



COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND  
STEWARDSHIP REPORT  
JULY 2020



## THANK YOU

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown our nation into a crisis of epic proportions. Everyone, everywhere is feeling the effects. For the 37 million people who were already struggling with hunger, it's harder than ever to meet daily needs. For tens of millions more people, job losses, school closures and health expenses mean a devastating new reality: not knowing where they will get their next meal.

For Feeding America's network of 200 food banks, the pandemic is the perfect storm. More people need food assistance than ever before in our network's history. Food donations dried up suddenly. Social distancing and shelter in place orders upended our food distribution model and resulted in the sudden loss of two million volunteers.

Thanks to the exceptional generosity of partners like you, struggling families had somewhere to turn. Your help made it possible for the Feeding America network to respond quickly to make new connections in the supply chain and to innovate new and safer food distribution methods. With your support, our food banks responded with strength, speed and resilience to feed their communities in the face of incredible challenges, right when people needed us most.

Your generosity helped our network provide more than **1.3 billion meals** for the grant period from March 1 through mid-June. In the face of countless obstacles and immense vulnerability, our network mobilized to innovate new solutions and meet these challenges head on. With your support, Feeding America achieved incredible success, distributing 40% more food than we did in the same period last year.

Your gift meant children had fuel for remote learning, families shared meals and homebound seniors had the

nourishment they needed. Your outstanding support not only provided nutritious food to struggling families but also inspired the generosity of others to help do the same. In a time of crippling uncertainty, you helped millions of people rest easier knowing there would be food on the table. On behalf of all of us, thank you.



Food is such a basic need, but such a powerful one, and this funding allowed us to give meals, and most of all, hope. It's hard not knowing what tomorrow will bring, or next week, or next month. When kids ask questions like "When is dinner?" and you don't have an answer, it is heart breaking. This grant support has helped take away some of these hard questions.

There is still a lot of worry and struggle. But, as long as families we serve can go home to a meal, the other challenges they face might seem a little more manageable. Thank you for giving this opportunity to serve.

— **COMMUNITY HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHEAST INDIANA, INC. (FORT WAYNE, IN)**



### YOUR FUNDING MET URGENT NEEDS

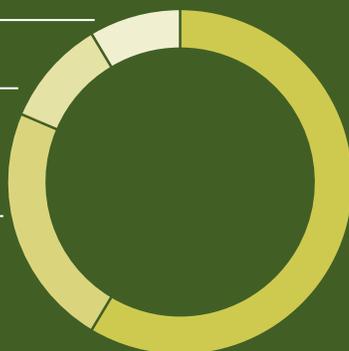
Food banks have used grants from our COVID-19 Response Fund to meet their communities' urgent needs for food assistance. Here's how your support helped.

Provided Labor for Food Distribution (10%)

Expanded Food Pantry and Meal Programs (10%)

Secured Warehouse and Safety Equipment (26%)

Purchased Food and Household Items for Distribution (54%)



### YOUR PROFOUND IMPACT

Your generous support is helping to feed families in every community in the U.S. Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic on March 1, Feeding America's network has achieved:

**1.3B** Meals Provided

**40%** Increase in food distributed over the same period last year

**200** Food banks supported



## THE PEOPLE YOU HELPED REACH

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a need for food assistance unlike anything our food bank network has seen in our history of more than 35 years.

**For the 37 million Americans who already faced food insecurity, trying to put food on the table during the pandemic introduced a crisis within a crisis.** For most of the people we serve, it is a struggle to buy enough food to fill their pantry for more than two days. Imagine being told the best way to keep your family safe is to buy a two-week supply.

Many people struggling with hunger were the first to lose their jobs when the economy froze or lacked paid sick leave. School closures meant missed meals for their children. On top of that, the health threat is having a disproportionate impact on communities of color, the elderly, and low-income families – the very same people who are more likely to struggle with hunger.

