



CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL OUTREACH: AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE – VERSION 1

**A project of the ProVeg International Grants
Program.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Chain restaurants, fast-food establishments, catering companies, university canteens, and other large-scale institutions reach millions of consumers on a daily basis and thus offer an impactful opportunity to reduce animal-product consumption. Introducing animal-product alternatives within large-scale corporations or institutions can result in a significant decrease of animal-based products being used.

This introductory guide provides guidelines and tools in order to develop a corporate or institutional outreach strategy. It is non-exhaustive and is meant to be used as a resource alongside the Corporate Engagement and Institutional Outreach Intervention Accelerator webinars or recordings, where more in-depth details will be discussed. Recognising that social contexts play a major role in any campaign's success, rather than providing exact steps, we aim to provide advice and tools that can be easily modified to fit varying cultural, economic, and social contexts. Lastly, this guide will be occasionally updated.

We hope this guideline helps you in your journey to create a more compassionate world for people and animals.

For the list of webinars and other Corporate Engagement and Institutional Outreach Intervention Accelerator resources, please click [here](#).

If you have any questions, please email accelerator@proveg.com.



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II. WHY WORK WITH CORPORATE BUSINESSES AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS?

1. THE RISING DEMAND FOR PLANT-BASED FOODS

Plant-based diets are on the rise. In western countries, the consumption of animal-based is stabilising or even decreasing. In countries experiencing a rise in the demand for animal-based products, we can try to institute similar trends as people become more aware of the health benefits of plant-based diets and the impact of intensive farming on the planet and animals. Promising early signs from various governments opting for progressive dietary guidelines, along with recent advances in the food sector and the increased availability of plant-based alternatives, confirm that change is starting to happen.

With the rising demand for alternatives, ensuring that there is a corresponding supply is crucial. Large-scale companies and institutions such as catering companies, chain restaurants, hospitals, schools, etc., might be familiar with the growing demand for plant-based products but they do not necessarily have the knowledge to appropriately adapt their menus. Similarly, city governments can also play an important role in raising public awareness and implementing dietary change in public-institution menus but they might not have the knowledge or research needed to enact policy change. This is where we come in. With our knowledge of plant-based health impacts, environmental impacts, and nutritional and chef skills, we can support corporations and institutions in their shift to more plant-based menus.

2. CORPORATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS - IMPACT

Working with corporations or institutions can result in significant reduction in the consumption and sales of animal-based products, and while also increasing demand for plant-based products. And working with institutions typically has a much higher impact than campaigning for individual dietary change. Take, for example, a country-wide chain restaurant that sells a million animal-based meals per day. If we help this chain restaurant to replace 10% of its meals with plant-based alternatives, that could amount to 100,000 fewer animal-based meals sold per day – that's more than 36 million fewer animal-based meals per year! Or, if we help a public school with 10,000 students to adopt a plant-based menu one day a week in its school cafeteria, that's 10,000 fewer animal-based meals consumed each week, or more than 3.5 million fewer animal-based meals consumed each year. As you can see, working with large corporations and institutions can have a major impact.

III. Challenges of working with corporations and institutions



1. CHALLENGES FACED WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION

Choosing to work with corporate businesses is an important decision that requires internal discussions and buy-in from your organisation. Some staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders might see it as a threat to the integrity of the organisation since corporate businesses can be seen to have different values to nonprofit organisations. However, an organisation benefits from working with corporations because the potential opportunities to reduce animal-based consumption far exceeds that of individual diet-change campaigns. Additionally, working with corporations could result in financial revenue for your organisation if or when you decide to charge for services. It's important that your organisation's stakeholders fully understand the benefits and potential impacts of corporate and institutional campaigns.

2. CHALLENGES FACED WITHIN THE CORPORATIONS OR INSTITUTIONS



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Corporations or institutions might be reluctant to change, and, if they decide to change, they will probably have little to no interest in changing for ethical reasons – they will only want to change for profit-based reasons. Therefore, it is important that there is always a mutual benefit for both the organisation and the corporation. While the organisation is achieving its mission to reduce animal-based consumption, a corporate business will be improving its environmental sustainability goals and increasing its profit margins by introducing plant-based options. Even if the reason for adopting plant-based options does not align with your organisation's approach, focusing on the common goal makes the collaboration valuable for all parties.

