



OREGON FOOD BANK

Impact Report 2023

We Have to Face Hunger as an **Ongoing Crisis**



HERE'S A HARD TRUTH WE ALL HAVE TO FACE: hunger is terrible right now. The number of people experiencing hunger in our communities is unbearably high.

More than 860,000 neighbors sought food assistance through the Oregon Food Bank Network in 2019. By comparison, we worked with upwards of 1.5 million people in 2022, and we expect to see more than a million in 2023. That's the highest demand I've seen in my lifetime — and very likely the worst hunger crisis we've faced since the Great Depression.

We hear time and again from parents, seniors and young people alike that food and housing prices are still too high to make ends meet with the type of jobs and pay that are available — let alone for folx on fixed incomes like social security. These affordability challenges have gotten worse just as pandemic-related supports began to sunset. More than 750,000 Oregonians saw a drastic cut to grocery budgets, and many of these families showed up at food assistance sites.

Disasters driven by climate change don't help either. The vast majority of food banks around the country

this year spent time in emergency response mode — from wildfires, to tornadoes, to tropical storms and flooding. This near-constant disruption to our lives and livelihoods is yet another reminder that we have to face hunger as an ongoing crisis, with actions to match.

Thank you for the many incredible ways this community shows up each day. It's through your love and support that Oregon Food Bank has remained strong, forward-looking and rooted in values of equity and justice. That same love and support kept food assistance flowing throughout the pandemic; it ensures that our local food systems are strong and resilient; and it will help us dismantle the systems that drive poverty in our communities.

Hunger is an ongoing crisis. And with your ongoing love and support, we can end it for good.

Susannah Morgan

President, Oregon Food Bank



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From Crisis Response to Food Justice

In one way or another, we've all experienced the impacts of rising prices and widening inequality in recent years. Groceries today are nearly 20 percent more expensive than they were in 2020. In that same time period, the number of people living outdoors or without permanent housing has increased 22 percent. The housing affordability crisis in many parts of Oregon has left more than half of people who rent their homes without enough money to afford essentials beyond housing. Making matters worse, federal supports that improved the affordability of food, housing and childcare during the pandemic all expired even as prices continued to rise.

For those of us who were already living paycheck-to-paycheck, these trends have forced impossible choices between putting food on the table, keeping a roof over our heads and paying for healthcare. And we know that these realities are much worse

for communities that have long faced disproportionate hunger and poverty – including more than 62,000 Oregonians who are excluded from cash food assistance and vital government-run programs simply because of arbitrary factors like immigration status.

With what feels like ever-shrinking options, families throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington have increasingly turned to our emergency food assistance system for support. Free food markets, pantries and meal sites across the Oregon Food Bank Network have seen record-high demand over the past year, even as our own food, transportation and shipping costs rise.

Yet through it all, we've persevered with this community's shared belief in food justice. We believe that food is a human right. That everyone deserves access to fresh, nutritious food – no matter where we live, where

we're from or the color of our skin. That communities must make our own decisions about the food we produce, distribute and consume. That we must preserve native and traditional land stewardship practices that have fostered sustainable food systems for generations.

Our freedom, our health and our ability to thrive all depend on access to food. Yet we know we can't truly end hunger through food alone. We have to take action to prevent hunger from happening in the first place. That's why we pursue systemic solutions that help families keep food on the table today and address the challenges that drive food insecurity in our communities. Together, we're building a movement toward food justice – one that is led and fueled by people who are most impacted by hunger and poverty. And together we can eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should be hungry.*



By the Numbers

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

44,700+

44,700+ volunteer hours completed among more than 8,600 volunteers committed to ending hunger and its root causes

3,000+

3,000+ people and over 50 events drove action to advance anti-hunger policy and systems change

OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY

38,000+

38,000+ donors collectively gave over \$21 million – with the most common gift of \$25 given 16,000+ times

\$1.8 million

\$1.8 million invested in local food production supporting 136 BIPOC farmers and Native and Tribal fishers

FREE, NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL

53%

53% of all food distributed as fresh or frozen produce, dairy and protein

48+ million

48 million meals worth of centrally-sourced food – part of 73 million distributed across the OFB Network

