

American Rescue Plan - State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds - Food System Equity Program: Household Assistance Food Program for Disadvantaged Communities 2022 Work Plan

Background

On October 26, 2021, the Board of County Commissioners allocated \$300,000 of American Rescue Plan funds to immediate food security assistance. This was first implemented in a food system support project in November 2021, with non-profit partners that provided emergency food assistance for low-income persons within Alachua County over the holiday season. The project's estimated reach is between 2,000-3,000 households annually.

Over four years, approximately \$75,000 will be distributed between local food banks, small local farmers, and marginalized and underserved community non-profits in support of emergency food assistance. This program has flexibility in deploying its allocated resources to reach overall programmatic goals. Though not implemented in the first year, approximately \$25,000 may be allocated for fresh produce purchased from small local farmers. Another \$50,000 will be allocated for food purchasing card distribution.



Figure 1 Fall 2021 Strike Out Hunger information and community outreach sheet.

As the first iteration of the program in November 2021, Alachua County partnered with the Long Foundation and the Bread of the Mighty Food Bank for an annual Strike Out Hunger event and a special Thanksgiving initiative to continue to aid in the immediate food needs of the community.

The Strike Out Hunger event, held on November 18, 2021, was a food drive distribution that provided turkeys, fresh produce, and supplemental food items. The Bread of the Mighty Food Bank facilitated the special Thanksgiving initiative and provided grocery gift cards

to local food pantries to individuals that reported immediate food needs. Alachua County funded these activities utilizing American Rescue Plan funds.

November 2021 Food Statistics and Impact



Figure 2 Fall 2021 Strike Out Hunger food donation bags.

Total Impacted Individuals who benefitted from food assistance:

- 14,664 individuals
 - o Bread of the Mighty Food Bank distributed 1,666 grocery gift cards to the head of households. A total of 6,664 benefitted from the food assistance.
 - o The Strike Out Hunger event assisted 2,000 households. A total of 8,000 impacted individuals benefitted from the food assistance.

Total amount of food distributed:

- 31,981 pounds of turkeys
- 63,056 pounds of nutritional and supplemental food

- o Fresh produce, canned and packaged foods, and other items

Fall 2022 Proposed Workplan

2022 Goal: Expand food system support over and above Year 1 non-profit collaborative projects and food purchasing card distribution to also include produce from small local farms and to low-income and food-insecure communities over the Fall of 2022 and into 2023. This initiative will coordinate with other Food System Equity Programs created by the Office of SEEDS.

How this will be achieved:

Non-profit Collaboration

Alachua County will partner with the nonprofit community for another Strike Out Hunger event on November 17, 2022. The Long Foundation,

Farm Share, and Bread of the Mighty Food Bank may participate. Logistic support will be provided by Alachua County with tables, chairs, and staffing for the day of food distribution. Community service workers organized by the County will assist in food distribution. The County will also work with the non-profits to generate awareness for the day of the event and ongoing food assistance locations. The November Strike Out Hunger event will also be an opportunity to solicit applications for additional food assistance that can be consistently applied over an entire year.

Data Collection and Reporting

For 2022, the County will rework the data collection form used in 2021 into an online application and screening tool. The online application and database will be called the Alachua County Food System Support Portal (Portal).

The forms will go into a database that will assist the County with follow-up food assistance over 2022 and through 2024. Preregistration will allow the County to better target assistance and report metrics.

These metrics will assist in reporting and measuring progress toward minimizing food insecurity in vulnerable populations.

As an incentive to fill out the online form, qualified applicants will receive a food-purchasing card with an approximate value of \$30. Approximately \$50,000 will be allocated toward food-purchasing cards in 2022. Supplies will be limited. Depending upon the number of applicants, not every qualified individual may receive a card.

These qualified households will have follow-up outreach for additional food assistance using produce grown by local small farmers.

As of November 18, 2022, there are over 548 applications in the Portal.

The first wave of card distribution will be between Thanksgiving and the end of December. Applicants will be contacted via email regarding their approval status.

The Portal gives the County a database of pre-qualified individuals that can be contacted for follow-up food assistance and participation in related Food System Equity Programs.

Local Small Farmers

Supporting local small farms increases the resilience and economic health of our community.

Going into 2023, up to \$25,000 will be allocated to purchasing produce from small local farmers.

This produce will be delivered in a Community Supported Agriculture model where regular shares of grown food will go to qualified Portal applicants.

Shares will be dropped off to community partners and distribution sites near qualified Portal applicants.