At the same time, hunger has skyrocketed among people who could not make ends meet for the first time in their lives. Our nation is setting grim unemployment records: more than 44 million Americans have filed new claims for unemployment benefits since mid-March. Missing paychecks means families are falling into food insecurity and being forced to make impossible choices between buying food and paying for necessities like rent or medicine. With no other options to feed their families, they are turning to us: **40% of the people we are serving have never sought our help before.**

We expect this need to persist. Feeding America projects that the pandemic will disproportionately impact people

already at risk of hunger and could result in an estimated additional 17.1 million people experiencing food insecurity, an increase of 46%.



I am a single mother and I just lost my job due to coronavirus. I don't know how I'm going to pay my rent. Thank God for the food pantry. At least I don't have to worry about food.



**94%** of food banks report that the number of clients has increased compared to this time last year

**60%** average increase in the number of clients

**40%** average proportion of clients who have never sought our help before

**18%** of food distributions have ended without enough food to serve everyone

## YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

At the same time the need soared, our network's standard operating model was upended – food donations disappeared in a flash, our client shopping experience required a complete overhaul and most of our valued volunteers had to stay safely in their homes. During this time of tremendous strain on our capacity to feed everyone, your gift made a world of difference.

**Your support enabled food banks to overcome immense obstacles, and they are profoundly grateful.**

Generous contributions to the COVID-19 Response Fund – deployed with urgency to meet the immediate need – generated confidence within the food banks and their communities that they could rise to the challenge of the pandemic and gave them the resources to do so. You shored up our network so that we could meet the surging need and provided stability that will be so crucial to our capacity to meet the sustained need moving forward.

All of our food banks have extraordinary stories to tell about how your funds helped them provide record amounts of food to record numbers of people. This report shares just a few.

**Food banks' strong partnerships are crucial to their response.**

Our food banks are leading institutions in many of their communities, particularly in times of crisis. Strong, deep partnerships throughout the public and private sectors helped food banks respond creatively to unforeseen challenges. The local networks each food bank has built within their community were critical to our success in distributing unprecedented amounts of food, and the funding the food banks received helped their agencies that were struggling to stay afloat.

**Food banks are distributing food directly to clients.**

About 14% of our network's 60,000 charitable feeding agencies had to cease or suspend operations during



The grant has helped us to solve the challenges we were otherwise unable to solve on our own. Thanks to the grant, we have adequate carts to move products with less manual labor, tents to protect volunteers and products from the weather, safety vests for volunteers, extra storage shelves, rain gear, car window markers, masks, gloves, etc. The grant helped us make the improvements we needed to serve more families in less time.

— NORTH TEXAS FOOD BANK PARTNER AGENCY:  
PLEASANT GROVE FOOD PANTRY (DALLAS, TX)



the pandemic. These closures mean that food banks are assuming the food distribution responsibilities of thousands of partner agencies – and also taking on the related expenses for staffing and transportation.

Food banks are taking exceptional measures to evolve operations rapidly – at increased cost – to continue to safely distribute meals. Many are operating drive-thrus, whereby people in need can pull up their car for a volunteer to load an emergency food box in their trunk. Partners are helping provide space and volunteer support to enable this new model.



For example, Coastal Bend Food Bank partnered with the city of Corpus Christi, TX to use the Convention Center main floor to set up a packing room and also to conduct drive thru distributions using their extensive parking lots. Not only did the food bank make good use of the otherwise closed city facilities, it also strengthened its partnership with the city's staff.



Unlike disasters from recent years, such as the wildfires that devastated parts of California, COVID-19 has thrown our community into an ongoing emergency without a clear end in sight. With our network of more than 1,000 program sites across Los Angeles County, the Food Bank is in a unique position to respond to the dramatic increase in need in our community. This crisis has highlighted the importance of a broad network of partners and supporters, which is essential to mobilizing large scale relief programming.

— LOS ANGELES REGIONAL FOOD BANK  
(LOS ANGELES, CA)



**Food banks are reaching the most vulnerable people.**

Food banks from coast to coast also made direct food deliveries with the help of creative partnerships, especially to serve people who could not drive to food distributions. Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan collaborated with local nonprofit Agencies on Aging, whose volunteer network provided direct deliveries to seniors following shelter in place restrictions.