\$1.4 million

\$1.4 million in fresh produce purchases through Double Up Food Bucks in 32 grocery stores across 20 counties in Oregon

720,600+

720,600+ community members accessed resources via FoodFinder across 14 languages



Centering Our Community

THE MOST VALUABLE INSIGHTS and effective solutions come from those of us who have experienced hunger and its root causes first-hand. And here in Oregon and Southwest Washington, there are specific communities that face disproportionately-high rates of hunger across rural, urban, suburban and remote areas:

Black, Indigenous and all People of Color (BIPOC):

Hunger and poverty disproportionately impact BIPOC communities in every corner of Oregon and Southwest Washington, as a result of systemic racism and historical injustices. According to data from the **Oregon Center for Public Policy**, Black and Latine households in Oregon are twice as likely to experience poverty as White households.

Immigrants and refugees:

1 in 5 **Oregonians born outside of the U.S. live in poverty**, the number one driver of hunger. Almost 80 percent of Latine immigrant parents surveyed in Oregon in 2020 reported being worried whether food would run out before they had enough money to buy more.

Trans and gender-expansive communities:

In Oregon, gender expansive and Two-Spirit individuals face significantly higher rates of food insecurity. According to a **survey conducted in 2022 by the Williams Institute at UCLA**, 20 percent of transgender adults compared to eight percent of cisgender adults experienced food insecurity.

Single mothers and caregivers:

Single mothers face the highest food insecurity rates in the United States and the majority are paid poverty wages. Here



in Oregon, 1 in 3 single mothers lives below the poverty line — and for Black, Indigenous and Latine single mothers, that figure is 1 in 2, reinforcing the fact that **poverty and hunger are worse and more pervasive** for those who hold intersecting identities.

We hold the lived experience and expertise of these communities at the center of every decision we make — from the food we source, to the programs we invest in, to the anti-hunger policies we support. And this expertise underscores what so many of us have long known: that hunger is not an individual experience or circumstance. Hunger is a community-wide symptom of unequal access and barriers to employment, education, housing and health care — of a lack of voice and representation in major decisions that impact our families.

That's why it is so important that we continue to address the systemic injustices that drive hunger and poverty — including the intersections of racism, classism, sexism, settler colonialism and more. And with lived experience in the lead, we continue to make progress toward a hunger-free future.

Leading With Lived Experience

The majority of the Oregon Food Bank team has experienced hunger and/or its root causes, and our shared experiences inform the work we do every day. Celia Ferrer, Oregon Food Bank's Community Philanthropy Associate Director, describes how her personal experience with hunger and its root causes drives her work.



"I'm an immigrant and a single mother," Celia shares. "My primary motivation is to be able to give my kids and everyone's kids the best chance at life. I live and breathe that hope."

Celia also speaks to the importance of ending stigma and shame around food assistance and understanding that hunger is not a personal choice: "Hunger is not a personal issue; it's an issue that is born of systemic inequalities that exist in our society. And so I feel strongly about being able to contribute to reshaping this society. That means eliminating the root causes of hunger and looking at the systems we operate in — from food distribution to production."

Celebrating Community Leadership with Guerreras Latinas

Our network of community-based, grass-roots partners like **Guerreras Latinas** — an organization that offers Spanish-speaking women a safe space to connect, access resources and opportunities to empower themselves through information — shows how those of us with lived experience are the experts on ending hunger.

Guerreras Latinas removes barriers to education and resources by offering classes, workshops, and training — along with child care, hot meals and transportation to and from community events.. Women come together to advocate and make transformative changes to community conditions, making it possible for everyone to thrive., Through mutual support, women build healthier relationships with their children and partners, gain skills in financial management, access improved health care benefits and so much more. Many participants have purchased new homes,

made successful financial investments and started new businesses — successes the organization’s leaders attribute to the power of listening and learning with the community.

“The only thing we do is listen,” shares Guerreras Latinas Executive Director, Yoana Molina Marcial. “Our community is filled with desires and a lot of dreams. I believe that by listening carefully to how they are repeated over and over again, we can help them turn those wishes and dreams into goals and connect them to resources and services to help them achieve them.”

