



Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember, District 1

CONSENT CALENDAR
May 19, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author), Councilmember Mark Humbert (Co-Sponsor)

SUBJECT: Referral to Incorporate Food Insecurity as a Funded Category in Future Community Agency Grant Funding Cycles

RECOMMENDATION

Referral to the City Manager to establish food insecurity as a funded category for the next Community Agency RFP process which will be released roughly late summer, 2027 through early 2028, and for subsequent funding cycles to ensure city funds are permanently allocated to address this key priority and maximize sustainability for relevant non-profits.

POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On April 23, 2026, the Budget and Finance Committee adopted the following action: M/S/C (Kesarwani/Tregub) to send the item to Council with a positive recommendation as amended to establish food insecurity as a funded category for the next community agency RFP process. Vote: All Ayes.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Bay Area Food Prices Continue to Rise Deepening the Food Insecurity Trend...

Between December 2024 and December 2025 food prices in the San Francisco Area increased by 4.3 percent, higher than any other household expense.¹ As food prices rose, reliance on food assistance became less certain as the federal shut down suspended funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) delaying assistance to families. This continued the trend of increasing food insecurity

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, San Francisco Area - December 2025: [https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_sanfrancisco.htm#:~:text=3.0-.Food,and%20shelter%20\(+1.7%20percent\)](https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_sanfrancisco.htm#:~:text=3.0-.Food,and%20shelter%20(+1.7%20percent)).

as Federal food assistance had already declined when COVID era emergency food allotments ended, reducing CalFresh benefits (California's food stamps program). A recent November 2025 poll by the Public Policy Institute of California showed that "three in ten Californians, and half of lower-income residents, say that they or someone in their household has reduced meals or cut back on food to save money."²

...While the Future of Food Benefits Looks Bleak.

While Alameda County allocated over \$8 million in October of 2025 to compensate for delayed CalFresh payments during the federal shut down, future access to food assistance is looking even more precarious. The budget reconciliation law H.R.1, signed in July 2025, implements roughly \$186 billion in cuts to SNAP over the next 10 years. These cuts, the largest to food assistance ever, are estimated to affect most CalFresh households, reducing or eliminating altogether monthly benefits through state financing constraints and new eligibility requirements.³

BACKGROUND

Food Insecurity Impacts One in Five Californians. Limited or uncertain access to adequate food and nutrition can have long-term physical and mental health effects on adults and children alike.⁴ The number of food insecure individuals and families is steadily climbing and food banks throughout the state are struggling to keep up.

The Previous RFP to Support Food Assistance Providers Allocated Funds for Two Years Only. In August of 2024, the Berkeley Food Network (BFN), which provides a large on-site pantry, several neighborhood/community pop-up pantries, and home delivery of grocery boxes to over 130 households, was awarded the full amount of funds allocated to support food assistance programs. BFN also works with eligible community members to support their CalFresh application submissions. The RFP covered roughly 20 percent of their overall costs for FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26. Seventy percent of the funding by year went to program and operations staff directly supporting food sourcing, volunteer coordination, and food assistance program management. Thirty percent of the funding by year went to non-personnel costs, including office and food distribution supplies and equipment, and for subscriptions for core software. These funds will last through June of 2026.

² Public Policy Institute of California: Statewide Survey - November 2025, Californians and Their Economic Well-Being: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-economic-well-being-november-2025/>

³ California Budget and Policy Center: Federal Funding Cuts to SNAP (CalFresh) Will Have Sweeping Impacts on Californians, September, 2025: <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/federal-funding-cuts-to-snap-calfresh-will-have-sweeping-impacts-on-californians/>

⁴ California Association of Food Banks website: <https://www.cafoodbanks.org/hunger-data-reports/>

On January 30 2026 the Berkeley Food Pantry, a nonprofit organization providing emergency groceries to over 1,000 Berkeley and Albany households annually, closed its doors for good. This loss will put additional strain on the existing pantries, particularly as the effects of H.R.1 become more deeply felt.

This item has been revised to reflect new information about the availability of funds for which BFN is eligible to apply: funds from the City's HOME-ARP award, as the original item included a referral to reissue and fund a Request for Proposal process to support food assistance providers. The HOME-ARP program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, provided grants to state and local governments for housing and supportive services for qualifying vulnerable populations. Some of the city's award funds have been underutilized due to certain regulatory constraints. Staff have determined that addressing food insecurity is a suitable use of these funds that also addresses a high priority need for the City. Staff recommend awarding the available funds through a new procurement process to address food insecurity in the FY 2027 and FY 2028 fiscal years. BFN has been notified of this funding opportunity and will be applying for this grant.

RATIONALE FOR THIS REFERRAL

Overall, the cost of living in California is among the highest in the nation with housing costs and food prices outpacing other states.⁵ While the City's RFP process for community agency funding ensures resources are allocated to key priorities such as housing, education and job training, it does not directly address food insecurity. Allocating funds to reissue an RFP for Berkeley-based food assistance programs will ensure food insecure households are more readily served over the next two years. Establishing food insecurity as a permanent funded category for the community agency funding cycle will maximize sustainability for those relevant, and much needed, agencies.

FISCAL IMPACT

Staff time to manage the RFP process and award the HOME-ARP funds, and to develop and incorporate the RFP into future funding cycles.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

There is no significant environmental impact associated with this referral.