Feeding Tampa Bay (Tampa, FL) partnered with restaurants and caterers to keep their staff employed to produce meals - reaching a height of 8,500 meals daily. They recruited delivery services to bring meals to homebound individuals, again keeping drivers employed while serving people in need.

When schools began to close, our eyes immediately turned to the nation's children. For nearly 30 million children who receive meals at school, no school means no meals. Food banks are partnering with schools on emergency measures to ensure that these vulnerable children are fed, even when schools let out for the summer. For example, when schools suddenly closed, Food Bank of Delaware (Newark, DE) forged new partnerships with organizations like Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs to provide meal kits until schools and districts developed their plans to distribute meals.

**Food banks are finding new ways to overcome volunteer shortages.** In an average month, nearly two million volunteers across the Feeding America network of food banks and agencies help sort, pack and distribute tens of millions of pounds of food. But we quickly saw a sharp decline in the number of volunteers because of

shelter in place orders. Food banks had to scramble to hire and pay additional staff or change their operating models to navigate the reduction. More than half the network is partnering with the National Guard to box and distribute food at food banks or local agencies. The Greater Cleveland Food Bank (Cleveland, OH), for example, is using some of the National Guard deployed to assist to help deliver food to 1,000 local seniors.

Another innovation came from Food Bank of the Rockies, in Denver, which partnered with staff from Boys & Girls Clubs locations that were closed to assist in a volunteer capacity. Arkansas Food Bank in Little Rock was one of several that partnered with Get Shift Done, an organization that connects the affected hospitality workforce with local non-profits to provide hunger relief. The food bank hired restaurant workers who had been laid off to pack food boxes at an additional facility rented by the food bank to provide extra space.

**Food banks are rising to the challenge with flexibility, agility and strength.** While the pandemic posed monumental hurdles, our food banks are more than meeting the moment, thanks to your help.

Even the food banks most experienced in disaster response have never been through this perfect storm. Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank in Louisiana shared: "We rely heavily on the tourism, gaming and hospitality industries, and these sectors were greatly impacted in our region. We moved from serving 100,000 people annually to serving 50,000 people per month. Despite having extensive leadership experience during natural disasters, this emergency was unlike any situation our organization had ever experienced. It was widespread, impacting the whole nation, and it required a response for which there was no playbook."





Second Harvest has chosen to lean into the COVID-19 crisis to look for the ways that it can transform us as an organization and make us an even stronger ally for the people we serve. New systems have been adapted, new logistics have been implemented and relationships have been formed. We are finding that every situation has a lesson to teach.

— **SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF EAST CENTRAL INDIANA, INC. (MUNCIE, IN)**



The Northeast Iowa Food Bank (Waterloo, IA) was one of dozens of food banks that shared that adaptability was critical to its success. The food bank, like virtually every other, changed its whole distribution operation in just two days. It went from a client choice model, similar to a grocery store, to a drive-thru model where clients stayed in their cars while volunteers loaded their trunks with boxed food. For food banks all across the country, this dramatic change required new supplies, like boxes, and socially distanced volunteers to pack them. Accommodating these changes meant some food banks were open 24 hours.

**Food Banks are tapping new supply sources.** When consumers stocked up on food, it left shortages at stores. Food donations from the retail and manufacturing channels dropped significantly - an estimated 40-70% decrease.

In recent weeks, the surge in consumer demand at grocery retailers has slowed but not normalized, as restaurants, schools and cafeterias remain closed. Shelf-stable food remains largely unavailable for donation because the supply chain is still catching up with the significant consumer demand that depleted distributor and retailer inventories.

Beyond purchasing food, perishable product from the food service industry is now our greatest opportunity, and industry experts believe this will remain so, at least throughout the summer. When restaurants, schools and college cafeterias closed, demand for the food normally sold to these entities disappeared almost overnight. Food banks began working with industry suppliers right away to capture this product.