We’re excited to deepen Oregon Food Bank’s partnership with Guerreras Latinas through a new **FEAST grant** that supports organizing efforts with Latine families in East Multnomah County. The future of food security and food sovereignty in the community has never been brighter!







Transformative Investments to **End Hunger**

WE KNOW THE ROOT CAUSES OF HUNGER are systemic — and achieving our mission requires the kind of transformative, systemic change that ensures everyone has access to the food we need today and tackles hunger at its roots.

Over the past year, Oregon Food Bank invested heavily in programs and infrastructure that will transform our region and our community's experience — dismantling the barriers to shared prosperity through community-led solutions. Through the generosity of this community and strong government and industry partnerships, we will channel transformational resources into programs, staffing, capital projects, sustainable agriculture, technology and more.

Combined, these efforts will advance local solutions that modernize infrastructure, amplify community power and reimagine our food systems. And we're excited to

share just a few examples of these investments in action over the past year.

Community Grower Support Addresses Historical Injustices

Small agriculture can yield statewide economic strength and help solve hunger. Yet farmers and small food processors from Oregon Food Bank's priority equity constituencies — particularly BIPOC, immigrant and refugee communities — face significant barriers to launching farming businesses, including Oregon's history of racist land use laws. To help address these systemic barriers, the Community Grower Support fund supports farmers and food producers from communities that face disproportionately-high rates of hunger.

Boosted by \$7 million in local food purchasing grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the fund is helping 136 growers

and producers launch and expand farming businesses focused on fresh, culturally familiar foods across 18 counties. Food purchase dollars ensure that food produced by BIPOC fruit and vegetable growers, ranchers, herbalists, dairy farmers, bakers, and Native and Tribal fishers is distributed to underserved rural, remote and urban areas throughout the region.

The impact of these investments has been transformational in many ways, with funds helping growers hire local employees, invest in critical infrastructure, and expand access to culturally-specific and fresh foods in communities that are not adequately served through existing food assistance networks. Together, we're fostering the kind of connections and support that promotes health, well-being and financial stability in local communities throughout the region!



Modernized infrastructure, reduced carbon emissions

Oregon Food Bank's statewide warehouse in Northeast Portland is the central hub of an incredible network of 21 regional food banks and more than 1,400 local food assistance sites. More than ~50 million lbs of food are sourced and distributed annually through this hub, reaching more than a million people facing food insecurity in rural areas, small towns and urban centers alike. Yet this amazing operation — and our broader efforts to prioritize fresh produce, dairy and protein — are limited by 20-year-old facilities that were designed to handle large quantities of shelf-stable goods like pasta and canned vegetables.

Rooted in the belief that everyone in our communities deserves access to fresh, nutritious food, we've deepened and expanded relationships with local growers, ranchers and manufacturers to identify new ways to share our local bounty. This year, we began renovations that will double the amount of refrigerated storage in our statewide warehouse — and repurpose space to safely receive and process a higher volume of fresh foods.

This work is among a host of improvements that will reduce our carbon footprint and minimize our contribution to the climate

disasters that have played a significant role in worsening hunger and poverty across the country. An enhanced fleet of food distribution vehicles will replace fossil fuel consumption with renewable energy — and shore power upgrades in statewide shipping operations have eliminated the need for diesel fuel in our overnight refrigeration systems.

Today, each of the eight freight trailers used to deliver food statewide utilize electric power during loading and staging. And new electric vehicle purchases will soon modernize our local delivery fleet, decreasing impact on the environment while increasing access to fresh, local, refrigerated foods. These upgrades represent a major win for our communities — and the environment!

Closing unjust gaps in government food assistance

Civic engagement and community organizing are the most effective paths to changing the policies and systems that cause hunger in our region.

Guided by the expertise of immigrant and refugee leaders and organizations, Oregon Food Bank worked with more than 120 partners to launch the one of the most significant statewide efforts in our organization's history: **the Food for All Oregonians (FFAO)** coalition.



“Food for All will have a big impact for people in our communities who can’t access [SNAP] food assistance to feed our kids and families. This effort proves that when you show up and build trust, people will get involved — and we can change our communities for the better!”

