and have a pulpit announcement the day of the sales.

One or two volunteers will be needed to sell the vouchers for a half hour after each service. May accept checks for purchases made out to the church/synagogue (not to the food share organization).

### Signage

Each merchant should have a bright colored laminated sign stating “We accept Shares” to place in the storefront window. Sellers/distributors of shares should have a different brightly colored laminated sign stating “ Shares Sold Here” to display when/ where selling vouchers.

### Bookkeeping

Voucher Sales Coordinator's bookkeeping should consist of tracking distribution of vouchers by voucher number and by location, date, amount of distribution, etc. When distributing vouchers

include a receipt (see attached). It is important to distribute the vouchers in numeric order; otherwise bookkeeping will be a nightmare.

**We hope you find this manual helpful, and we look forward to hearing how your program progresses. If we can be of further assistance to you, please feel free to call us at 312-573-4469.**

# CHICAGO SHARES

## Merchant's Agreement to Redeem Vouchers

I, \_\_\_\_\_, on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_,  
(NAME) (NAME OF STORE)

agree to participate in the program known as CHICAGO SHARES, As a participating merchant, I agree to accept CHICAGO SHARES vouchers, with face value of 50 cents or face value of one dollar, as payment for merchandise, exclusive of beer, wine, spirits and tobacco products. In addition, I agree to display the CHICAGO SHARES logo in my store window so that voucher-holders can easily identify participating merchants.

It is my understanding that when I receive a voucher as a payment for merchandise, I am to cancel the voucher by clearly writing the word "cancel" on the front of the voucher. It is my understanding that I will be reimbursed by CHICAGO SHARES the full face value of each voucher remitted at the end of each month.

It is my further understanding that I may cancel my participation in the program at any time by notifying CHICAGO SHARES.

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/s/

CHICAGO SHARES  
730 N. WABASH STREET  
CHICAGO, IL 60611  
PHONE: 312-573-4469  
WWW.CHICAGOSHARES.ORG

# Pick-up Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

I, \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of Chicago Shares,  
NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE

have picked up \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)  
NUMBER OF VOUCHERS

with dollar value of \_\_\_\_\_ (\$ \_\_\_\_\_ )  
AMOUNT

from \_\_\_\_\_  
MERCHANT'S NAME

for reimbursement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chicago Shares Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Merchant's Representative

# CHICAGO SHARES



730 N. WABASH STREET  
CHICAGO, IL 60611  
PHONE: 312-573-4469  
WWW.CHICAGOSHARES.ORG

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_ have received \_\_\_\_\_ vouchers.  
BUSINESS ENTITY # OF VOUCHERS

Numbering from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_

with a dollar value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT I WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABOVE  
VOUCHERS AND THAT I HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO REMIT  
BACK TO **CHICAGO SHARES** THE FUNDS AT PAR VALUE  
AND/OR UNSOLD VOUCHERS.

NAME OF CHICAGO SHARES REPRESENTATIVE \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE OF RECIPIENT \_\_\_\_\_

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:	
Payment Received: _____	Date: ____/____/____
Check number: _____	
Received by: _____	

# CHICAGO SHARES



730 N. WABASH STREET  
CHICAGO, IL 60611  
PHONE: 312-573-4469  
WWW.CHICAGOSHARES.ORG

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_ have received \_\_\_\_\_ vouchers.  
BUSINESS ENTITY # OF VOUCHERS

Numbering from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_

with a dollar value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT I WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABOVE  
VOUCHERS AND THAT I HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO REMIT  
BACK TO **CHICAGO SHARES** THE FUNDS AT PAR VALUE  
AND/OR UNSOLD VOUCHERS.

NAME OF CHICAGO SHARES REPRESENTATIVE \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE OF RECIPIENT \_\_\_\_\_

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:	
Payment Received: _____	Date: ____/____/____
Check number: _____	
Received by: _____	

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Chicago Shares, 730 N. Wabash Ave. ☒ Chicago, IL 60611 ☒ 312 573•4469☒ [www.chicagoshares.org](http://www.chicagoshares.org)