⁵ [LAHomes.com](https://www.lahomes.com/blog/california-cost-of-living-guide/): "California Cost of Living [2025]: How Expensive Is It to Live in California, posted by Courney Korb, April 16, 2025: <https://www.lahomes.com/blog/california-cost-of-living-guide/>

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments (1):

Referral for Development of Request for Proposal (RFP) to Support
Berkeley-Based Non-Profit Food Assistance Providers Serving Food Insecure
Households



Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember, District 1

ACTION CALENDAR

June 25, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author) and Councilmembers Mark Humbert and Susan Wengraf (Co-Sponsors)

SUBJECT: Referral for Development of Request for Proposal (RFP) to Support Berkeley-Based Non-Profit Food Assistance Providers Serving Food Insecure Households

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to develop and fund a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to support Berkeley-based non-profit food assistance providers serving food insecure households. Funds are intended for (but not limited to) the following needs:

- Expansion of capacity to serve more people experiencing food insecurity, such as one-time purchase of equipment;
- Hiring of additional staff to serve more people; and/or
- Other emerging needs to be determined.

Refer \$200,000 annually in funding to the biennial FY 2024-25 to FY 2025-26 budget process to fund qualified proposals resulting from the RFP.

POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On May 16, 2024, the Health, Life Enrichment, Equity & Community Committee adopted the following action: M/S/C (Kesarwani/Bartlett) to send the item to the City Council with a positive recommendation and with an added amendment:

- Refer the issue of food assistance to the Community Agency RFP process the next time the RFP is developed.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Community Agency RFP Does Not Directly Address Food Insecurity . . . The RFP process for community agency funding is one of the City's mechanisms to ensure City funds are allocated to agencies addressing key priorities, such as housing, education, and job training. However, the RFP does not directly address food insecurity.

. . . But Food Prices Are On the Rise and Federal Pandemic-Related Food Aid Ended Earlier This Year. From August 2022 through August 2023, food prices in the San

Francisco area increased by 4.5 percent.¹ At the same time, federal food assistance associated with the pandemic ended earlier this year in March 2023. When the pandemic began in 2020, recipients of CalFresh (California’s food stamps program) were allotted the maximum benefit available for their household size, likely contributing to rising enrollment over the last several years. When the emergency allotments ended, CalFresh benefits were reduced, sometimes dramatically. For some single-person households, CalFresh benefits dropped from \$281 to as little as \$23 per month.² As a result, food banks throughout the state are seeing increasing numbers of people served.

Berkeley-Based Non-Profit Food Assistance Providers Report Increasing Demand.

The Berkeley Food Pantry is a non-profit organization providing emergency groceries to Berkeley and Albany residents four days per week, two hours each day.³ The Berkeley Food Network (BFN) provides an on-site pantry in addition to mobile pantries throughout the city and distribution to other local pantries like the Berkeley Food Pantry.⁴ Both organizations have reported significant increases in the number of households they are serving in recent years, as shown in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: Growth in Number of Households Served (2021-2023)

	Berkeley Food Pantry Number of Households Served	Berkeley Food Network Number of Households Served
Sept. 2021	766	1,518
Sept. 2022	1,047	2,601
Sept. 2023	1,290	3,182
Overall Percent Growth (Sept. 2021-Sept. 2023)	68.4%	109.6%

Sources: Berkeley Food Pantry and Berkeley Food Network

Alameda County Community Food Bank Reports a 52 Percent Increase in Food Distribution. The Oakland-based Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB), which partners with more than 400 institutions to provide food assistance to Alameda County families and individuals, reports an increase in demand throughout the county. The ACCFB has gone from distributing 38 million pounds of food during pre-COVID years to 58 million pounds of food most recently.⁵ As of October 2, 2023, 11.4 percent of Alameda County

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, San Francisco Area - August 2023: https://docs.google.com/document/d/11ri1T7alsDOPOnwV3Ob_OmQXFXKgF36dwlvizbvxtI/edit

² Cal Matters August 8, 2023 article: “How Hungry is California? Millions Struggle to Eat Well in an Abundant State” <https://calmatters.org/explainers/california-hunger-crisis/#2b5159b1-a710-41cb-839b-aac1ea2791e4>

³ Berkeley Food Pantry’s website for a full description of services provided: <https://www.berkeleyfoodpantry.org/>

⁴ Berkeley Food Network’s website for a full description of services and programs provided: <https://www.berkeleyfoodnetwork.org/who-we-are/about/>

⁵ Alameda County Community Food Bank website: <https://www.accfb.org/about-us/what-we-do/>

residents are experiencing food insecurity—up three percent from just April 10, 2023, shortly after the federal pandemic-related food assistance ended.⁶

BACKGROUND

Food Insecurity Impacts One in Five Californians. Limited or uncertain access to adequate food and nutrition can have long-term physical and mental health effects on adults and children alike.⁷ The number of food insecure individuals and families is steadily climbing and food banks throughout the state are struggling to keep up.

Increasing Demand for Food Assistance Is Impacting the Wider Bay Area. The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, for instance, is now serving 350,000 people across the two counties monthly, which is double their pre-pandemic levels of service. The San Francisco-Marin food bank went from serving 32,000 households weekly to more recently serving 56,000 households weekly. Food banks throughout the state are functioning more like supermarkets in terms of peoples' regular food procurement venue rather than sources of emergency aid.⁸

FISCAL IMPACT

\$200,000 annually to fund the RFP, and staff time to develop the RFP and review and select qualified proposals.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There is no significant environmental impact associated with this referral.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani, District 1

(510) 981-7110

⁶ California Pulse Website for Alameda County: <https://stanford-datalab.github.io/covid-19-ca/alameda/#food-insufficiency>

⁷ California Association of Food Banks website: <https://www.cafoodbanks.org/hunger-data-reports/>

⁸ Cal Matters June 12, 2023 article: "A Catastrophic Hunger Crisis? California Food Banks are Being Flooded by Families Seeking Help:" <https://calmatters.org/california-divide/2023/06/california-food-banks/>