Working with public institutions will also involve other challenges. The financial factor might not play such an important role, but there might be political tensions at play, depending on the region where you are based. In institutions, there might also be a tendency to take a very moderate position and words such as 'veganism' or campaigns such as a vegan/veggie challenge might be too sensitive. This can create conflicts within the team or even with your members, as you might have to take a more pragmatic position than usual. Public institutions also tend to be much slower in their decision-making processes than corporates, which can slow down your work.

Bear in mind that corporate businesses and public institutions will need to consider your organisation to be a trustworthy and professional partner. They also have staff, stakeholders, and customers who might question the partnership. Groups with very clear animal-rights vocations might be at a disadvantage, compared to groups focusing on plant-based eating, so how we present ourselves (our branding, marketing, communications, etc.) is of utmost importance. We strongly encourage you to learn more about the importance of branding and marketing in the Nonprofit Management Accelerator webinar titled: 'Increase Impact through Branding and Marketing: the Importance of a Name', [here](#).

IV. What can we offer?



1. CONNECTION WITH THE COMMUNITY AND SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

First, as organisations working in the plant-based space, our most valuable asset is our connection with the plant-based community (vegetarians, vegans, and flexitarians). Through our campaigns, social media, and communication with stakeholders, we are familiar with their needs, motivations, barriers, etc. Being close to this target audience has great value for corporate businesses, making a partnership of value to them because it will introduce them to a new pool of customers.

Of course, the ultimate goal is that consumers will choose the new plant-based products being offered by the corporations. This means that making the new plant-based options visible is key. To learn more about this topic, please refer to the communication section of this guide.

2. PROVIDING DATA

As well as offering insights into consumer's wants and needs, we can show companies how providing plant-based options can make them more financially and environmentally sustainable. For example, a company that replaces part of its animal-centred dishes with plant-based alternatives will reduce its greenhouse gas emission in addition to diversifying its revenues. Similarly, a catering company that offers plant-based options will reduce its production costs (since plant proteins such as legumes and grains are usually less expensive than animal proteins) as well as gain a new customer pool. For institutions, offering a wider range of plant-based options will contribute to sustainability goals as well as promote public health. It is important to note that public institutions often outsource services from corporate businesses. For example, city governments often have contracts with private catering services for events.

It is also crucial to use the widest and most concrete information possible when reaching out to corporate businesses and institutions. NGOs and grassroots that promote plant-based eating have the advantage of having access to specific and relevant data in their field. This can be done by using a [CO² calculator](#) for example, or any other data tool that is relevant to your region (ProVeg International is currently developing a calculator which will be available shortly). Other valuable information might include plant-based recipes, ingredient lists, and a database of plant-based product vendors.



EXAMPLE PERSUASION TACTICS AND BEST PRACTICES

- » Demonstrate Demand
 - Provide vegan statistics and market demand (See [Rankings and Consumer Data Collection Accelerator](#) for training.)
 - When dining in a group, vegans often choose the restaurant
 - Public petition
 - Vegan meet-ups, etc.
- » Chef Mentorship
 - Menu consultation
 - Offer chef training
- » Plant-Based Certification, Environmental Certification, etc. demonstrating they are providing plant-based dishes
- » Publicity
 - Free advertisements, etc.
 - Happy Cow, ABillionVeg, etc
- » Promotion on menus
 - Promote health
 - Promote animal welfare
 - Promote environmental Impact
 - Promote taste
- » Promotion within restaurant
 - Signs, coupons, specials, etc.
- » Promote Environmental Impact
 - Determine CO2 emissions per menu change
 - Determine water saved, land saved, animals saved, etc. per menu change
- » Promote Health
 - Provide health information on diet-based noncommunicable diseases and health benefits of plant-based products.

V. How to start?



1. IDENTIFY YOUR PARTNER

If you decide to work with corporate businesses, you might already have a 'wish list' of companies in mind. Whatever criteria you follow (vegan friendliness, openness to work with NGOs, personal contacts, a connection with your organisation's mission, past collaborations, financial power, etc.), make sure your collaboration with a company will add value for both partners. Even if you have different interests, agree on common goals of replacing animal-based products so that you remain connected to the mission of your organisation.



