



WE ARE THE FOOD BANK

Partner Agency Newsletter

March 2024



From the CEO

Dear Agency Partners,

Inflation is hitting our families hard, evident from the long lines at all our distribution sites. This is a challenge faced by food banks nationwide, but particularly in CA with its high cost of living. Santa Cruz County, one of the most expensive places to live, feels this impact acutely, especially with the highest rental market in the nation.



Our food bank, like your partner agency, is significantly affected by inflation. Our food purchasing budget for this fiscal year was 61% higher than FY 18/19, before COVID. While we received substantial support during the pandemic, this year's demand surpassed our expectations. To address this, we are diversifying food donations, partnering creatively, and leveraging opportunities through Feeding America and the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB). We are also advocating for increased federal support with the help of Congressman Panetta. Your support is invaluable. Let's continue working together to ensure our community does not go hungry. Thank you for your commitment, and I look forward to our ongoing collaboration.

In Partnership,

Erica Padilla-Chavez

Erica Padilla-Chavez
Chief Executive Officer

Agency Network Update

Lean Produce Season

We are always working to bring in fresh and healthy produce for our communities. This is, however, our lean time of year - between growing seasons. We still anticipate produce donations sporadically during this time, but we ask for your patience and understanding as quantities and variety may run low. We also ask that agencies please educate volunteers and participants about the fact that we are between growing seasons and produce will be lean. When we have donations, we work hard to get them out to our partners as quickly as possible.

PG&E Power Outage Reporting

We've contracted with PG&E to support distributions to community members that were affected by recent power outages. Second Harvest receives reimbursement for households served in zip codes that experienced power outages due to inclement weather or planned power shutoff events. The funding is then used to source more products for our partner agencies. Thank you to all agencies that have supported us with quick participation information responses! We appreciate your diligence, flexibility, and all that you do for our community.

We Are Here for You! Office Hours

As a reminder, Josué Barajas, Chief Programs Office, and one Agency Network Manager, will be available for two hours each month to answer questions or hear concerns you may have. We also invite you to drop in, say hi, and connect with us if you have the time. Our next virtual office hours will be **Wednesday, March 13 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.** This will be over Teams with the following link: [Join the Meeting](#) | Meeting ID: 298 583 924 006 | Passcode: akYeUa

Agency Participation Numbers

January* 2024			
County Zone	All Households	All Individuals	% Change from Dec. '23
North County	17,548	31,515	7.27%
South County	12,028	29,179	-0.05%
San Lorenzo Valley	5,241	10,393	-8.61%
Out of County	1,040	2,123	-4.24%
Total	35,957	73,210	1.45%

*45 of 49 partner agencies reporting – Thank you!

Community Spotlight



Josué Barajas, Chief Programs Officer, recently bumped into Tony, a former participant who was introduced to food bank services when they lost their job during the pandemic. Tony previously attended The Food Bank's Friday distributions at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk where they received food and signed up for CalFresh. Once we ended the distributions at the Boardwalk, Tony still received CalFresh and was introduced to a food pantry near them. Tony shared with Josué that they are now gainfully employed and no longer need CalFresh. While Tony still attends the local pantry distributions, it's not for themselves but to get

food for their elderly neighbor. They are excited to have been introduced to food bank services and have utilized them when they needed it the most and now are giving back by taking food to their elderly neighbor. This is a success story that motivates us all.

As a reminder: Please submit any participant stories so we can share affirming stories from our community and help destigmatize accepting food in times of need.

Annual Demographics Survey

It is time once again to collect participant demographics data. This data collection is a contractual obligation for our partner agencies and is reported to local governmental grant funders and Feeding America (our parent organization). Reporting helps The Food Bank determine where to prioritize and allocate resources so we can all work to better support those who are food insecure in our county. The Agency Network Team continues to strive to simplify and streamline the survey process and focus on collecting a representative sample from our agency network. We have thoughtfully considered how many surveys are needed based on the agency's reported monthly participation, in order to get a representative sample of the County's collective participant population.



Please let survey participants know that their information will be confidential, this survey will only be asked of them once a year, and that it is crucial for demonstrating to donors and funders that our food bank and agency networks are helping the community and that we need their continued support.

Save The Dates

Please add the events below to your calendars!

We kindly request that agencies update us regarding changes to, or cancellations of, their distributions.

Wednesday, March 13

Agency Network Team Office Hours

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

[Join the Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 298 583 924 006

Passcode: akyeUa

Friday, May 3

CalFresh Forum

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.: Breakfast & Networking

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.: Program, including lunch

Location: Twin Lakes Church – Monschke Hall

2701 Cabrillo College Dr, Aptos, CA

Monday, April 15

Partner Agency Meeting

Location and Time: TBD

Monday, September 16

Partner Agency Meeting

Location and Time: TBD

800 Ohlone Parkway, Watsonville, California 95076

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