Again, agility was critical. Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York (Latham, NY) shared: "Remaining flexible is another lesson we have learned from the pandemic. Traditional donations decreased overnight, but new donations took their place, such as bulk perishable donations from the foodservice industry. We had to completely rethink our volunteer operation and were fortunate to have an offsite space nearby made available to us at no cost. This allowed us to continue sorting food while maintaining social distance guidelines. Again and again, we



have been called on to be flexible and creative so we can continue to meet community needs in a new landscape."

**Food banks are so much more than food distribution centers - they are beacons of hope.** Our work is about more than food. It is about care and resilience. The San Antonio Food Bank (San Antonio, TX) shared how your gift helped provide this comfort in a time of desperate need. They helped ensure increased access to food by identifying new locations for food distribution that were familiar to families and allowed for social distancing. Since over 70% of those in need were first-time pantry users, many did not know what to expect. Creating an environment that was inviting and supportive reduced the stigma families experienced in accessing food assistance - often one of the largest barriers.

Food banks are also leaders and connectors, bringing a community together to meet its most urgent needs with speed, efficiency and compassion. For example, Food Lifeline (Seattle, WA), shared that the pandemic brought to light that food banks serve as highly effective hubs for critical information. "We have realized during this crisis that there is more opportunity and community appetite for us to leverage all of our stakeholders to better align and reinforce our more "traditional" hunger relief efforts with additional information regarding policy and advocacy, voting, and how to access federal food assistance programs."



"When you're feeling down every little bit helps. It's all about the H word, Hope." Joanne's doctors asked her to eat lots of fruits and vegetables during his time to stay healthy. Thanks to help from our donors we are able to bring healthy, prepared meals directly to senior living facilities like Joanne's across our 10-county service area.

— **FEEDING TAMPA BAY (TAMPA, FL)**



## WE ARE REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE

COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on a significant number of at-risk populations, such as people of color and the elderly – often, the very people who are at greater risk for hunger. Feeding America, along with the network of food bank leaders, is working to ensure that this pandemic does not perpetuate inequity or deepen the burdens often borne by at-risk populations and people from low-income households.

Feeding America dedicates our resources, platforms, and political will to make the biggest impact for people with the greatest need. By focusing on the needs of people most impacted, we can better ensure the health and safety of all communities. We know the following communities are disproportionately impacted by both COVID-19 and food insecurity, and these are just a few examples of how our food banks are mobilizing to help fill their plates during the pandemic and beyond:

**Black Americans:** The Greater Chicago Food Depository (Chicago, IL) is a shining example of how our food banks are committing to racial equity and addressing disparities for their Black neighbors. Even before the coronavirus pandemic, Black households are almost three times as likely to be food insecure as White households. During the pandemic, food insecurity doubled overall and tripled among households with children in April 2020. In the Chicago metropolitan region, food insecurity rates jumped from 14

to 24%, with Black households disproportionately impacted. The Food Depository is allocating 60% of its COVID funding to agencies serving Black and Latinx communities.

**Latinx families:** One terrific example is Food Bank for Monterey County (Salinas, CA) which serves 53% of the county's residents. The food bank shared that your funding is helping reach its Hispanic neighbors. "The Salinas Valley, much of it rural, almost exclusively Hispanic and suffers the highest levels of hunger, poverty, homelessness and COVID. Our hunger relief efforts have been heavily concentrated in these communities, as that is where need is greatest, and these high levels will persist long after shelter in place has ended."

Feeding America West Michigan (Comstock Park, MI) is another example, distributing meal boxes to Latinx migrant workers who often cannot access federal hunger relief programs. "We're creating boxes with culturally appropriate cuisine, so it's not just food, it's familiar food."



With generous funding, the Food Depository has been able to ensure these populations have reliable access to the food they need to live healthy, stable lives. We will continue to stand strong as a pillar of hope in our community as the economic fallout of COVID-19 persists. Thank you for your support.

