

Alachua County Florida  
**Recovery Plan**

**American Rescue Plan**

**State and Local Fiscal Recovery  
Funds**

Alachua County Food Security – Strike  
Out Hunger, Household Assistance  
Food Program for Disadvantaged  
Communities

## Executive Summary

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Federal government has provided the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (ACBoCC) funding through the American Rescue Plan – State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Many low-income and disenfranchised communities were disproportionately impacted in their food security by COVID. This project brings immediate food relief to disadvantaged communities via a drive-up food giveaway effort. For these residents, food insecurity is compounded by a higher likelihood of poor health conditions because of a lack of affordable and nutritious food.

## Uses of Funds

The ACBoCC will allocate \$300,000 over four years for an annual Strike Out Hunger, Household Assistance Food Program for Disadvantaged Communities. This annual food assistance event will occur in November, every year and is targeted to disadvantaged communities per Treasury guidance under Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2) Food Programs.

Disadvantaged communities in Alachua County have experienced ongoing food insecurity. Lack of Nutrition Security, or having consistent, affordable access to foods that promote well-being and prevent disease in quantity and quality are critical factors in maintaining health and preventing disease, has increased nationally under COVID. Demand for SNAP benefits increased overall in 2021 by 15% in January and 21% in October. These increased demands are tied to the higher proportional cost and food availability for these populations. (US Department of Agriculture, 2021) For marginalized and low-income communities, COVID has compounded the economic disparities around lack of food access and security. Access to food can reduce hospitalization and COVID impacts for these at-risk communities that are already stressed with healthcare equities pre-pandemic. (Dimperio, 2021) Treasury guidance targets this issue under Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Food Programs (2.1)

In 2018, prior to the pandemic, Alachua County was estimated to have over 36,000 Food Insecure people representing 13.9% of the population.<sup>1</sup>

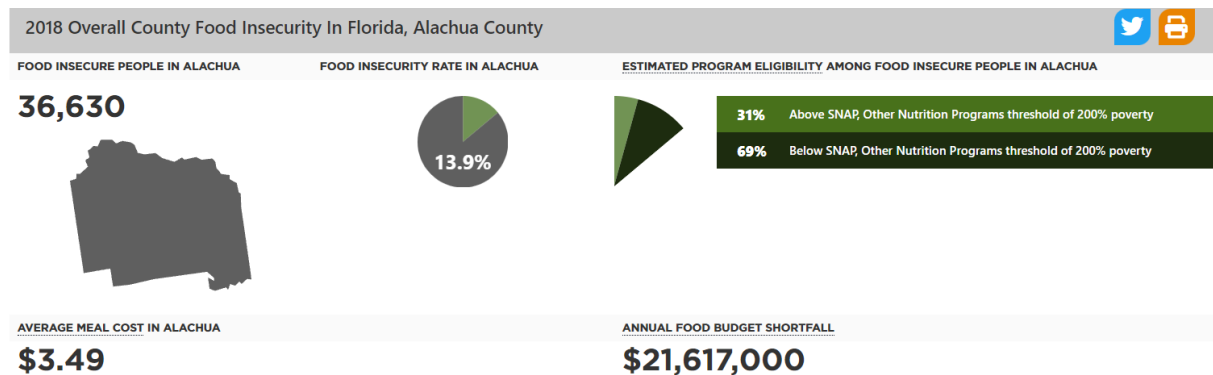


Figure 1 Feeding America 2018 Alachua County Food Insecurity

<sup>1</sup> <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/florida/county/alachua>

During the pandemic, food insecurity increased to 15.4% in 2020 and is estimated to be 14.8% in 2021. (Feeding America, 2021) Per the INDY Hunger Network, poverty, unemployment, and income are key drivers of individual and household food insecurity across the country. Traditionally, food pantries provide emergency food to families experiencing temporary setbacks. Lack of food and resources makes it nearly impossible to maintain healthy habits, eat nutritious meals, or manage chronic illnesses. Poor health, in turn, makes it even more difficult to climb out of poverty and food insecurity. (Indy Hunger Network, 2020)

Existing Federal monthly benefits through SNAP may be inadequate during COVID-19. COVID has impacted the supply and distribution of food stuffs. Inventory of certain foods at local grocery stores may be temporarily low before a store can restock. For marginalized communities that are food insecure this has meant that:

- There is a significant shift in where consumers are buying food during the pandemic, i.e. grocery stores.
- Families that receive SNAP or other related food assistance, receiving funding once a month and typically do not cover large quantities of food items to purchase. (US Food and Drug Administration, 2021)

ACBoCC Programmatic Response

### **\$300,000 Alachua County Food Security – Strike Out Hunger, Household Assistance Food Program for Disadvantaged Communities**

Per Treasury Required Programmatic Data for Household Assistance Projects: Food Programs (EC 2.1) the following section provides a brief description of the structure and objectives of the assistance program, the number of individuals served, and how the aid is responding to the negative economic impact of COVID-19.

