

Feeding Ohio's Hungry

Continuation of Partnership with the State of Ohio FY 2014-15 Biennial Budget Request

For more than a decade, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks has successfully partnered with the State of Ohio to feed hungry Ohioans through the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program (OFPACP). *There is no better example of a highly efficient, cost-effective public-private partnership* in Ohio, which directs surplus and unmarketable agricultural products from more than 100 Ohio farmers and producers through the state's network of foodbanks and onto the tables of Ohio families, ensuring even our most vulnerable populations have a source of nutritious, Ohio-grown, -raised, and -produced food.

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks requests **\$34 million over the 2014-2015 biennial budget (\$17 million per year)** to support the continuation of this essential grant agreement for the purchase of food and grocery products, and distribution of this food through the 12 foodbanks, representing all of Ohio's 88 counties, to the more than 3,300 member agencies participating in the emergency food assistance program. ***This request represents less than one dollar per person, per month, served by the emergency food assistance network.***

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 losses for farmers and growers, provides the most nutritious food in foodbank warehouses, and, most importantly, gets wholesome food to struggling Ohio families for pennies on the pound.

What We Do

In state fiscal year 2012, our member foodbanks distributed approximately 160 million pounds of food and grocery items throughout Ohio. Twenty-five percent of this food (more than 40.1 million pounds) was provided through the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program funding and funding from an additional Executive Order from Governor John R. Kasich.

Who the Funding Serves

More than one in five Ohioans (2.32 million) were served through the emergency food network in state fiscal year 2012. More than 316,300 of these Ohioans were seniors, 832,461 were children, and one out of three households surveyed had at least one adult who was working.

The statewide *Hunger in Ohio 2010* study conducted by Mathematica Policy, Inc. found that of those clients surveyed:

- 53% had to make the difficult choice between keeping the lights on and buying food;
- 43% had to make the difficult choice between putting gas in their car to get to work and buying food;

- 43% had to make the difficult choice between buying food and keeping a roof over their head;
- 42% had to make the difficult choice between paying for medicine or medical care and buying food.

What Will Be Accomplished With the Funding

During SFY 2012, the \$12.5 million provided by the Ohio General Assembly allowed the Ohio Association of Foodbanks to purchase and distribute more than 30.9 million pounds of food, providing more than 25 million meals to families and individuals across Ohio. 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 2011, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks provided more than \$47.1 million worth of in-kind, third-party MOE dollars back to the state.

By relieving hunger and providing some stability to struggling Ohio families, the State of Ohio will experience a reduction in expenditures for related programs, such as health care, child care, and other assistance programs. The 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 the time to continue 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 2014-2015 budget.