— GREATER CHICAGO FOOD DEPOSITORY (CHICAGO, IL)



**Native American households:** St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance (Phoenix, AZ) conducted mass distributions for 3,200 households in the Navajo and Hopi Nations, which were especially hard hit by the pandemic. To help the Havasupai Tribe living at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, the food bank made two helicopter drops of food to aid 200 households. St. Mary's also provided food boxes to Tuba City Regional Hospital to distribute to more than 300 COVID-19 patients in isolation.

Stephanie is a recruiter at Bay Mills Community College, Michigan's first accredited Tribal College located on a Native American reservation. When her husband lost his job due to the pandemic, he and Stephanie received food from the school's distribution from Feeding America Western Michigan to help feed their three sons. Now, Stephanie and Andy are volunteering to help.



"No one should feel bad about going to accept food," Stephanie said. "We all have situations come about that we have no control over. Sometimes, it's hard to reach out for help. So that's why I wanted to volunteer - because I know that I've been in that situation before."

— FEEDING AMERICA WESTERN MICHIGAN (COMSTOCK PARK, MI)



**Households with children:** The harsh reality is that while COVID-19 infection rates are relatively low in children, hunger is not. Our food banks have gone to extraordinary lengths to keep these vulnerable children fed, especially with schools closed.

When schools were closed in Indianapolis, for example, Gleaners Community Food Bank teamed up with a local school district to get pre-packed family meal boxes delivered through their school buses on routes they designed together.



The security that Food Finders has provided to my family has allowed me to not be scared whether or not I can feed my children tomorrow. With this help, I no longer have to suffer through the fear I was feeling when I would go to bed at night. Because Food Finders has been helping us, you took away that burden.

— ROBIN, WHO RECEIVED FOOD FROM FOOD FINDERS FOOD BANK (LAFAYETTE, IN)



At dozens of food banks, lines for drive-thru food distributions were consistently astonishing. Every car has a story of a family struggling through this crisis and reaching out for help.



**Seniors:** Advised to remain at home and living on fixed incomes, low-income seniors cannot stock up on food, supplies or prescriptions, and many are anxious given their risk for illness. Our food banks are rising to the occasion to help protect seniors' health and well-being. Many food banks are delivering directly to homebound seniors or finding partners to support that effort.

**Rural communities:** Feeding America food banks are quickly responding to this crisis in innovative ways to support their rural neighbors. Many have begun home deliveries to reduce transportation expenses for rural families, often with help from local police, fire departments or the National Guard. Others are offering SNAP enrollment assistance by phone, text, and mail to ease the burden of traveling long distances in remote areas.

Herman Mathews, age 99, joined the United States Navy the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He shared that his wife "never used to let me in the kitchen because she was such a good cook. We were married for 72 years before she passed away in 2011." Herman was referred to Feeding South Florida, where we assisted him with a SNAP application and enrolled him in our new meal box home delivery program - born out of a pandemic partnership with Amazon Flex. With the food he receives from Feeding South Florida, he plans to make, "the potato soup my wife used to cook." We are honored to have the opportunity to serve Herman as he has served us.

— FEEDING SOUTH FLORIDA  
(PEMBROKE PARK, FL)





## ENHANCING OUR PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS TO MOBILIZE RESOURCES

Despite their heroic efforts day in and day out, food banks cannot meet this surging need alone. The Feeding America government relations team works tirelessly in partnership with our network to ensure the needs of hungry families are represented in all legislative efforts related to this crisis.

We have also worked closely with the USDA and other agencies to insure maximum flexibility in feeding programs, such as school meals, and we will continue to use our trusted and non-partisan voice in Washington, D.C. to advocate for evolving needs as communities respond.

Food banks will continue to provide as much help as they possibly can for our neighbors in need during this time. However, they need food, funding, and flexibility to do their work - and they can't do it alone. With help from these programs, no one in this country will have to worry about going to bed hungry:

**SNAP is essential.** It is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. For every meal that our network provides, SNAP provides nine. SNAP is fast, efficient and rated by the Congressional Budget Office as one of the most effective supports during economic downturns. And, SNAP is good for the economy. For every dollar spent on the SNAP program, about \$1.70 is returned to the economy.