— JOSE LUIS CUNA
Ontario



Food for All is anchored by policy solutions that close unjust gaps in government food assistance programs — policies that exclude huge portions of our communities based on immigration status and other arbitrary factors. More than 62,000 Oregonians are currently barred from vital supports like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (sometimes referred to as “SNAP” or “food stamps”), including Legal Permanent Residents and young people engaged in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (commonly known as “Dreamers”).

The coalition’s locally-led approach successfully shortened the distance between people facing food insecurity and the elected officials whose decisions impact us — bringing a new level of accountability to leaders in Salem, including:


4,500+ pledges, emails and other actions supporting Food for All

1,600+ phone calls to Representatives and Senators urging passage

300+ advocates at state legislators’ Town Halls and Community Forums with in Ontario, Tillamook, Portland, Beaverton, Salem, Roseburg and online

100+ community leaders meeting with their elected officials in Salem — equipped to act as spokespeople and deliver testimony in public hearings





Between legislative dysfunction spurred by the Republican walkout and a lack of prioritization by Democratic leaders in the end-of-session rush, our landmark legislation (Senate Bill 610) ultimately did not pass this year. Yet we built undeniable community power together — and our coalition now has an incredibly strong foundation for future passage. We will not stop until everyone in Oregon has access to the resources we need to thrive!

Statewide resources for hunger relief

We need a robust, thriving ecosystem of anti-hunger partners throughout the region to achieve our vision for communities that never go hungry. Our Network is strong and resilient because we work together toward shared goals — including efforts to move state resources toward local solutions to hunger.

Throughout the legislative session, we drew on the wisdom and expertise of 21 regional food banks and 1,400+ food assistance sites to direct resources where they're needed most, maximizing our impact in communities that face disproportionate hunger and poverty. State investments in Oregon's food assistance network include:

\$10 million

Food purchasing:

As demand for food assistance continues to rise, these critical one-time funds are dedicated to local purchases that help fill gaps in the donated food supply — and ensure a steady flow of food in communities that need it most.

\$14.3 million

Food system infrastructure improvements:

Significant new funding will help regional food banks improve aging food system infrastructure. State investments also include nearly \$1 million for the visionary Black Community Food Center led by our partners at **Feed'em Freedom Foundation**.

\$6.3 million

The Oregon Hunger Response Fund:

A boost to the Oregon Hunger Response Fund (OHRF) will provide critical support for regional food banks — nearly \$2 million above current funding levels.



Anti-hunger policy wins and the work ahead

IN ADDITION TO MORE THAN \$30 MILLION INVESTED in the Oregon Food Bank Network, our community's advocacy and organizing efforts – guided by the Policy Leadership Council – secured a host of major investments and policy wins to address hunger and its root causes. Working alongside dozens of partners and allies, our victories this legislative session include:

- ✓ Support for **essential food assistance programs**, including free school meals at 200 additional schools across Oregon and \$4.2M of ongoing funding for Double Up Food Bucks, which doubles the value of SNAP dollars at many farmers markets, CSAs and local grocers.
- ✓ Steps toward **economic justice for low-income families**, including an Oregon Kids' Credit, that provides a **refundable credit** of \$1,000 per child for people who earn less than \$25,000/year.
- ✓ Steps toward a **healthier environment and mitigating climate change impacts** – including the establishment of community resilience hubs for natural disasters, increased accessibility to heating and cooling for low-income households, stronger protections against toxic chemicals and more.
- ✓ **Real progress on housing for all**, including a limit on extreme rent hikes, measures to help keep people in our homes, and investments in emergency rent assistance and homelessness prevention services.
- ✓ **Progress toward re-imagined community safety** such as investments in **Healing Hurt People**, a program that provides crisis intervention and navigation services in hospitals – including safety planning and connections to housing support and treatment for substance use disorder.
- ✓ **Increased access to quality, affordable child care**, including investments to help low-income families pay for care and supports for child care workforce retention and recruitment.



It takes a true movement to take on systems that exclude so many people in our communities, and we know that movements take years of effort and heart to build. We should all be proud of the landmark changes we passed this session – as well as the strong foundation for Food for

All Oregonians. And we know there is power in persistence. It takes time to achieve big things – and our mission to eliminate hunger and its root causes is most definitely big. The commitment and action from this incredible community keeps us inspired for the work ahead!

