



The Association of Gleaning Organizations is a relatively young organization. We headed into 2020 with strong momentum. We were planning our annual event, the International Gleaning Symposium, to be held in Burlington, Vermont on April 23- 25. We were progressing on the formation of an independent 501(c)(3). Lastly, we were advancing forward with our project to create a report on the state of gleaning in North America.

As the year progressed, 2020 presented many changes; we viewed these challenges as opportunities to adapt our services. We were able to adjust and, although the year looked very different than we had expected, we successfully provided valuable services to gleaning organizations throughout North America.

2020 Gleaning Census

We continue to work on conducting a 2020 Gleaning Census in which we talked with 128 gleaning organizations about their work and challenges. These conversations allowed us to aggregate data and create a comprehensive database. This database allows us to discover best practices and better understand the needs of gleaners.

We updated the database by removing numerous organizations that are no longer in operation. Fortunately, we discovered these organizations were replaced by new organizations. According to our best estimates, there are 182 organizations actively gleaning in North America.

The census is entering its final stages and we hope to wrap up interviews by the end of the year, with the possibility of a few organizations spilling into January of 2021. Some of this data has been shared with ReFed so they could use it in their upcoming report on food waste. Our next step is to work with a research assistant at Vermont Law School to compile the data and compose a report. This report will be finished in early summer 2021.

Already the data have provided amazing insight into the work gleaners are doing and we are excited to share this valuable information with the broader food waste community. For example:

- We identified best practices to share with the community.
- We discovered the work of some really unique organizations and we will highlight their work in case studies.
- We identified policy and funding recommendations that we will share with the larger community



Board Development

Our board selection committee met with prospective candidates in January and selected four leaders from the gleaning movement who will serve on our board. They are:

- [Theresa Snow, Salvation Farm](#)
- [Eva Agudelo, Hope's Harvest](#)
- [Katherine Kennedy, Concrete Jungle](#)
- [Stephanie Wooten, Glean KY](#)

This team is currently acting as an advisory committee and laying the foundation for a strong additive organization. They are focused on board roles, bylaws, and adopting a strategy to accomplish our mission and vision. All of this work is in preparation for applying for 501(c)(3) status in March of 2021. (Our original application date was planned for October 2020 however, the focus shifted to finding ways to support gleaners as they cope with COVID.).

The board also launched three advisory committees in 2020 as a way to involve more members and grow the strength of the network. Each of those committees has at least one member at large. We anticipate continuing to expand member involvement in the board and governance in 2021. This may include adding more board members, expanding our committees, and finding new ways to solicit feedback from members about governance issues.

International Gleaning Symposium

As was the case for many organizations, COVID disrupted most of our goals and plans for this year. We had to cancel The International Gleaning Symposium. Before COVID, this event was on track to be well attended and had raised just under \$25,000 in sponsorships. Due to the uncertainties surrounding COVID, we will host an online event in 2021. This event will be held May 24 and 25.

Coffee Chats

This year we launched Coffee Chats, a series of Zoom calls for our members to connect and share ideas. The First Coffee Chat was hosted on April 9. Fifty organizations attended, and many more requested to view the recording. Attendance continued to be strong throughout the year on all 9 calls we hosted, with XX unique individuals attending at least one event. We received strong positive feedback about the value of these events and we plan to continue hosting Coffee Chats in 2021.



Nationalgleaningproject.org

We formed an advisory committee in partnership with Vermont Law School to revamp the nationalgleaningproject.org website. Gleaners were recruited from around the country to act as advisors for this project, and serve as key partners in this process. Our goal is to make the website more accessible and useful to gleaners, farmers, policymakers, and the general public. The goal is to complete this project by year-end 2021.

Shared Resources

As part of the revamp of nationalgleaningproject.org, we are compiling a resource library of shared forms and written materials that will be available to gleaners everywhere. Access to these materials will help streamline their operations. As part of this process we have already compiled a shared list of best practices for gleaners to safely harvest and distribute food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID Resources

We continue to seek new ways to support gleaners. We know there is an overwhelming need for their services right now and we strive to identify ways to help them increase their capacity. One of the ways we are able to help is by providing free masks to any gleaners who need them. In addition, we have made our Executive Director available to conduct COVID related research for organizations.

Mentoring Program

Our peer mentoring program for members will launch in January 2021. The goal is to grow the capacity of gleaning organizations by connecting gleaners with one another and facilitating the sharing of ideas and expertise.

We have an excited group of seven mentors lined up who have generously offered their time and expertise. The AGO Mentorship Program starts the week of January 18 and runs for 12 weeks. Mentees will spend 8 hours throughout the course of the program in one-on-one sessions with their mentor. In addition, mentees will participate in a peer cohort for one hour per week to discuss struggles, successes, and new ideas.



Affinity Groups

Building on the success of our Coffee Chats, we will launch four Affinity Groups in 2021. This program will operate similarly to the Coffee Chats but is more focused on providing resources to similar organizations. The groups will form around the following organization types: On-Farm Gleaning, Mid-Sized Organizations, All Volunteer Led Organizations, and Food Justice Organizations Running Multiple Programs, Including a Gleaning Program. Groups will meet quarterly and will be led by our board members.

New Organizations

This past year, we advised and supported three new gleaning organizations.

UTAH: First, we provided expertise and mentorship to an organization in Ogden, Utah that wanted to start an urban gleaning operation. This project struggled to get started due to COVID and only held a few gleans in 2020. They plan to continue operations in 2021.

IOWA: We also helped a group in Iowa launch a statewide gleaning organization. We provided advice and connected them with other statewide gleaning organizations. This statewide network is now up and running, rescuing food all across the state.

WISCONSIN: We provided mentorship to an effort to relaunch an urban gleaning operation in Milwaukee. We will continue helping this organization as they move into their second season next year.

We also provided expertise, advice and connections to many other organizations in their first few years of operation. This has proven invaluable to helping these organizations grow and prosper.

Media Coverage

AGO was featured frequently in the media this year as gleaning and on farm food waste experienced a moment of public awareness. We were featured in four radio interviews, a podcast, and three national newspaper articles including *The New York Times*.

Membership



We officially launched our membership on December 15, 2020. We asked members to pay a fee and join us as Founding Members. These fees help to support all the programming and individualized support for the gleaning community you just read about. After just one week, we already have seven members and look forward to getting more support and buy-in from our members.

Budget

We raised \$71,000 in 2020 and anticipate expenses being \$33,500.

This has been a challenging year for our organization, but we are very proud of the work we have done and the services we are offering to gleaning organizations around the country. We look forward to continued momentum and growth in 2021.