



## **Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

Hunger and poverty don't discriminate. There is no one "face of hunger," but there are inequalities that disproportionately impact food insecurity in marginalized communities.

The San Diego Food Bank welcomes all of those who seek support with dignity and respect. Our client-inspired, mission-guided and data-supported approach motivates us to seek to remove barriers to food access as core to our mission of providing nutritious food to people in need. We recognize that those barriers can include messaging, language, neurodiversity, gender identity, speech, transportation, and mobility, among others. Through ongoing staff engagement, community partnerships and individual determination, we embrace our role in fostering maximum outcomes to food access.

While the Food Bank primarily focuses on hunger relief, we acknowledge the multifaceted nature of food insecurity. We recognize the need to address the underlying root causes of hunger and we partner with nonprofit organizations committed to addressing these causes. For many of our nonprofit partners, the Food Bank supports the hunger-relief portion of the long-term work they are doing. Our partner network includes school pantries, senior service programs, transitional and affordable housing organizations, college resource centers, refugee services, and sober living facilities that provide clients additional resources to address underlying root causes of hunger. We allow for an unlimited number of nonprofit partners, which allows for the inclusion of agencies with specific service populations to procure food from the Food Bank.

In addition, the Food Bank staff uses data to prioritize onboarding new emergency and neighborhood food distributions sites in communities with a higher meal gap (the gap between pounds distributed and number of people in poverty). We work with our nonprofit partners to be open during hours not currently offered in order to make food distributions more accessible in their communities.

Prior to partnership, all agencies are required to sign the Food Bank's Partner & Indemnity Agreement that states their organization "shall not, under any circumstances, deny any of its services on the basis of race, age, religion, sex, politics, or sexual orientation."

## **Internal Programs**

The breadth of programs offered by the Food Bank speaks to our commitment to be responsive to the needs of our large and diverse local community. From our Diaper Bank to our Senior Food programs, the Food Bank offers support to San Diego County residents at all stages of life.

## **Client Choice**

We recognize that when people can choose the food items they want, we are more effectively assisting and empowering them in their battle against hunger by providing foods appropriate for their dietary restrictions, cultural tastes, and other circumstances such as kitchen access.

Agencies who partner with the Food Bank have the opportunity to select the quantity and variety of foods that match the needs of their community. Consistent with our mission to provide nutritious food, over 30% of the food we distribute is fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Client Choice Pantry at the North County Food Bank, chapter of the San Diego Food Bank, is set up similarly to a neighborhood grocery store. The pantry offers a variety of fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, meats, dairy products, baked goods, non-perishable food items, diapers for infants & toddlers, and period supplies. Pantry clients shop by appointment only and can self-select the foods that best meet their dietary needs and preferences.

## **FEED**

Implemented in 2014, the Food Bank's FEED Program - "Feeding Everyone with Equity & Dignity" - showcases our commitment to bringing equity and dignity to food assistance work, with the mission of creating a more dignified and equitable experience for our program participants. More than 300,000 local community members and 160 agencies are participating in this initiative. Clients with a Food Bank ID have no restrictions or limitations on where and when they can use their card to receive food from our participating agencies.

## **Diaper Bank & Period Supplies**

As a proud member of the National Diaper Bank Network, our Diaper Bank Program aims to ease the burden on low-income families by providing emergency diapers during times of financial hardship for families with infants and toddlers.

## **College Hunger-Relief**

Our College Hunger-Relief Program provides food assistance to food-insecure college students from low-income backgrounds. Our team supports students at local public universities and colleges by distributing food to college food pantries and assisting in capacity-building programs for food pantry staff and volunteers.

## **Food Bank University**

Food Bank University offers learning opportunities for all our nonprofit partners. We offer courses designed to equip our diverse nonprofit partners to better serve their communities. Topics include the fundamentals of food banking; food safety; grant writing; fundraising; and volunteer recruitment and retention. Professionals in each area teach the courses and can share their personal expertise.

## **Hunger Conference**

Our biennial hunger conference brings together nonprofit professionals and experts with members of our nonprofit network to share new skills, broaden the understanding of existing topics, and share best practices of the food banking industry.

## **Military and Veterans**

The Food Bank has over 10 nonprofit partners that specifically focus on serving the military and veteran community in San Diego. In total, we serve 39,000 active-duty military and veterans, as well as their families every month.

## **Government Programs**

The Food Bank serves as a California Department of Social Services distribution agency for two government commodities programs, the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). All Food Bank staff, agency staff and volunteers working with these programs are required to complete federally-mandated training on issues related to diversity, equity, and social justice on an annual basis.

## **Other Programs**

The Food Bank facilitates access to CalFresh/EBT and 211 San Diego connecting San Diegans in financial need with additional resources and support services. Additionally, nutrition education programs provide tools to help clients maximize budgets and make healthier food choices.

## **Leadership**

San Diego Food Bank is a BIPOC-led, community-focused organization with 25% of our Executive Leadership identifying as Hispanic/Latinx. The organization's Chief Executive Officer, Casey Castillo, identifies as Hispanic/Latinx and has been with the Food Bank for more than 15 years.

The composition of the Board of Directors continues to be more and more diverse each year, including 9% Hispanic/Latinx and 9% Asian representation for 2022-2023. Within the Food Bank's Senior Director and Director Team, members of the BIPOC community make up more than 40% of this leadership level of the Food Bank, exceeding the Hispanic/Latinx population in San Diego County (35% - US Census).

## **Staff**

The Food Bank staff reflects the diversity of the community we support. The percentage of our employees who identify as Hispanic/Latinx reflects the high percentage of Hispanic/Latinx clients (63% - SDSU Report 2023) the Food Bank serves. Additionally, many of our staff have experienced food insecurity themselves and bring a perspective, capability and viewpoint to their work that we value and respect.

## **Communication**

Many Food Bank staff are bilingual. Staff use their language skills in the field and at our two offices to help our clients feel welcomed, heard and valued. The front desk of our main reception areas are regularly staffed by someone bilingual in English and Spanish.

As a service to our clients, the Food Bank regularly contracts Vietnamese, Mandarin, Russian, and Arabic translators at our large, basic-needs distribution events to ensure more community members are able to communicate in the language in which they feel most comfortable.

The Food Bank provides important documents such as enrollment forms and program descriptions in many languages. For example, our Oasis Insight intake form for clients is available in 17 languages: English, Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Haitian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Chinese, Somali, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. We regularly look to expand the language support we offer and are looking to add Laos, Pashto and Dari.

In addition to translating our forms in different languages, we also practice inclusivity by adding various gender options to our client intake form such as: female, male, transgender, non-binary, and prefer to self-describe.

## **Professional Development**

Food Bank staff remain committed to enhancing their skills, knowledge, and experience to better represent the clients we serve. Staff regularly attend conferences and trainings to stay informed on current issues impacting our communities. Training topics include equitable language in the work of nonprofits and social and racial justice.

In summary, while we are proud to have established an organizational culture that celebrates diversity and strives to treat all of our stakeholders equitably, we understand there is much work still to be done, especially in overcoming systemic food and nutrition insecurity. We are committed to that work.

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The Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement was created by a working group comprised of Food Bank employees that represent various ages, ethnicities, genders, and languages. This working group includes titles of all levels ranging from coordinator to director and constitutes varying years of experience ranging from one year to 10 years. The Food Bank's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement embodies the values important to our team's culture.