

FREE & THRIFT
STORE MANUAL

Contributors

A big thank-you to all who contributed to the Free & Thrift Stores manual!

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
A.	About PLAN	2
B.	Some Advice for Every Project	3
C.	Leadership Turnover	9
D.	Administrative Run-Arounds	10
E.	Collaboration & Intersectionality	11
II.	Thrift Vs. Free Stores	12
III.	Initial Store Logistics	14
A.	Finding a Space	14
B.	Working with Administration	15
C.	Bookkeeping and Documentation	17
IV.	Store Layout	19
A.	Back of the House	19
B.	Front of the House	23
C.	Prepping Store Inventory	25
V.	Volunteers & Staff	28
A.	Trainings	28
B.	Roles & Leadership Structures	30
C.	Compensation	32
D.	Burnout	32
VI.	Timelines for your Store	33
VII.	Advertising	34
A.	Audience	34
B.	Social Media Platforms	36
C.	Events	38
VIII.	Distribution	39
A.	Overflow	39
B.	Transportation	42
C.	Customer Pickups	43
IX.	Store Longevity	44
A.	Integration Into Daily Campus Operations	44
B.	Strategies to Institutionalize Your Store	46
X.	Endnotes	47

B. Working with Administration

You will be working with your administration a lot so it's important to establish a good relationship with them so that they know and trust you. As you prepare for your first meeting with administration to discuss your top space choices, be prepared to talk about how the program will benefit your school. Ask questions about the campus-specific logistics that we list on pg. 14, so that when you walk away from the meeting you know what is required of you for each of your space choices.

How to Advocate Your Store to Your Admin:

1. Less waste in dorms means less work for housekeeping staff
2. Less material in the dumpster means lower landfill hauling costs for your campus
3. Engaging students with a higher level of thinking regarding consumption
4. Teaches students valuable financial management skills
5. Provides a valuable service to all employees, staff, and students at a very small cost (if any) to the college.

Permits and Codes

Do some sleuthing to find out what kinds of permits or codes you will need for the potential spaces of your store. Perhaps you will need to know the fire code or other similar safety measures. In addition, the space you are using may only be allowed to operate within regular workday hours and academic terms of the institution. A good place to find this information would be referring to other student projects on campus. Meet with the leaders of these projects and ask how they got started and who they talked to. If you have a staff advisor such as a professor or Student Activities office staff member, ask them about any connections they have that can help you get this information. Again, the more you know going into the initial meeting to pitch your store ideas, the greater the likelihood that administration will assist you in your efforts. It could also be that you will be unable to find that information without first talking to administration.



For an example of a Space Use Agreement from Western Carolina University, check out the "Free and Thrift" folder in your Google Drive.

<< FRONT OF THE HOUSE >>

Layout of Store Front

To help get a better picture of what your storefront will look like, start sketching out different layouts. You can test these layouts by marking them out on the ground with masking tape. Try to get the feel for the flow of the shop when a customer walks in. In your layout, include space for clothing racks, bookshelves, shelves for miscellaneous items, and mirrors. Utilize what your campus already has; oftentimes **Campus Surplus** will be able to fully outfit your store with secondhand items. Talk to your campus Facilities Department to find out more about surplus. Get creative with designing your store to provide customers with a smooth shopping experience; rather than having clothes organized as gender specific, you might group them by clothing type and color - i.e. t-shirts, pants, jeans, jackets, etc. If you anticipate having a lot of a specific item being donated, accommodate for that.



For an example store layout, see Clark's thrift store blueprint in the Free & Thrift folder in the shared Google Drive

Cleanliness

Keeping your store clean does not require a ton of work if it is done regularly. Just like with the back of the house, creating a list of tasks to complete will help keep the store clean and organized. At Earlham College, students created a "Task Master" sheet in which volunteers could keep track of who was working in the store when, opening and closing shift tasks, and the status of each of these tasks after each shift. In addition, there should be a "How To" guide for organizing and cleaning in the store. Tasks can range from sweeping the floors to refolding clothing on shelves. It is important to have this list in a centralized location preferably in the back of the house so that all workers can refer to it at all hours of operation.

For a sample "Task Master" list, check out your campus's "Free and Thrift" folder in Google Drive.



Case Study: The Earlham College Free Store's Overflow System

Students at Earlham College created a three-tiered donation hierarchy for their overflow system that was crafted around where overflow items would be sent.

- 1) First, donations went to local shelters and pantries, places that would give away the donations to others **for free**.
- 2) Second, to local thrift stores where they **could be sold**
- 3) Third, to larger thrift stores such as Goodwill where items could either be sold or **exported** to second-hand economies elsewhere in the country or around the world.

Earlham's approach to donation overflow prioritized the surrounding community by supporting local initiatives and businesses. Remember that your store exists within a large network of other micro economies around the world that many people with few resources can go to for help and resources. By supporting other initiatives like your store, you are giving back to the network you belong to.

Source: Endnote 7

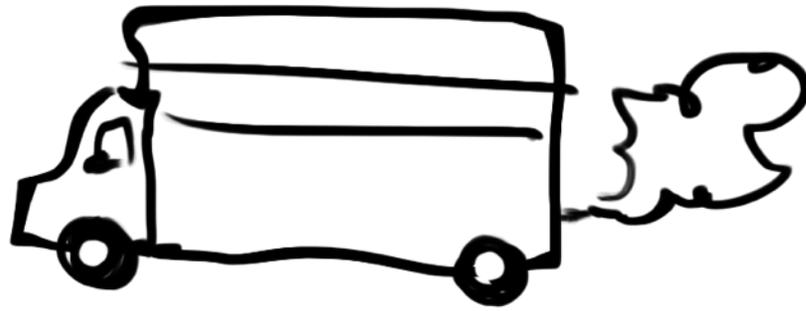
Think of the larger context in which your store exists - not only your campus, but the surrounding community - to identify what local resources you can utilize for overflow stock. This will involve setting aside time in your planning timeline to connect with establishments like:

By intentionally creating strong and lasting partnerships you are not only guaranteeing a flow of stock in and out of your store, but also establishing a place in the greater community in which your campus exists. As the workers in your store come and leave, having stable partnerships will prove invaluable in preserving the longevity of the store .

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- Grade schools
 - Local homeless shelters
 - Cooperatives
 - Food pantries
 - Goodwill, Salvation Army, or Planet Aid
 - Smaller, more local thrift stores
 - Any other major community spaces



For pros and cons on donation locations for textiles, furniture, and other store donations, see the "Collection & Aggregation" chapter in our "Expanded Recycling" manual



Transportation

For stores that are just starting off, offering the service to transport large items to students will likely not be feasible.

Instead of offering to transport furniture and other bulky items for students, look into services your campus already offers. Often schools have trolleys that students can rent during move-out period, but could easily be used during the rest of the term too. A group such as the Facilities Management department would most likely be in possession of these types of tools, and may be a source for other transport needs.

Additionally, being a PLAN member campus gives you access to reduced prices when renting trucks from a variety of hauling companies. As you store grows and becomes more established on campus, you will better be able to gauge how much time and materials you will need to commit to transportation of store purchases. If your store does have access to vehicles among other capacities that enable you to transport store purchases, you may want to charge for these trips, and factor them into the budget of your store.

For more on PLAN member discounts with hauler companies, ask your Campus Coordinator for a list of our company partnerships