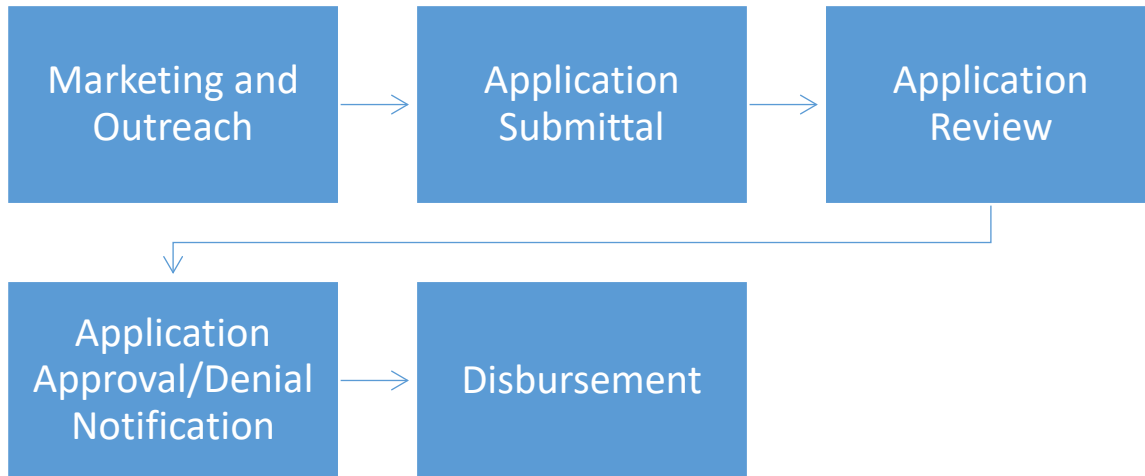
Possible Community Partners and Distribution Sites



Figure 3 Fall 2022 Strike Out Hunger Food Drive participants being served.

- Alachua County Community Support Services Building
- Municipal Government Partners
- Neighborhood Community Centers
- Bread of the Mighty Food Bank (and Partner Food Pantries)
- Lazarus Ministries
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Meridian
- Gainesville Police Department
- MLK Commission
- Grace Marketplace
- Upper Room Ministries Food Pantry

Process to Apply for Emergency Food Assistance



Marketing and Outreach

An explanatory portal site will be hosted off the County’s Sustainability page.

A simple url redirect will be used in all outreach: “alachuacounty.us/foodhelp”

Applicants will be asked to follow the link to the [application site](#) (on Monday.com)

See the Outreach Flyer in Appendix A.

Application Submittal

All applicable information must be submitted. Address and contact information are critical

Before submitting the final check box will be an “Attest as true” statement.

“I attest that all information provided on this form is accurate and all resources provided by the County will be used for food purchases.”

Criteria and Guidance to Applicants:

- Applicants must be a resident of Alachua County.
- Resources are limited and will be distributed on a First Come/First Qualified basis.

- Funding to households may only be used for food purchases.
- Only one (1) food purchasing card per head of household is allowed.
- Incomplete forms and forms with missing information will not be reviewed for eligibility.
- Negatively impacted by COVID may mean that you have experienced things such as but not limited to higher food cost, insufficient food, reduced income, reduced employment hours, or lost employment.
- The value of the card will be approximately \$30.
- We are estimating a delivery date for all approved applications between Thanksgiving and Late December.

Application Review

The application status will be checked from submitted to under review.

Disbursement

The person handing over the card will compare the photo identification information to the Approved List of Applications on the Monday.com board and annotate when the card was picked up. This is done by listing “picked up” in the very last text field to the far right of an application in the Distribute Cards view.

2022 Fall Food Partnership



Hello! As part of Alachua County's local food system and food relief efforts, we are offering grocery cards and related services.

To apply, Go online
to:
<http://alachuacounty.us/foodhelp>
and fill out the form there.



The form can be filled out on a smartphone or computer.

If you need computer access, applicants may also use the lobby computers at Alachua County's Community Support Services Department at John Henry Thomas, M.D. Center, 218 SE 24th Street, Gainesville, FL 32641

Cards supplies are limited and will be dispersed to Alachua County qualified heads of household on a first come first served basis.

Please call 352 548 3765 if you have any questions.

FAQ

Q: When is the distribution?

A: Due to the tremendous demand distribution will be after the initial wave of applications are reviewed. We anticipate card distribution will happen after Thanksgiving and before Christmas.

Q: How much are the gift cards?

A: We are targeting \$30 per card.

Q: Can the cards be delivered?

A: No, the approved applicant must present a photo id to be given the card. Currently, the pickup location is Alachua County's Community Support Services Department at John Henry Thomas, M.D. Center, 218 SE 24th Street, Gainesville, FL 32641.