

Feeding Ohio's Hungry

Continuation of Partnership with the State of Ohio FY 2016/2017 Budget Request

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks requests \$20 million per year in the 2016/2017 biennial budget to support the enhancement of a grant agreement for the purchase of food and grocery products, and distribution of this food through Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks, representing all of Ohio's 88 counties, to the more than 3,300 member agencies participating in the emergency food assistance program. ***From October 2013 to March 2015, Ohioans lost more than \$408 million in food stamp benefits that have resulted from a number of changes. These include time-limiting food stamp benefits to unemployed able bodied adults without dependents who reside in 71 Ohio counties to just 3 months of food assistance in every 36 month period, staggering food stamp benefit issuances, and the across-the-board cuts resulting from the loss of ARRA food stamp benefits.***

There is no better example of a highly efficient, cost-effective public-private partnership in Ohio than that of the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program (OFPACP). This statewide partnership directs surplus and unmarketable agricultural products from more than 100 Ohio farmers and producers through the state's network of foodbanks onto the tables of Ohio families, ensuring even our most vulnerable populations have a source of nutritious, Ohio-grown, raised, and produced food.

Operated by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, the program has thrived within Ohio for 15 years with funding provided by the Ohio General Assembly and administration completed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The program prevents waste, reduces loss for farmers and growers, increases and sustains employment in Ohio, represents the most nutritious food in foodbank warehouses, and, most importantly, provides the most wholesome of food to Ohio families for pennies on the pound.

What We Do

In state fiscal year 2014, our member foodbanks distributed about 186 million pounds of food and grocery items throughout Ohio. Twenty-two percent of this food (more than 40 million pounds) was provided through the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program and numerous Executive Orders from Governor John R. Kasich.

Who the Funding Serves – Hunger in Ohio 2014 Study

More than one in six Ohioans (2,007,500 unduplicated) were served through the emergency food network in 2014. Of those, 280,000 (15%) were seniors, 570,000 (30%) were children, 1,157,500 (55%) were adults, and 34 percent of the households surveyed had at least one adult who was working. The *Hunger in Ohio 2014* study found an increase of 40 percent over the findings reported four years ago in *Hunger in Ohio 2010*.

Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap 2015* shows that more than 653,000 Ohio children—or nearly one in four (24.2 percent)—live in food insecure households, meaning they don't always know where their next meal will come from. Overall, nearly 2 million Ohioans—more than one in six (16.9 percent)—are food insecure.

The report demonstrates that the ‘meal gap’ is widening for food insecure households in Ohio, meaning they have fewer dollars to spend and the cost of food is on the rise. Ohioans are sacrificing nutritious food to pay for utilities, medicine and medical care, housing, and more. We are all paying more for hunger in the long run because of reduced educational achievements, reduced worker productivity, and higher rates of chronic health conditions. Foodbanks continue to see record-high demand for help with food. Some factors contributing to increased demand for help with food include:

- SNAP benefits were reduced across-the-board in late 2013 by an average of \$36 per month for a family of four, bringing the average benefit to less than \$1.39 per person, per meal.
- Many working Ohioans are earning wages that are too high for them to receive SNAP benefits, but that are still below the self-sufficiency level.

What Will Be Accomplished With the Funding

By increasing this funding, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks will be positioned to acquire more than 70 million pounds of highly nutritious protein items, shelf-stable foods, and fresh fruits and vegetables, representing more than 56 million meals for hungry Ohioans.

How the Funding Benefits ODJFS and the State of Ohio

The State of Ohio benefits from this partnership by claiming the value of privately donated and purchased food that is applied towards meeting the basic spending level required under section 409(a)(7) of the Social Security Act and for the purpose of meeting the State Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements. In SFY 2014, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks provided more than \$61.3 million worth of in-kind, third-party MOE dollars back to the state through a grant agreement U-1415-17-0452.

This investment will support the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program, improve educational outcomes for Ohio’s children, reduce malnutrition among the elderly, and save the State millions in short- and long-term health care expenditures, increasing human capital and our ability to meet the challenge of a global economy.

The Need for Stable, Ongoing Funding

Now is not the time to reduce funding that provides food to Ohio families. Challenging economic times have led to increases in demand for emergency food assistance and decreases in funding and contributions from a range of sources. Food is one of the most basic human needs and access to food must be ensured for all Ohioans.

If Ohio does not address this critical need, evidence of the economic realities that face the hunger relief network are clear: foodbanks and charities may be forced to reduce their hours and days of operation while others will try to cut staff or salaries to make ends meet. Even more alarming, some may be forced to close their doors altogether because they cannot survive.

The most appalling consequence to unstable funding of these programs will be found in the households of Ohio’s most vulnerable populations. Hunger, already on the rise in the state, will increase exponentially. There will be no means of feeding those who need it most. Those already in desperate situations will be left with nowhere to turn.

Expanding the state’s investment in programs that have proven results benefits an increasing number of hungry Ohioans of all ages, provides indirect benefits to farmers and local communities, and is a fiscally responsible choice to be included in the biennium budget.