Executive Summary

Eat for Equity turns a Saturday night into something much more. Eat for Equity is a non-profit that organizes monthly benefit dinners, engaging communities to eat, drink, throw in a few bucks - and raise thousands for a greater cause. In Minneapolis alone, we have thrown over 50 benefit dinners for non-profit organizations nominated by our guests - now with 150 to 200 guests a month. Our innovative approach to fundraising and community-building was recently featured on NBC’s Today Show.

Building on our success in Minneapolis, Boston, and Portland, Eat for Equity will use a mobile kitchen tour to bring this community-driven model to more cities across the country. We will organize a series of roving benefit feasts, cooking for hundreds out of a kitchen on wheels.

This idea responds to demand from over 30 organizers from around the country. They want to build local Eat for Equity branches, but they also want support - and they want to tap into a larger, giving movement. Our mobile tour brings the kitchen and the tools to them, teaching organizers about how to cook for a crowd, and how to bring that crowd together to give.

At each stop, this tour builds knowledge, excitement, media attention, and core support around the local Eat for Equity. It will train over a hundred organizers to build the movement. It will serve thousands of plates of local, fresh food. It will raise tens of thousands of dollars for local and international causes - and - it will develop connected, vibrant communities built around food where individuals come together to create a better, more equitable world.

Introduction

There is a myth about the millennial generation: namely, that they are apathetic and disengaged. This myth is fueled by statistics that indicate a low level of charitable giving among young adults. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, those under the age of 25 often give less than 1% of their income to charity, and most of those contributions are to religious
causes. A young adult making $20,000 a year will likely give just $16 (.08%) to non-religious charities.

This, as non-profits and civic organizations encounter a challenging funding environment paired with a rising need for their services. Organizations are soliciting financial support more than ever, but for this generation, simply cutting a check isn’t sufficient. Millennials seek a genuine connection in the cause, and each other.

Enter Eat for Equity, which is built on the idea that this generation is anything but dispassionate. Eat for Equity has shown that when young adults are asked to share their ideas, time, and yes, their money, they respond generously. The success of Eat for Equity - in Minneapolis and in other cities across the country - proves that people crave opportunities to contribute to and develop community. They just need to be asked. Guests at Eat for Equity volunteer to host dinners, nominate organizations, and give generously and regularly to a range of non-profit causes. A person who attends just one Eat for Equity will match their peers’ yearly average donation in a single evening (by contributing a suggested $15), though many guests give more, returning on a monthly basis.

Young adults are hungry for community and ownership. Eat for Equity is shaped by the values and priorities of its participants, who nominate non-profit causes for upcoming events. Eat for Equity represents a shift in the way young adults will interact with giving. Eat for Equity is a vehicle that gives young people - and others with modest resources and big hearts - the power to make a significant difference. It empowers everyday people to interact positively with their communities, pool their resources and give to critical causes. It increases knowledge and connectedness by exposing guests to a new non-profit cause each month.

The idea of Eat for Equity started as a response to Hurricane Katrina, when its founders were living in a cooperative house at Boston University. One of its founders saw a recipe for jambalaya and thought out loud, “If we made a New Orleans-themed meal, would people in the house donate money for hurricane relief?” The answer was yes, and its founders decided to
invite everyone they knew - friends, classmates, professors - and to make it an event, not just a
dinner. They also realized that this basic idea could be transferred to any cause, as a way to
build a giving community around social change.

One of Eat for Equity’s founders, Emily Torgrimson, brought the idea with her when she
returned to her home state of Minnesota. The first Eat for Equity Minneapolis dinner drew a
handful of her closest friends into a small apartment, and raised just over $100 for an education
program in Guatemala. Eat for Equity Minneapolis’ monthly events now attract 100 - 200 guests,
and Eat for Equity Minneapolis is at the center of the broader Eat for Equity movement.

The Eat for Equity model of community-driven, participatory benefit dinners has proven
to be scalable, replicable, and wildly popular. Since its start in 2006, Eat for Equity has been on
a consistent upward trajectory, continuing to grow in dollars raised, number of supporters, and
branch expansion. With advertising limited to word of mouth and social media, Eat for Equity
Minneapolis’ consistently exceeds the capacity of its host homes. Eat for Equity Minneapolis is
at the center of the broader Eat for Equity movement, having developed best practices that
inform the work of branches around the country.

Competition

The idea to bring people together around food to connect and give is a simple one, used
by Eat for Equity, as well as independent non-profits and grassroots organizations like Empty
Bowls and Sunday SOUP. Non-profit organizations often arrange their own annual benefit
dinners and galas to support their operations. Events raise needed funds, as well as awareness
for the organization and its mission. However, such events can be costly, as well as time- and
energy-consuming for the organization to produce - renting venues, hiring caterers, booking
entertainment, inviting guests. Guests often pay a high ticket price, which is a barrier to casual
or new supporters, who want to support the organization but are not able to contribute at the
$100 level.
At **Empty Bowls** events, guests eat a simple meal of soup and bread, and are given a handcrafted bowl [in exchange for a donation] as a reminder of “all the empty bowls in the world.” The money raised is donated to an organization working to address hunger. Empty Bowls events are independently organized across the United States and in at least 14 other countries.

