



Major Hunger-Relief Investment to Help with Growing Food Insecurity

Berkeley Food Network has tripled its efforts during the COVID-19 emergency response

\$600,000 Bayer Fund grant will grow innovative partnership between Alameda County Community Food Bank and Berkeley Food Network

Berkeley, Calif. – May 19, 2020 – As the COVID-19 pandemic has driven unprecedented surges in demand for food assistance, Berkeley Food Network (BFN) and Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) today announced one of the largest single investments ever in hunger-relief efforts in Berkeley and Alameda County.

A majority of a \$600,000 grant announced this week from Bayer Fund, the philanthropic arm of life sciences company Bayer, will deepen the partnership between BFN and ACCFB to expand hunger-relief efforts in Berkeley. Half the total grant (\$300,000) is earmarked for BFN to procure food and invest in infrastructure and hire staff to establish an innovative food redistribution center, which will serve as a network hub for smaller hunger-relief organizations in the city. The remaining funds will go to ACCFB for purchase of food for distribution in Berkeley, and throughout Alameda County, and includes \$100,000 allocated specifically for COVID-19 relief.

The timing of this investment is particularly critical as both organizations have swiftly ramped up programming to meet emergency demand. BFN alone has had to triple its operations since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Before this crisis took hold, one in five Berkeley residents was already experiencing hunger – and we’ve since seen an extraordinary spike in need since,” says Sara Webber, Co-Founder and Executive Director of BFN. “This funding from the Bayer Fund will be critical to our ability to serve the growing need today – but is also an investment in our long-term efforts.”

“Communities impacted the hardest by COVID-19 will be experiencing the effects for years beyond our initial emergency response and recovery efforts,” says Suzan Bateson, Executive Director of ACCFB. “The surge in need tells part of the story. Consistently half of the households seeking our help have never reached out to us before, and our food distribution is the highest it’s ever been in our 35-year history. We’re only able to serve this need thanks to generous support like this from the Bayer Fund – and through partnerships with our amazing, passionate network of partner agencies like Berkeley Food Network.”

Among its growing suite of hunger-relief services — including onsite and mobile pantries, and a robust food recovery program, all serving thousands of residents weekly — BFN is establishing the first urban-based Redistribution Organization in California, and one of the first in the nation. As a Redistribution Organization, BFN will increase the capacity for dozens of smaller Food

Bank partner agencies in Berkeley. The Bayer Fund investment will increase BFN's own capacity to receive – and, in turn, distribute – larger volumes of food from ACCFB.

Bayer, which is Berkeley's largest private-sector employer, has more than 1,000 employees in the San Francisco Bay Area, the majority of whom work at its Berkeley biotech center. "This Bayer Fund grant is not only about supporting critical needs in our community but its advancing innovation in how local agencies deliver services," said Jens Vogel, Senior Vice President and Global Head of Biotech for Bayer. "Our work to serve patients today and tomorrow depends on innovation. When we see community agencies finding exciting new ways to improve access to needed food and nutrition, we're so very honored to be of help."

"The Berkeley economy includes many independent, small businesses and non-profits that bring people together through music, theater and dining – sectors hard hit by the pandemic as we work to keep everyone safe by sheltering in place," said Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin. "The collaboration between the Food Bank and the Berkeley Food Network to increase access to quality nutrition is needed now more than ever. This is the second time that Bayer has stepped forward to help address the impact of this pandemic locally and we're proud to have them as a member of our business community."

"Historic levels of income inequality mean that working families – and now our growing legion of unemployed – are more likely to be food insecure than ever," said California Assemblymember Buffy Wicks. "This landmark investment will have a significant impact on our community's ability to meet that unprecedented need. I'm grateful to Bayer, the Berkeley Food Network, and the Alameda County Food Bank for building this partnership, and for pulling out all the stops on hunger relief efforts in AD-15."

About Alameda County Community Food Bank

Alameda County Community Food Bank — Feeding America's 2016-2017 Food Bank of the Year – has been at the forefront of hunger relief efforts in the Bay Area since 1985. The Food Bank serves 1 in 5 Alameda County residents by distributing food through a network of 350 food pantries, soup kitchens, and other community organizations, as well as direct-distribution programs including Children's Backpack and Mobile Pantry. More than half of the food distributed is farm-fresh produce. For 13 consecutive years, Alameda County Community Food Bank has received Charity Navigator's top rating — Four Stars — ranking the organization among the top 1 percent of charities nationwide. Learn more at www.accfb.org.

About Berkeley Food Network

The Berkeley Food Network was founded in December 2016 with the straightforward goal of ending hunger in Berkeley. It opened the doors of a new warehouse last fall with the goal of creating a redistribution center in collaboration with Alameda County Community Food Bank to increase the capacity of dozens of hunger-relief organizations in Berkeley and northern Alameda County while serving as a hub for BFN's own anti-hunger programming, including an on-site food pantry and its mobile pantry program. Learn more at <https://berkeleyfoodnetwork.org/>.

About the Bayer Fund

As a philanthropic arm of Bayer in the United States, Bayer Fund develops programs and makes strategic investments to qualified non-profit organizations tackling big challenges – combatting malnutrition and food insecurity; enhancing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education; providing support services for patients and families managing cardiovascular disease and cancer. Bayer Fund also offers programs that encourage employees to engage in their communities via matching gifts. Learn more at <https://www.fund.bayer.us/>.

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