



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

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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/>