Timeframe: Start November 2021-2025

Project description: Provide emergency food assistance for low-income persons within Alachua County over the holiday season. On an annual basis for four years, a total of \$75,000 will be distributed between local food banks, small local farmers, and non-profits serving marginalized and underserved communities in support of emergency food assistance. Food insecurity is a chronic condition for marginalized communities that is objectively exacerbated by COVID-19 economic impacts on these residents. Low-income residents that are either under or unemployed due to the pandemic, lack of access to affordable and nutritious food. This in conjunction with an increased likelihood of nutrition-related illness (e.g. hypertension, diabetes) makes this population at greater risk for hospitalization and infection.

For 2021 this project will allocate approximately \$25,000 to local food banks for assistance with non-perishable foodstuffs and gift card distribution. Another \$50,000 will be used for the purchase of turkeys. The local non-profits Pastor's Association and Long Foundation will assist in the assembly and distribution of foodstuffs for donations. Alachua County Community Support Services will assist in the vetting and prequalification of residents. The community is targeting a distribution date of November 15-19 at the Oaks Mall in Gainesville Florida.

Estimated reach: 2,000 households annually. This reach could be expanded with the participation of other non-profit food distribution non-profits such as Florida-Based Farm Share.<sup>2</sup>

The structure of the Food Distribution is based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control on structure food distribution events during COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to food security across the U.S. Access to healthy food options and nutrition are important to overall physical and mental health and well-being

Food pantries and food distribution sites provide donated food at no cost to people who have limited access and play an important role in communities. Community organizations often work with food pantries to provide food to families

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, considerations for food pantries and food distribution, sites should ensure safe access to food to aid in reducing the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Consider providing a drive-through model in which clients can receive a box of food placed directly in their vehicle by staff or volunteer
- Delivery of food items to minimize in person interactions
- Modify the layout, as needed, to facilitate social distancing between staff, volunteers, and clients (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

In future years, the programmatic offerings and goals will be expanded to include a greater portion of locally sourced and perishable foodstuffs from local farmers. In addition, garden seeds for vegetable growing will be included in the distribution baskets to promote long-term food security. Alachua County supports a resilient food system that meets immediate hunger needs while also supporting education and producer roles in addressing food insecurity.

### **Promoting Equitable Food System Outcomes**

ACBoCC will promote outcomes with equity in mind in how we measure our performance and target assistance through community partnerships over the next four years. **Goals (a)**

#### **For November 2021**

To promote greater equity for marginalized and at-risk communities the Strike Out Hunger Event will:

- Provide immediate food relief for the food insecure. Residents served by the food distribution event will be from marginalized communities. These residents include low-income, elderly, youth, and homeless populations
- Leverage, non-federal resources for the event including staff time for the coordination of and or food donations from community partners
- Build community networks - Build community networks to maximize engagement with affected populations. By engaging trusted neighborhood voices in the assembly and distribution of the foodstuffs we will be better able to meet the outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.farmshare.org/>

### **Additional Goals For Future Years 2022-2025**

- Diversify healthy, local options – Diversify the foodstuffs to support local food system resilience and security by purchasing a percentage of perishable fresh and culturally appropriate foodstuffs and
- Support local farmers from marginalized communities – Purchase perishable foodstuffs for inclusion in the good giveaways from local small farmers including marginalized farmers
- Encourage personal long-term food security - Vegetable garden seeds for culturally appropriate crops will be included in each giveaway basket. These seeds may be used for long-term food security for use in home gardens

### **Awareness (b)**

The distribution efforts are founded on years of County collaboration with local non-profits representing marginalized and underserved communities. Neighborhoods have come to rely on this annual Strike Out Hunger food event. It represents a shared county-wide effort to give back to those most in need of help over the holidays. This project builds on that awareness, expanding fresh foodstuff offerings from the local farming community in future years.