### **TEFAP can help overcome food supply shortages.**

TEFAP is public private partnership with a long record of success. Last year, Feeding America's food banks were fortunate to have received 1.2 billion pounds of food from the USDA through TEFAP — translating into millions of meals for families. As the scope of the coronavirus crisis becomes clearer, food banks will need TEFAP more than ever to help communities access food.

### **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) is a promising new opportunity.**

This program, announced in April, provides USDA funds to purchase food and work with distributors and wholesalers to provide food boxes to food banks and other community organizations. We are collaborating closely with the USDA to strengthen the program to meet critical needs.



## LOOKING AHEAD

Thanks to you, we have weathered the perfect storm's initial shock of soaring need, shrinking donations and upended distribution models. Even as the economy slowly reopens, we are preparing for sustained increases in need for food assistance over the weeks and months to come, particularly among the vulnerable populations. *We estimate a sustained 50% increase in people facing hunger for the next several years.*

Food Lifeline in Seattle shared this assessment, which represents what many of our food banks are planning for: "At the projected peak of need, 1 in 4 Washingtonians will experience food insecurity. A large percentage of the people our agency network is currently serving are accessing the system for the first time in their lives. In some ways, food insecurity has been slightly mitigated by both the federal stimulus checks and enhanced unemployment insurance, but once both of those sources dry up and with a low likelihood of any more federal aid, food insecurity is going to get significantly worse, not better. Beginning to reopen the economy will not end the food insecurity crisis any time soon unfortunately."

During her shifts at a local grocery store, Ana helps customers fill their carts with food. But when she goes home at night, she doesn't know where her family's next meal will come from. Ana's husband is one of millions of Californians who have lost their jobs due to business closures caused by COVID-19. Even though Ana works full time, her salary isn't enough to cover the costs of rent, utilities and groceries. No matter how much overtime she picks up, the ends just don't meet. Instead of donating to the Food Bank as they used to, Ana and her family have become recipients.

— FOOD BANK OF CONTRA COSTA AND SOLANO (CONCORD, CA)

### **Moving forward in service of our mission, we have set key goals to strengthen our network:**

1. Enhance partnership with and the role of federal and state governments in addressing barriers to food security and other resources that help improve families' financial stability.
2. Enhance our food supply ecosystem to expand and grow food resources and other essential, enabling services, to meet planned demand.
3. Strengthen the capabilities and capacities of the network with and through food banks, with the goals to sustain and evolve operations to: a) respond to increased need in the near term and b) support equitable access to resources to those in need in the long term.
4. Identify and act on racial disparities to ensure that all people, at all times, have access to enough food and other resources for an active, healthy life. This priority has a near-term focus of removing food access barriers and accelerating public benefits enrollment. Priority communities and populations are Black communities, especially in the rural south. Through this work, we will also leverage research and technology to deepen insights about the needs of the people we serve and measure impact so that we can continue to improve.
5. Elevate the voices of the people we serve in this movement and engage people to commit to create an America where no one is hungry.

## THANK YOU

There has never been a time when your support has been more important or the people we serve have been more vulnerable. Thanks to you, we provided 1.3 billion meals between March 1 and mid-June, an astonishing 40% more than the same period last year.

While there is more work to do, your generosity has helped provide stability while fueling innovation. It has helped us create new ways of providing more food to more people, when we were faced with unprecedented need – and changes – in a matter of days. And, it has provided hope at a time of tremendous fear and uncertainty.

In the words of one neighbor, “Thank you so much Feeding Westchester (Elmsford, NY) for helping me and my son survive this crisis. I lost my restaurant job in

March, and Feeding Westchester helped me get weekly groceries that I cannot afford anymore. Sometimes I lose hope, but the kindness that has been shown to me has kept me holding onto hope. I will try to give back when I can but for now, all I can say is thank you.”

Your generosity has helped us feed families like this and identify opportunities to grow as we continue to meet the challenges of the coming weeks, months and years. With your partnership, we will emerge from this crisis even stronger together. **Thank you.**



### FEEDING AMERICA

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