

Using Power Platform to drive community impact

When people want to support local food banks, the first step isn't always obvious. Which organizations are nearby? What items are most needed? How can someone help quickly and meaningfully? Lee Ford set out to solve this challenge after seeing how disconnected the donation experience can be even for those eager to contribute.

Utilizing [Microsoft Power Platform](#), Ford built Foodbank Friend as an intelligent, AI-powered assistant that makes it easier to give. The solution connects users with real-time donation needs at local food banks, streamlines the experience through conversational interaction, and lays the groundwork for future integrations with expense systems and corporate giving platforms.

Challenge

Making it easier for people to help

Many food banks operate with a limited digital presence, making it hard for potential donors to take meaningful action. Foodbank Friend was designed to remove that friction through a guided, AI-powered experience that delivers immediate value and supports future growth.

- Help users find local food banks based on location, making discovery simple and accessible.
- Show real-time donation needs by pulling live data so users know exactly what to give.
- Generate a donation list on the spot, including estimated costs to make giving easier.
- Enable future integration with expense systems and corporate giving platforms laying the groundwork for scale and enterprise use.

The goal: Develop a scalable, AI-driven solution to connect users with local food banks and surface donation needs through data integration.

Solution

A better way to give

By using Power Platform, an AI-powered assistant was built. At the center is a Copilot Studio agent that engages users through natural conversation. Users enter a location and get a curated list of nearby food banks along with real-time needs sourced from the [Give Food API](#). The agent can also generate a shopping list with estimated costs, helping donors take immediate action.

[Watch the video >](#)

It's an AI powered assistant that helps people find local food banks and what they need - turning a simple idea into an actionable, scalable experience.

Core components include:



Copilot Studio

Powers the natural language interface for location-based food bank searches. And generates shopping lists for items needed by food banks in a readable format using generative AI.



Data Connector

Custom connector built for the agent to interact with the Give Food API for food bank location, items needed and contact details



Microsoft 365 integrations

Helps translate and format API data into user-friendly responses.



Built-in security

Ensures all user interactions and data stay within authenticated sessions.

Result

Reducing friction between good intentions and real impact

Foodbank Friend demonstrates how Power Platform can accelerate delivery and amplify impact. Implementing a custom connector allowed the agent to interface directly with an external API exposing food bank data, effectively extending its functionality beyond native capabilities.

Key outcomes:

- Streamlined the donation process by helping users connect with local food banks and identify real-time needs.
- Capabilities for future integration with expense systems and charitable platforms.
- Showcased how developers can build community-focused solutions, not just business tools.

Learning resources

Explore these resources for more examples and practical guidance.

- [Foodbank Friend GitHub repository](#)
- [Powerful Devs Hack Together series](#)
- [Power Platform Samples](#)
- [AI in Action series](#)