The importance of traditional, familiar foods

AS AN OREGON FOOD BANK **Food Systems Ambassador** and food assistance coordinator with **Pacific Climate Warriors**, Heifara Wheeler is working toward a future where every Oregonian has access to the food they need to thrive.



Though he grew up in Hawaii, **Heifara** felt disconnected from traditional Pacific Islander foods. Like many immigrants, his family tried to assimilate to American culture, largely avoiding traditional foods and cultural practices. As Heifara grew older, he learned more about food's deep roots in creating and sustaining community, cultural identity and autonomy. And energized by these experiences, he now works to connect Pacific Islander families in the Northwest with traditional foods.

"Part of a society is to care for its people, and we need to care for everyone who lives here," Heifara shares. "It's important for our community to have access to traditional foods. These foods have a connection

to our oral histories — to who we are as a people and the belief systems that we share."

Oregon Food Bank is proud to partner with Heifara and leaders throughout the state to ensure communities have access to fresh, familiar food. And we're excited to expand this work through investments in local growers and producers who are bringing even more traditional foods to area free food markets and pantries.

Opening doors to end hunger

This year, we celebrated the **grand opening of Columbia Gorge Food Bank's new home in The Dalles** — marking a new era of expanded food distribution capacity and anti-hunger advocacy throughout Hood River, Sherman and Wasco counties.

The new warehouse and Community Food Center offers more than five times the space to meet the rising need for food assistance, with an even greater

opportunity to partner with local growers and producers to support families locally and across the state.

Victor Veloz is one of several community leaders working with Columbia Gorge Food Bank to connect people throughout the region with food, essential resources and opportunities to get involved.



“Having the provisions from the Columbia Gorge Food Bank is huge,” Victor shares. “We wouldn’t have the food that’s out in the community right now. That can make a difference in somebody’s life from one day to the next.”



Get Involved

OUR VISION FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES that never know hunger is only possible through the strength of our community partnerships. There are many ways for you to get involved in the fight to end hunger for good.

Food Industry Partners

Much of the food we distribute comes from food industry partners that include local, regional and national growers, packers, manufacturers, retailers and more. These companies know that joining with us means the products they donate will directly help individuals and families throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington. Our food resource developers work with these vital partners every day and regularly connect with other food system partners to build new relationships as the need for food assistance continues to grow.

Community Partners

Throughout the region, we work with a wide variety of community partners to advance our shared mission of eliminating hunger and its root causes. From running food pantries and free food markets, to supporting local BIPOC farmers, to grassroots organizing around anti-hunger policies, we are honored to work



with so many passionate and committed individuals and organizations.

Corporate and Organizational Partners

Engaged, socially-responsible allies are key to ending hunger and its root causes. We work with hundreds of incredible, values-aligned corporate and organizational partners that share our vision – whether through fundraising drives, employee giving, group volunteer shifts or other local partnerships.

Volunteers

Our food distribution efforts are supported by thousands of amazing volunteers at our central warehouses and out in the community. Along with these indoor and outdoor options, we offer a host of seasonal opportunities to make a difference from the comfort of home. Please check our website for the latest volunteer shifts and events near you!

Advocates and Organizers

Oregon Food Bank advocates and organizers work year-round to advance anti-hunger policies at the local, state and federal level. Together, we can ensure that decision-makers prioritize the investments needed to keep food flowing today, alongside

systemic changes to prevent hunger from happening in our communities.

Monthly Sustainers

Monthly Sustainers are critical partners in our work, helping ensure that we can meet the need for food today while addressing hunger's root causes. It's an easy, convenient way to support these efforts throughout the year – just set up your recurring gift and we will take care of the rest!

Legacy Circle Members

Legacy Circle members support the movement to end hunger at its roots through an estate, trust or bequest – opening doors to multi-generational relationships and engagement that help realize a vision of hunger-free communities.

Learn more and get involved at
OregonFoodBank.org/Get-Involved
or reach out to our team at
Contact@OregonFoodBank.org
or (503)282-0555.

Together, we can end hunger for good.

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