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this perspective, working with a chain restaurant has greater potential impact as your work will be multiplied in different locations. For more information about engaging with local restaurants, please refer to our Local Restaurant Outreach Intervention Accelerator [here](#).

Whatever the size is of the company you're working with, always emphasize the benefits they will receive. By investing in plant-based offerings, they will be able to attract new customers, increase their income, and score positively on environmental sustainability. In most cases, this will reflect well on the image of the company and attract positive publicity. Inform companies that you will communicate the results of their efforts.

You can take a similar approach with public institutions. Choosing more progressive and opened-minded partners that are already working on programmes around food, sustainability, or public health topics might be easier to begin with. It might be more effective to invest your time in connecting with existing programmes than having to convince a potential partner of the role that plant-based food plays in fighting climate change or in public health issues.

Choose the 'low hanging fruit' first. Targeting smaller (and often more accessible) companies might be easier to start with than a large multinational company. Choosing an 'easier' company to start with can be useful, but don't be afraid to reach out to the bigger and more impactful partners once you've gained experience. Consider working with catering companies, retailers, university canteens, hospitals, etc. that provide food to thousands of people every day and can therefore increase the impact of your campaign. From

Example Corporate and Institutional Targets

- » Chains restaurants or local restaurants
- » Chain hotels or independent hotels
- » Catering companies
- » Kindergarten canteens
- » School lunch programs
- » University dining hall
- » Retirement homes
- » Public canteens
- » Hostels
- » Large company employee dining halls
- » Other large-scale dining halls
- » Hospitals
- » Airline menus or airline catering companies
- » Prison systems
- » Chef schools

2. FIND YOUR ALLY WITHIN THE COMPANY OR INSTITUTION

A) Corporations

After identifying a suitable company or institution, being strategic in finding the right person to make your first contact with is the most effective way to get the partnership moving forward. Ideally, this person is in a decision-making position, will see the potential for financial or other gain as a result of your assistance, and will thus be able to drive the partnership from within the organisation. Your contact person will always be your main point of contact and a useful ally through which to pass on information to others in the company or institution. Further down the line, this key person will probably connect you with other people in the company in order to follow up on various operational processes.

B) Public Institutions

When working with a public institution such as a city government, your first contact person will probably be a sustainability manager or health manager in the environmental or health department. Depending on the political system in your region, this person will have to prepare a report and present it to the Deputy Mayor, who will have to present it to the city council (this process might vary, depending on your country and municipality). Once you get the green light for a partnership with the city, the initial person will likely remain your contact person and will help to follow up with operational tasks. You will probably also work with catering companies whose services the city contracts for its schools, canteens, community services, etc.

3. DISCUSS GOALS AND REACH AN AGREEMENT

After a few preliminary meetings with your contact person, arriving at a clearly stated agreement is crucial. Do your homework beforehand and get insight into the short and long-term goals of the company or institution. How can you connect these goals with the goals of your organisation? What information or support will they need? Learn about what actions they might already have taken and how you can help them to improve their plant-based offering, using a step-by-step approach. When you have a good idea about what they will need, it will be easier to explain what you can offer them, how much it will cost, and what the benefits will be for them. Define everyone's role in the process and set realistic deadlines.

The same goes for public institutions. Determine if you will need assistance from politicians and, if so, decide which politicians you will need to engage with, and establish what their sensitivities might be. Are there any specific topics they care about and are there others you should avoid? Building a relationship with a contact person within the institution usually facilitates this process.

In all situations, we recommend using a written agreement to ensure a more professional partnership.

Example Campaign Aims

- » Launch a Vegan Day, Meat-Free Day, or similar
- » Substitute animal-based ingredients with plant-based alternative
- » Increase vegan options on menu
- » Increase veganizable options on menu (non-veg items that can be easily made vegan)
- » Decrease animal-based menu items by x%
- » Persuade adoption of plant-based meat and dairy items
- » "Blending" animal-based products (for example, replacing 50% of meat patty with mushrooms, replacing 50% of meat sauce with vegetables)
- » Aim to make the menu 10%,20%,50% vegan, etc.
- » Partner with corporation during your vegan challenge
- » And more.