### **Access and Distribution (c)**

Access and distribution are annually coordinated by trusted community voices. The process is focused on getting the word out to neighborhoods and impacted communities with minimal to no process requirements for participation. The Long Foundation, Pastors Association, Food Banks, and Alachua County will coordinate all access and distribution. Participants will be screened by requesting proof of EBT Food Stamp card. Notice of screening requirements that the program is for the economically disadvantaged will be included in all advertisements and notices for the event.

### **Outcomes (d)**

- Reduce food insecurity of disadvantaged communities with immediate food assistance for at least 2,000 residents
- Avoid food insecurity health impacts and COVID hospitalization due to lack of access and affordability of food.

### **Efforts to Date to Support Economic and Racial Equity**

The ACBoCC supports and protects at-risk communities through its Strategic Vision that integrates equity, vital programs supporting food systems and health, alongside non-profit sector service partners.

Equity was placed at the forefront of Alachua County through a November 2020 voter-approved charter amendment that directed “(an) examination of policies for all County operations for elements of racial, economic, and gender bias in the design and delivery of County programs and services. The County will identify and act to mitigate and improve upon the effects, patterns, and disparities imposed by said biases.”

Food Insecurity is an equity issue for Alachua County as it is felt most acutely in marginalized communities during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and aligns with Treasury

Guidance for Household Food Assistance. ACBoCC detailed related equity goals within their adopted Fiscal Year 2022 Strategic Guide.

This guide sets the definition for equity: “Equitable means striving to treat everyone justly according to their circumstances, providing opportunity and access for everyone, while focusing on closing existing equity and access gaps”. It also sets Guiding Principles to address root causes, utilize a collaborative approach, and operate in a transparent, accountable, efficient, and effective manner in service delivery. Specific Food System Goals were also placed under the Guide’s Achieve Social and Economic Opportunity for All header: Work with private and public partnerships, including farms and local food entrepreneurs to build a community food system. (Alachua County, 2021)

ACBoCC also made significant investments creating an overall Equity Plan for County operations and community engagement, hired talented leadership to spearhead this effort, and engaged in pilot projects to support food system equity outcomes since the ballot initiative. Efforts are ongoing.

Alachua County built this Strike Out Hunger food system equity program as an expansion of past collaborations with local cities, non-profits, food banks, and other trusted marginalized community representatives to distribute healthy foodstuffs since 2016.

### **Constraints and Challenges**

Addressing food system equity has geographic constraints and challenges that will impact project success. Geographically, pockets of food insecurity and related health disparities can be found across Alachua County. As previously cited, the County has approximately 36,000 food-insecure residents (Feeding America, 2021) overall. These numbers are compounded by avoidable health issues, such as hypertension in zip codes that are predominantly composed of low-income and black residents. A recent analysis found that Eastside County zip codes, 32609 and 32641, specifically, with this demographic are almost two times as likely to require emergency services than the average County resident. Compared to a predominantly white and affluent zip code, 32605, that same Eastside cohort is three times as likely to need emergency services. (Dimperio, 2021). Hypertension risk factors are closely associated with race and food insecurity issues (obesity, salt intake, potassium deficiency, and other poor dietary options). (Mayo Clinic, 2021)

Taking these geographic issues into consideration, outreach for the Strikeout Hunger Assistance will need to be targeted to these location hotspots of confluent food insecurity and health disparities. Trusted community voices such as the Pastor’s Association, Long Foundation, and Food Banks that already are embedded in and serving these communities will ensure participation and program effectiveness: putting food assistance into the hands of those most in need.

### **Project Demographic Distribution**

Per Treasury guidance, the program funds are targeted to disadvantaged communities in zip codes that have the disproportionate impact of the challenges listed above, are generally low-income communities, and can be further defined as part of HUD’s Qualified Census Tract.

