



Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember, District 1

CONSENT CALENDAR
March 10, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author)

SUBJECT: ~~Budget Referral to Reissue the Request for Proposal (RFP) to Support Berkeley Based Non-Profit Food Assistance Providers Serving Food Insecure Households and~~ to Incorporate Food Insecurity as a Funded Category in Future Community Agency Grant Funding Cycles

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RECOMMENDATION

~~Refer to the City Manager to reissue and fund a Request for Proposal (RFP) process as a short-term measure to support Berkeley-based non-profit food assistance providers serving food insecure households. Like the RFP that was issued in August 2024¹, funds are intended for (but not limited to) the following needs:~~

- ~~• Expansion of capacity to service more people experiencing food insecurity, such as purchase of equipment;~~
- ~~• Hiring of additional staff to serve more people; and/or~~
- ~~• Other emerging needs to be determined.~~

~~Refer \$300,000 annually in funding to the biennial FY 2026-27 to FY 2027-28 budget process to fund qualified proposals resulting from the RFP.~~

~~Further, R~~referal to the City Manager to establish food insecurity as a funded category for the next Community Agency RFP process which will be released roughly late summer, 2027 through early 2028, and for subsequent future funding cycles to ensure city funds are permanently allocated to address this key priority and maximize sustainability for relevant non-profits.

¹The RFP was issued as a result of Council's June 25, 2024 action to approve item #59: "Referral for Development of Request for Proposal (RFP) to Support Berkeley-Based Non-Profit Food Assistance Providers Serving Food Insecure Households": <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06-25%20Item%2059%20Referral%20for%20Development%20of%20Request%20for%20Proposal%20%28RFP%29.pdf>

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Bay Area Food Prices Continue to Rise Deepening the Food Insecurity Trend...

Between December 2024 and December 2025 food prices in the San Francisco Area increased by 4.3 percent, higher than any other household expense.² As food prices rose, reliance on food assistance became less certain as the federal shut down suspended funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) delaying assistance to families. This continued the trend of increasing food insecurity as Federal food assistance had already declined when COVID era emergency food allotments ended, reducing CalFresh benefits (California's food stamps program). A recent November 2025 poll by the Public Policy Institute of California showed that "three in ten Californians, and half of lower-income residents, say that they or someone in their household has reduced meals or cut back on food to save money."³

...While the Future of Food Benefits Looks Bleak.

While Alameda County allocated over \$8 million in October of 2025 to compensate for delayed CalFresh payments during the federal shut down, future access to food assistance is looking even more precarious. The budget reconciliation law H.R. 1, signed in July 2025, implements roughly \$186 billion in cuts to SNAP over the next 10 years. These cuts, the largest to food assistance ever, are estimated to affect most CalFresh households, reducing or eliminating altogether monthly benefits through state financing constraints and new eligibility requirements.⁴

BACKGROUND

Food Insecurity Impacts One in Five Californians. Limited or uncertain access to adequate food and nutrition can have long-term physical and mental health effects on adults and children alike.⁵ The number of food insecure individuals and families is steadily climbing and food banks throughout the state are struggling to keep up.

The Previous RFP to Support Food Assistance Providers Allocated Funds for Two Years Only. In August of 2024, the Berkeley Food Network (BFN), which provides a large on-site pantry, several neighborhood/community pop-up pantries, and home delivery of grocery boxes to over 130 households, was awarded the full

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, San Francisco Area - December 2025: [https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_sanfrancisco.htm#:~:text=3.0-Food, and%20shelter%20\(+1.7%20percent\)](https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/consumerpriceindex_sanfrancisco.htm#:~:text=3.0-Food, and%20shelter%20(+1.7%20percent)).

³ Public Policy Institute of California: Statewide Survey - November 2025, Californians and Their Economic Well-Being: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-economic-well-being-november-2025/>

⁴ California Budget and Policy Center: Federal Funding Cuts to SNAP (CalFresh) Will Have Sweeping Impacts on Californians, September, 2025: <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/federal-funding-cuts-to-snap-calfresh-will-have-sweeping-impacts-on-californians/>

⁵ California Association of Food Banks website: <https://www.cafoodbanks.org/hunger-data-reports/>

amount of funds allocated to support food assistance programs. BFN also works with eligible community members to support their CalFresh application submissions. The RFP covered roughly 20 percent of their overall costs for FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26. Seventy percent of the funding by year went to program and operations staff directly supporting food sourcing, volunteer coordination, and food assistance program management. Thirty percent of the funding by year went to non-personnel costs, including office and food distribution supplies and equipment, and for subscriptions for core software. These funds will last through June of 2026.

On January 30 2026 the Berkeley Food Pantry, a nonprofit organization providing emergency groceries to over 1,000 Berkeley and Albany households annually, closed its doors for good. This loss will put additional strain on the existing pantries, particularly as the effects of H.R.1 become more deeply felt.

This item is being revised to reflect new information about the availability of funds for which BFN is eligible to apply: funds from the City's HOME-ARP award. The HOME-ARP program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, provided grants to state and local governments for housing and supportive services for qualifying vulnerable populations. Some of the city's award funds have been underutilized due to certain regulatory constraints. Staff have determined that addressing food insecurity is a suitable use of these funds that also addresses a high priority need for the City. Staff recommend awarding the available funds through a new procurement process to address food insecurity in the FY 2027 and FY 2028 fiscal years. BFN has been notified of this funding opportunity and will be applying for this grant.

RATIONALE FOR THIS REFERRAL

Overall, the cost of living in California is among the highest in the nation with housing costs and food prices outpacing other states.⁶ While the City's RFP process for community agency funding ensures resources are allocated to key priorities such as housing, education and job training, it does not directly address food insecurity. Allocating funds to reissue an RFP for Berkeley-based food assistance programs will ensure food insecure households are more readily served over the next two years. Establishing food insecurity as a permanent funded category for the community agency funding cycle will maximize sustainability for those relevant, and much needed, agencies.

FISCAL IMPACT

⁶ [LAHomes.com](https://www.lahomes.com/blog/california-cost-of-living-guide/): "California Cost of Living [2025]: How Expensive Is It to Live in California, posted by Courney Korb, April 16, 2025: <https://www.lahomes.com/blog/california-cost-of-living-guide/>

\$300,000 annually to fund the RFP process for FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28 and future years. Additionally, staff time will be required to develop and incorporate the RFP into the funding cycle, as well as review and select qualified proposals for the budget process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

There is no significant environmental impact associated with this referral.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments (1):

Referral for Development of Request for Proposal (RFP) to Support Berkeley-Based Non-Profit Food Assistance Providers Serving Food Insecure Households