4. PLANNING YOUR TIMELINE AND BUDGET

Once an agreement is written and signed, it is important to discuss goals and establish a timeline. This will help you to follow up on the process and identify any issues in a timely manner. If someone from the company is expected to deliver certain information, build the timeline in consultation with them so they are aware of what is expected and when. If the timeline is mostly for internal use, it's still useful to inform the company what they can expect and by when. It will help to get them more involved and connected to the project.

A properly planned budget will also help you to avoid unwanted surprises. Depending on the agreement you signed with the company or institution, you will need to allocate funds to certain tasks. Keep track of incoming and outgoing budget items in a structured way. Structured planning helps you to monitor the real costs and will help you to adjust budgets if necessary. (For more information on budgets, please refer to our Nonprofit Management Accelerator's ['Introduction to Accounting and Budgeting' webinar](#).)

Transparency is especially important when engaging with institutions. Inform them beforehand if you think adjustments need to be made.

Example Aims

- » Food industry executives will understand the market need for vegan food and will increase plant-based menu options and decrease animal-based options.
- » Customers will be motivated to choose plant-based dishes over animal-based dishes.
- » School systems will choose meat-free days to improve students' health and nutrition and reduce their environmental impact.

Example Goals

- » To reduce animal-based dish purchases in popular chain restaurants.
- » To increase plant-based dish purchases in popular chain restaurants.
- » To establish working relationships with food industry executives and create conditions that ensure future acceptance of plant-based meat and dairy alternatives or clean meat.
- » To establish working relationships with school system dining hall director and create conditions that ensure acceptance of plant-based dishes.

Example Objectives

- » To reach out to at least 10 chain restaurants to reduce animal-based menu items by 20%.
- » To provide chef training to at least 10 chain restaurants and follow-up to ensure animal-based menu items have dropped by 20%.
- » To launch a Plant-Based Lunch day in at least 10 public schools that caters to at least 10,000 students.
- » To persuade 10 university canteens to replace at least 50% of animal-produce menu items with plant-based alternatives.

5. DELIVER RELEVANT AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

A)

Prepare your team for any required workshops, recipe development, communication material adjustments, etc. Remember that the information you provide needs to be adapted to the situation. For instance, there might be differences between hospitals because of different food costs, different ingredient providers, etc. Retailers will be interested in new products on the market but every retailer has their own focus and what is interesting for one might not be interesting for another.

B)

Provide consumer-communication material. Regardless of whether you work with a university, a chain restaurant, a hospital, or a public canteen, they might be interested in using printed or digital communication material to inform their public of the new menu offerings. While it's a good thing to have standardised materials which can be used in many different situations, it's also recommended that you sometimes adapt your materials to the specific audience you're targeting. For instance, students in universities will be interested in different topics and attracted to different visuals than employees in a bank. Even if a company develops their own advertising materials, they still might need your input.



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C)

Launch – when you have provided all the information a company or institution needs in order to adapt its offerings, and they have all necessary promotional materials, the next step is to launch the new product to the end consumers. The launch needs to be carefully designed in order to attract the attention of the people you want to reach. You can also consider informing journalists and writing a press release, together with the company you're partnering with.

D)

After a successful launch, you'll need to regularly communicate about the new plant-based menu offerings. This can be done through regular tastings, free samples, etc. Make sure there is enough variety and change the options regularly (at least every season).

6. COMMUNICATE YOUR SUCCESS

Collect and share the results! Companies and institutions want to know the impact of the changes they made and they also want to share positive results. Try to get sales data on the number of plant-based dishes or products sold, and calculate what this means in terms of comparative [carbon foot-print](#), [water](#), land use, or animals that have been saved. (ProVeg International is currently developing a calculator which will be available shortly.) This will not only encourage your organisation and the company or institution to continue the partnership, but it might also open doors for new future partnerships.

Communicate these results either through your own communication materials (website, magazine, newsletter, social media, etc.) or through media partners – or both. Concrete results are important, particularly for media outlets, and will make them more likely to cover your success story.

7. ASSESS, EVALUATE, AND IMPROVE

Learn from your own work by assessing and evaluating. Sit together with your team and your partner organisation, and assess the process and the results. Did you reach your goals? What parts of the process could be improved? Was your timeline and budget realistic? Are you happy with the results? This information can help you define new partnerships and achieve even better results. It also can help you follow up on future partnerships with the company and consolidate your relationship.

