

Central Rivers Farmshed is a grassroots non-profit in Stevens Point, Wisconsin whose mission is to build a local food economy. A part of that mission is working to bring more vulnerable populations the access to fresh, healthy, nutritious foods. Through a partnership with the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, we can make that possible through the Badger State Box.

The Badger State Boxes are monthly supplemental nutrition boxes that sources all its contents from Wisconsin farmers and producers. However, that is not the most unique thing about this box, as the quality of the food far surpasses similar programs to it. Some staples of the box are fresh potatoes, onions, eggs, milk, yogurt, granola, greens, and so much more. Recipients of the boxes couldn't believe what they were given for free. One box can be given out per four people in a household, as these boxes are one of the more accessible supplemental food programs available.

When we publicly announced our distribution of the Badger Boxes, these were our frequently asked questions and their answers:

“What do you need to do to apply for a box?”

There is no application process for the boxes. This is a self-determined eligibility program and requires no approval from the state like other assistance programs.

“What materials do we need to bring to receive a box?”

There are no required materials for the boxes. Upon entry to pick up a box, participants simply fill out a document with their name, house address, number of people in their household, and their self-determination of if they are income eligible or not.

“Are we able to get boxes for someone who can't make it.”

Yes. Due to the nature of acquiring a box, it is possible for others to pick up a box for someone who cannot make it to our site for any reason. All we need is the information about them from the question above.

Badger State Boxes are special in where they source their products and how the community can obtain them. It isn't until you realize the income requirements of boxes, that you know how big of an impact can be made on the community. For a one-person household, the maximum income you can have to be eligible for a box is \$40,770 a year. For two people, combined income can be up to \$54,930. Compare this to be eligible for SNAP benefits, which for a one-person household maximum is \$2,148 a month (\$25,776 a year). While these programs in their nature are different and complex, Badger State Boxes helps relieve the personal spending on food by providing supplemental products for the month.



Badger State Boxes income eligibility makes them accessible to segments of the population that typically are not eligible for federal income programs, and the process of obtaining a Badger State Box is a lot less intensive. Those who fit in the ALICE group (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), who are “our families, neighbors, and colleagues who work hard, earn above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford a basic household budget.” People in this group would be able to access a Badger Box. Additionally, Badger Boxes are also widely available to seasonal agricultural workers and refugees, which are populations are typically underserved and Badger Boxes is looking to support them.

Our community has responded to our distribution with much support and interest. One parent of a recipient wrote: “The Badger Box food was simply stunning. I picked up a box for my daughter this morning (she is disabled physically and unable to walk long distances or carry heavy things), so she asked if I'd go in and get a box for her. It could not have been easier, and the foods contained in the box were wonderful. What a great assortment! Thank you for coordinating this distribution to the community. It is very much appreciated!”

Stories like these are important to tell, as we can see the real impact programs like these have. Real people are being positively influenced by accessible food programs like these, especially when these programs supply high quality foods. Those who rely on food pantries and food assistance often find nearly expired foods, dented cans, and sugary food donated, or find highly processed foods being the cheapest to buy. People, regardless of their situation, deserve fresh, nutritious food. People deserve Badger State Boxes.