This project will primarily serve these communities and immediately adjacent neighborhoods with similar demographic characteristics. The project funds are to be primarily targeted towards

economically disadvantaged communities that meet two of the following treasure guidance points:

*A program or service is provided at a physical location in a Qualified Census Tract (for multi-site projects, if a majority of sites are within Qualified Census Tracts)*

- The distribution site will be the Oaks Mall located in the Northwest corner of a 2021 HUD Qualified Census Tract;

*A program or service where the primary intended beneficiaries live within a Qualified Census Tract;*

The distribution site at the Oaks Mall will serve other HUD Qualified Census Tracts:

- On the Eastside; the Greater Duval Community which is part of zip code 32641 is part of Census Tract 6, This zip code is immediately adjacent to zip code 32609 Census Tract 14 and 19.02 which have similar low-income and economically disadvantaged communities
- In the Gainesville city-center area; Fifth Avenue Area and Porters Community are in Census Tract 2.00 and a HUD 2021 Qualified Census Tracts<sup>3</sup>.
- On the West Side of I-75 service is targeted to the SWAG Community, Census Tract 22.18 which is also a HUD 2021 Qualified Census Tract.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/qct.html>

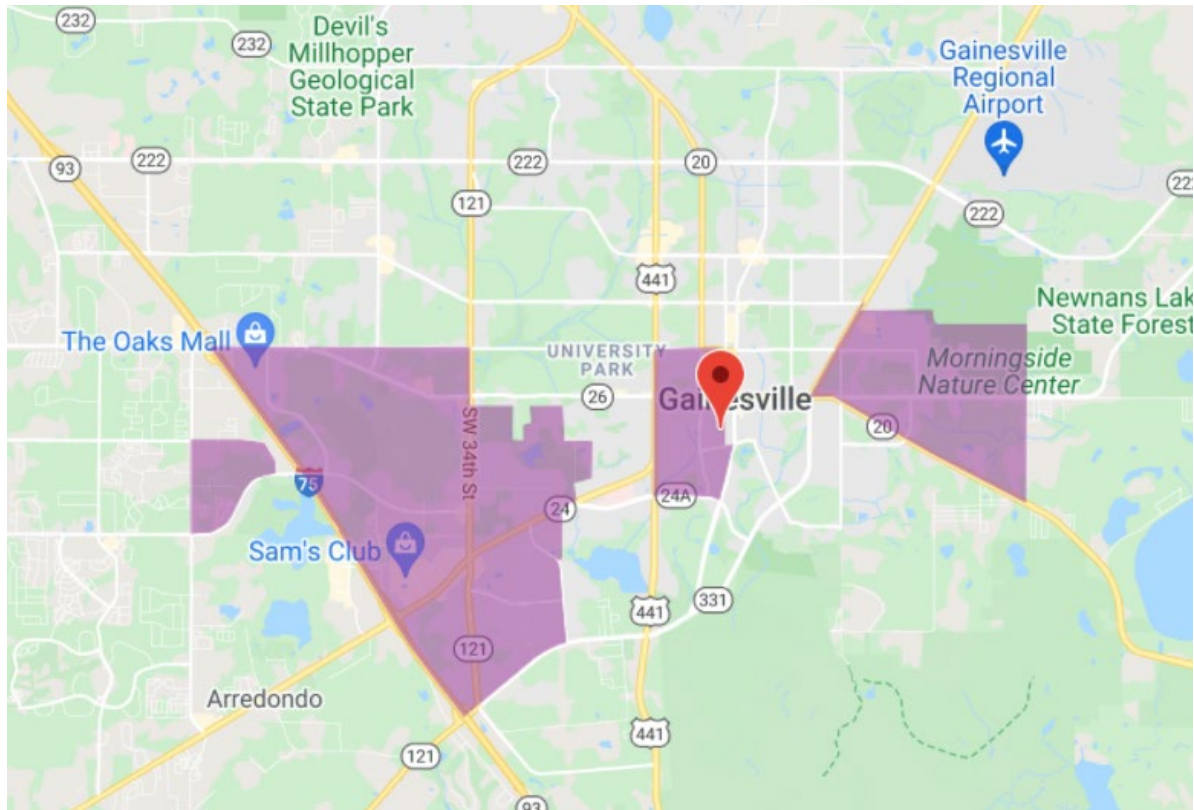


Figure 2 HUD Office of PD&R 2021 QCT Qualified Tracts

## Community Engagement

The Strike Out Hunger proposal benefits from years of prior community engagement and successful past projects. Project partners from the Pastors Association, Long Foundation, and Alachua County have promoted and will promote this event by direct contact in impacted neighborhoods, word of mouth, social media, websites, and trusted community voices. This program was generated from within the community and serviced by non-profit and community organizations.