To learn how to develop a formal evaluation and measure the impact of your work, see the Nonprofit Management Accelerator, specifically our [‘Evaluations and Impact Measurement: What are we Actually Achieving?’ webinar](#).

VI. Extra Tips



1. CONNECT WITH A CAMPAIGN

A strong consumer campaign, such as a plant-based challenge or billboard campaign, can help raise awareness and motivate people to choose plant-based options. For some companies and institutions, linking to a campaign might be too much and they may want to start small and get involved in a campaign further down the line. Campaigns such as 'Meatless Mondays' are low-barrier campaigns which can be easily adopted and which might be the perfect opportunity to launch plant-based dishes. On the other hand, a 30-day veggie challenge might not be appropriate for a company just beginning to experiment with plant-based offerings.

A supermarket that launches new plant-based products could benefit from launching these at the same time as the start of a well-known campaign such as Veganuary or the Veggie Challenge. If this challenge is taking place for the first time, however, it might not be that useful as people won't yet be familiar with the campaign. Depending on your region, you could also link the campaign to traditional or religious events.

2. CONDUCT FREE TRAINING SESSIONS IN ORDER TO GAIN EXPERIENCE AND GENERATE ATTENTION

Ideally, you can ask the company to pay for your time and expertise. However, if you are new to working with corporate businesses, you might want to first gain more experience and knowledge before feeling confident enough to charge for your services. You can consider providing free training sessions as a way to begin building expertise in this field. Communicate clearly that these free sessions are just an initial service in order to avoid partners who received free coaching in the past expecting the same in the future.



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If and when you decide to charge a fee, determining the correct fees is not an easy task. As a guideline, we advise you to make an estimation of the time you'll need in terms of the agreement, and calculate the salary cost (or a market-related equivalent if you are a volunteer). Bear in mind that it's easy to underestimate the time needed and that you will almost certainly spend more time preparing and facilitating the training sessions than you initially think. When you work with external experts such as graphic designers, communication specialists, chefs, etc., ask beforehand how much they will charge and add an extra 10% for your time. You could also have fixed prices for certain services. Sometimes a company or public institution requires printed brochures, posters, etc. You can charge a fixed price per item, based on the actual cost to your organisation.



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3. BE PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE CRITICISM FROM STAKEHOLDERS

As mentioned above, some of your followers might question collaborations with companies or have problems with the compromises you might need to make when working with a third party. Prepare them beforehand and explain why you believe that building these kinds of partnerships will help your organisation to reach your goals and potentially even increase revenue. Engage in open and respectful dialogue, but also keep in mind that, despite your best intentions and efforts, some people might still not approve of a particular initiative or project.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Please find various additional resources below for your corporate-engagement and institutional-outreach campaigns.

General Resources

- » [Forward Food 'Professional Guide to Plant Based Food Service'](#)
- » [Meatless Monday All Resources](#)
- » [Forward Food 'Institutional Meat Reduction Toolkit'](#)

Guides on Schools and Universities Outreach

- » [Meatless Monday 'School Cafeteria Guide'](#)
- » [Meatless Monday 'Colleges & University Guide'](#)

Guides on Hospitals Outreach

- » [Forward Food 'Hospital Toolkit'](#)
- » [Healthcare Without Harm 'How to Green Food Services in European Healthcare'](#)

Resources on Restaurants Outreach

- » [Veganizer Restaurant Outreach Workshops](#)
- » [Restaurant Outreach Welcome Kit](#)
- » [Meatless Monday 'Restaurant Outreach Guide'](#)

Public Institutions Outreach Guides

- » [Meat of the Matter 'Municipal Guide to Climate-Friendly Food Purchasing'](#)
- » [Meatless Monday 'City Ambassador Guide'](#)
- » [ProVeg Corporate Engagement and Institutional Outreach Accelerator](#)

Recipes

- » [Meatless Monday 'Cookbook' with recipes from 30 countries](#)
- » [Sub4Health 'Vegan Institutional Recipes'](#)
- » [Sub4Health 'Schools Institutional Recipes'](#)