**Sunday SOUP** is a grassroots network of 50 groups raising money to fund artistic projects. At SOUP events, a group of people come together to share a meal, and their donations support a creative project. The attendees vote on which creative project receives the micro-grant. Groups include FEAST Brooklyn, Philly Stake, and Portland Stock. Eat for Equity applauds and encourages the work of its “competitors.” There are key differences, however, in Eat for Equity’s approach to fundraising. Eat for Equity events are recurring, welcoming, participatory, intimate - and fun.

- **Recurring** events [from quarterly events in Portland to monthly events in Minneapolis] encourage guests to return to build friendships and community.
- **Our suggested cost** [$10 - $20] and culture is **welcoming** and inclusive of all guests. Unlike costly black tie events, every level of giving is considered generous, and we keep our price point at a moderate suggested donation.
- **Guests participate** by hosting dinners, nominating organizations, and giving generously and regularly to a range of non-profit causes. Guests can share their skills as organizers, artists, chefs, (and dish-washers).
- **Each dinner is hosted** at a different home, which makes each event both **intimate** and novel. The events give guests the chance to connect over a common cause - and to share, learn, and network with each other.
- **Eat for Equity is fun.** Guests hear a short presentation (within a five-to-seven minute range) about the organization for which they’re raising money, and the benefit party often includes dancing, music, and art.
Proposal

Eat for Equity will use a mobile kitchen tour to bring its successful, community-driven model to 24 cities across the country. This project responds to demand from over 30 organizers from around the country, who want to build local Eat for Equity branches, but they want support and a connection to a larger, giving movement. Our mobile tour brings the kitchen and the tools to them.

The tour will span six months, and will spend one week at each stop, training a core group of three to ten local organizers to facilitate Eat for Equity events. Over the course of the week, two Eat for Equity support staff will use hands-on training to build capacity among the local organizers. Support staff and organizers will build excitement for the event through media outreach and an active social media presence. At the end of the week, the team will co-host an Eat for Equity for 100 - 200 people.

The mobile kitchen infrastructure could take many forms - from a commercial food truck to converted bus. The mobile kitchen should reflect the core qualities of Eat for Equity - recurring, welcoming, participatory, intimate - and fun. Our current proposal is for a “tiny house” [8’X18’] built on a trailer, pulled by a truck with a portable farm in the truck bed. This reflects the Eat for Equity ethos of intimacy - by inviting organizers into a portable home for cooking and training. It also serves as lodging for the two support staff throughout the tour. Building a “tiny house” costs approximately $20,000 - $25,000 in materials, though the completed houses sell for $40,000 - $50,000 [and after the tour, Eat for Equity could easily store the house or resell for profit].

The tour will develop connected, vibrant communities built around food where individuals come together to create a better, more equitable world. The objectives of the tour are to:

- Train over 100 organizers to build independent, sustainable Eat for Equity branches
• Build excitement and media attention around the local Eat for Equity
• Co-host 24 events for 100 - 200 guests, serving thousands of plates of local, fresh food
• Raise tens of thousands of dollars for local and international causes

Financial Projections

With virtually no operating budget, Eat for Equity has already had a powerful impact on communities both locally and internationally. We’ve raised almost $30,000 for non-profit causes, engaging thousands of individuals in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. We measure our success by several standards: total dollars raised (before event expenses), total dollars sent (minus expenses), and estimated number of guests.

On every count, Eat for Equity is growing. In the last 12 months, we have raised a monthly average of $1,500. By limiting event expenses and overhead, we donate 70% of the total dollars raised. With the other 30%, Eat for Equity buys ingredients from local businesses and farmers, reflecting our commitment to local enterprise. On average, we feed a crowd of people at $3 per person. In our attached projected budget, we express a goal of a 2% increase each month in Minneapolis in total dollars raised. We will project event expenses to limited to ⅓ of each month’s fundraising goal, so that at least ⅔ of donations go directly to the charity.

This tour is anticipated to cost $78,360 in personnel, infrastructure, and operating costs. However, the project anticipates reselling the mobile kitchen/house for a profit, and reselling the truck and generator at depreciation cost [with conservative estimates, that results in $48,000 in returns, with an overall projected cost of $30,360. This investment could result on a ten-fold

With conservative estimates [$1000 raised at the first event, with a 2% increase at each consecutive event; with 30% going to food/event costs, and 60% donated], we project raising $21,295 at the 24 co-hosted events throughout the country. However, the goal of this tour is to
build sustainable Eat for Equity branches, who will organize anywhere from 4 - 12 events in the following year. If each of the 24 branches organizes 4 events [raising $1000 at each event, donating 60% of the money raised], this tour will result in $67,200 worth of donations to local and international causes. If each of the 24 branches organizes 12 events [again, raising $1000 at each event, donating 60% of the money raised], this tour will result in $201,600 of donations.

**Next Steps**

Eat for Equity must secure funding for an initial investment in mobile kitchen infrastructure, and to move forward with developing training materials. Eat for Equity will begin to secure commitment from local organizers to participate in the training and to dedicate themselves to organizing local events. Eat for Equity will pursue matching grants from corporations and foundations, in order to maximize the impact of its events.