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Alameda County Community Food Bank commits \$1 million investment to grow Food Distribution Network capacity

Six refrigerated Food Recovery trucks among significant grants to expand partner agency capacity and meet unprecedented – and growing – community need

OAKLAND, Calif. – January 22, 2021 – As food insecurity levels in Alameda County remain at an all-time high, Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) announced today a commitment to invest more than \$1 million this year to build the capacity of its 300-member agency partner network. This investment is a critical element of ACCFB’s efforts to maintain unprecedented levels of food distribution, which increased more than 40 percent (14.4 million pounds) from 2019 to 2020 to meet COVID-19 pandemic-related need.

“Alameda County Community Food Bank was founded 35 years ago by our member agencies and today they remain the lifeblood of a collective effort to keep children, adults, and seniors nourished,” says Suzan Bateson, executive director of Alameda County Community Food Bank. “Even before the pandemic we were identifying opportunities to reach more neighbors, and expanding the capacity of our network was a vital part of that strategy. The challenges of the last year have made us even more aware of the fragility of the safety net. Our network plays a vital role in ensuring all of us have enough healthy food. We are committed to providing partners with the strategic resources – especially infrastructure - needed to meet burgeoning need.”

Among the first actions, ACCFB will award 10 grants of up to \$20,000 each to support partners whose communities have been most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. “Through past experiences with emergencies and recessions we know we are facing a prolonged recovery,” adds Bateson. “We want to – and need to – equitably invest in the resiliency, sustainability and expansion of the network.”

The Food Bank has already welcomed 20 new partners since the start of the pandemic, with ongoing plans to expand, particularly, in areas of the county which have been impacted the hardest. The pandemic has also transformed the ways many partners run distributions – including conversion to contactless drive-throughs to home delivery programs supporting vulnerable populations.

“Our partner network has responded to this crisis with unparalleled creativity, compassion and determination,” says Bateson. “Many have continued to serve our community despite having been directly impacted by COVID-19 in one way or another. It has brought out the best in all of us and we want to ensure that this amazing network has the tools they need to continue this critical effort for the long haul.

Expansion of Food Recovery Efforts

Central to this network investment is more than \$400,000 in grants for the procurement of six refrigerated trucks for use to expand retail Food Recovery efforts. As the largest food recovery organization in



Alameda County, ACCFB already recovers more than 10 million pounds of healthy, surplus food from manufacturers and retailers annually.

The grants were awarded to the following, existing Food Recovery program partners located strategically throughout Alameda County: **Arsola's Distribution Center & Community Services** (Oakland), **Grace Baptist Church** (Oakland), **Hope 4 the Heart** (Hayward), **Interfaith Sharing** (Livermore), **San Lorenzo Family Help Center**, and **Tri-Cities Community Development Center** (Newark).

This new fleet will grow Food Recovery efforts directly within the network, while improving food safety and adding efficiencies. For example, Interfaith Sharing – which serves working families and seniors in Livermore – will replace a 30-year-old, unrefrigerated van. The new truck is more fuel efficient, while the refrigeration means safer and fewer trips necessary to pick up and deliver food.

Alameda County Community Food Bank's retail food recovery programming began in 2012; today ACCFB partners recover 5 million pounds of food through more than 100 retail outlets via 50 Food Bank agencies. Last year, the Food Bank awarded nearly \$35,000 in Food Recovery Program-specific grants.

Additional Capacity Efforts

In addition to direct COVID-related and Food Recovery support, the Food Bank's \$1 million commitment includes capacity grants to help partner agencies increase the number of people they can serve; to extend distribution windows; and to improve food, volunteer, and staff safety. ACCFB is currently also directly funding the expansion of Robert Allen Mercy House to better serve families in Oakland's Fruitvale district.

This re-investment of food bank funds is in addition to private foundation grants, which ACCFB's fundraising team also works to secure on behalf of agency partners. Last year, total private foundation grants secured for the network exceeded \$350,000.

The Food Bank also supports agency capacity through ongoing professional expertise, marketing, and seminars. In November 2020, 17 agencies attended ACCFB's most recent grant writing workshop which offered support and guidance for drafting applications for the Food Bank's capacity grant program as well as building each agency's own capacity to write effective proposals for third-party grants.

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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 300+ food pantries, soup kitchens, and other community organizations, as well as direct distribution and COVID-relief programs including school programs, home delivery and contactless drive-through distributions. This year, the Food Bank will distribute the equivalent of 43 million meals. More than half of the food distributed is farm-fresh produce. For 14 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.