## Labor Practices

Not applicable.

## Use of Evidence

The Strike Out Hunger event will assist approximately 2,000 households who respond to a public notice regarding a drive-through food and turkey giveaway within the community. The food giveaway increases the availability of nutritious food to food-insecure households that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and have exhausted other means to purchase food. The Strike Out Hunger event will provide a report that will highlight the approximate number of individuals that received food based on an average of 5 members per household and the total

<sup>4</sup> Map taken from [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sadda/sadda\\_qct.html](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sadda/sadda_qct.html)



number of turkeys purchased for the event. One turkey will be provided per vehicle. Other demographic reporting may not be available due to the inability to assess individuals at the drive-through event for safety and traffic control. This special event is sponsored by Alachua County, City of Gainesville, Long Foundation, Alachua County Christian's Pastor's Association, and other partnering agencies.

Alachua County has partnered with the Bread of the Mighty Food Bank to provide approximately 2,500 gift cards to pantries within Alachua County to food-insecure households to address food needs. This special initiative will target households in 2021 HUD Qualified Census Tracts and rural communities that otherwise would not have access to or transportation to participate in the Strike Out Hunger event. The food pantries, identified by the Bread of the Mighty Food Bank, will assess households and provide gift cards to those that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and have exhausted other means to purchase food. The Bread of the Mighty Food Bank will provide a demographic and outcome report that will include but is not limited to the number of individuals served and zip codes that will demonstrate communities in most need.

### **Table of Expenses**

Amount of funds used per expense category

- \$50,000 estimated cost of turkeys - Expenditure Category 2.1 Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Food Programs
- \$25,000 estimated cost of gift cards - Expenditure Category 2.1 Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Food Programs

### **Project Inventory**

- Project Name: Alachua County Food Security – Strike Out Hunger, Household Assistance Food Program for Disadvantaged Communities
- Funding Amount: \$300,000 to be allocated over four years at \$75,000 per year
- Identification Number: TBD (created by the recipient and used thereafter in the quarterly Program and Expenditure Report)
- Project Expenditure Category: 2.1 Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Food Programs
- Project Description: Provide emergency food assistance for low-income persons within Alachua County over the holiday season. Timeframe starts in November 2021 and goes through 2025.

Provide emergency food assistance for low-income persons within Alachua County over the holiday season. On an annual basis for four years, a total of \$75,000 will be distributed between local food banks, small local farmers, and non-profits serving marginalized and underserved communities in support of emergency food assistance. In the first year, approximately \$25,000 will be allocated to local food banks for assistance with non-perishable foodstuffs and gift card distribution. Another \$50,000 will be used for the purchase of turkeys. The local non-profits Pastor's Association and Long

Foundation will assist in the assembly and distribution of foodstuffs for donations. Alachua County Community Support Services will assist in the vetting and prequalification of residents. The community is targeting a distribution date of November 15-19 at the Oaks Mall in Gainesville Florida. Estimated reach: 2,000 households annually. This reach could be expanded with the participation of other non-profit food distribution non-profits such as Florida-Based Farm Share.<sup>5</sup>

In future years, the programmatic offerings and goals will be expanded to include a greater portion of locally sourced and perishable foodstuffs from local farmers. In addition, garden seeds for vegetable growing will be included in the distribution baskets to promote long-term food security. Alachua County supports a resilient food system that meets immediate hunger needs while also supporting education and producer roles in addressing food insecurity.

## Performance Report

At the event, program organizers will collect contact information and record output measures. County staff will use this contact information to follow up periodically over the next year to measure the following outcome and Treasury Required Performance Indicators.

Performance indicators output measures

- Number of participating families
- Total amount of food distributed

Performance indicators outcome measures

- Decrease in food insecurity as reported by families
- Decrease in food-related health problems as reported by families

For Treasury Required Programmatic Data, this additional information will be provided with every report. Household Assistance: Food Programs (EC 2.1)

- Brief description of structure and objectives of assistance program(s) (e.g., nutrition assistance for low-income households)
- Number of individuals served (by the program if recipient establishes multiple separate household assistance programs)
- Brief description of recipient's approach to ensuring that aid to households responds to a negative economic impact of Covid-19, as described in the Interim Final Rule

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.farmshare.org/>

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