

# Food Insecurity is **SOLVABLE**

## CFBNJ's FY24-27 Strategic Approach – Executive Summary

Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) acutely understands that new approaches are necessary to make lasting change for those we serve. Food insecurity is solvable. We have helped millions of people since our inception, but we acknowledge that the way we have been operating will not end hunger in New Jersey. We know food scarcity is not an issue – especially in the Garden State – and underlying issues must be acknowledged and addressed. We must add supported services to food distribution in a way that is measurable and significantly shifts outcomes. Our dedicated team is ready to listen and learn from the neighbors we serve to better understand and re-think what our help means.

## We are **excited** for our future.

Our FY24-27 Strategic Plan prioritizes an increase in our effectiveness and impact to achieve our vision of reducing food insecurity by 50% in our service area by 2030 towards our ultimate goal of a hunger-free New Jersey.



# Our HISTORY

## and where we find ourselves to date:



CFBNJ began in the back of our founder's station wagon and is now the largest anti-hunger and anti-poverty organization in New Jersey. It has provided families across the state with food, help and hope for more than 48 years. While disaster and emergency response are part of our history – notably Superstorm Sandy in 2012 – nothing prepared CFBNJ for what would be needed during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2023. In the pandemic's first days, CFBNJ shifted to a 24/7 operation as businesses shut down and people lost jobs. Neighbors who were already living paycheck to paycheck and many who had never needed help before in their lives, found themselves struggling to pay bills and keep food on the table.

## Thankfully, **communities** came together across sectors.

The state and federal government stepped in, and private citizens and companies were incredibly generous. CFBNJ protected its employees and reimaged food supply chains to develop a relevant response, resulting in emergency food distribution and other programs nearly doubling to meet the unprecedented need. Emerging from the pandemic, CFBNJ has 250 employees who fight hunger every day alongside 800 partner agencies. Together, we purchase and collect food for distribution; bolster food security through SNAP application assistance; invest in our network of community partners; inspire healthy lifestyles through nutrition education; advance economic mobility via workforce development efforts; reach communities with higher need and/or limited access to food; give voice to the complex ecosystem and root causes of food insecurity; and encourage others to get involved. Food banking across the country is in the midst of a sea-change – actively re-examining traditional ways of providing service and working towards “new and better” responses. The 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition & Health and Feeding America are shifting the national narrative, and CFBNJ is in lockstep with an ambitious vision to, “reduce food insecurity by 50% by the year 2030.” In many respects, New Jersey is leading the way. Our State is committed to public-private partnership and bi-partisan solutions. Leaders hold a universal belief that New Jersey families should be food secure, especially in our “Garden State.” CFBNJ's mission focused growth and approach through the pandemic has largely been possible through grit and passion. As we reflect on the problem of food insecurity, as well as solutions and our capabilities, we acknowledge that our work has been hampered by a need to more deeply understand those we serve, a lack of technology, a limited ability to measure effectiveness and impact, and the limitations of our antiquated physical resources.

# Our PLANNING PROCESS

We developed the vision and **strategic plan** using a **holistic approach**, incorporating a **wide range** of inputs:



**with internal and external stakeholders**



**of working sessions and workshops**



**with a Strategic Planning Committee**



**from food banks and other allied orgs**

CFBNJ started a strategic planning process in 2019 but paused this work due to the 2020 COVID-19 response. In Summer 2021, informed by stakeholders and our neighbors, the team refreshed CFBNJ's mission and vision. This was followed by an in-depth planning process in Summer 2022 with a united staff and Board Committee and the guidance of the Boston Consulting Group. As a result, 27 distinct work plans were created across programmatic and operational objectives and then synthesized into key themes and priorities. Each work plan has measurable KPIs and timelines for deliverables, which will be tracked, modified and reported out in the months and years ahead. Interdependencies, as well as staffing and technological needs, have been assessed and prioritized across the themes. The outcome is a vital and practical plan with our neighbors at its core. Questions posed during the planning process included:

- What are our neighbors' most critical needs for today and tomorrow?
- How can CFBNJ best support those needs directly and through our network?
- What will move the needle toward our vision in a post-Covid environment?
- What stands in our way? What barriers need to be overcome?
- What questions need to be answered?
- How do we quantify and measure success?
- How do we prioritize our work for maximum impact?

# Refreshed VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

## Fueling our future

We will reduce food insecurity by 50% in NJ by 2030

VISION

We serve as a champion for addressing root causes of hunger, delivering neighbor-centered solutions and fostering collaborative partnerships across all sectors of society for NJ

MISSION

A culture of caring

CULTURE

Compassion  
Inclusion  
Empowerment  
Accountability

VALUES



# Plan HIGHLIGHTS

## Creating food security solves hunger...



Solving food insecurity requires a comprehensive and tailored approach unique to specific communities. The level of food insecurity post-pandemic is alarming and cannot be solved by food alone. Like disasters prior, recovery is a marathon taking upwards of a decade to stabilize. Pandemic recovery will be a slow, multi-year endeavor, and our New Jersey neighbors will continue to struggle. Our neighbors need our best post-pandemic solutions working in concert to move the needle for impact. Getting food to people who need it will be strategically and thoughtfully combined with supportive services and strategic advocacy to meet specific community and neighbor needs.

## Mission delivery: **priority #1**

**“New and Better” Distribution: Asking the Right Questions. Listening to our Partners. Developing Solutions. Responding Reliably and Consistently. Measuring Outcomes.**

- **Reliability - On Time, Every Time.** One of the most critical ways we add value to our Community Partners is by being a dependable partner ourselves. This means our Partners can count on us to fill their food orders correctly and deliver them on time. Food security means counting on consistent access to food; our Partners need to know they can count on us to provide this.
- **A “Food and...” Approach.** Food alone does not lead to food security. It’s when food is paired with other supportive solutions, such as job training, financial literacy, SNAP application assistance and nutrition education, that neighbors are on their way to economic stability. Our goal is to increase the percentage of our network partners that offer supportive solutions with food distribution, with the outcome being an increase in sustainable improvement outcomes for neighbors.
- **Where Are We Not Meeting the Need?** We need to understand need at the county and community level in order to increase the percentage of communities meeting service targets. Utilization of a new dynamic community prioritization tool will be key to this new level of understanding and to building local community connections and collaboration.
- **Reduce Disparities by Race and Place.** Geographic data reveals that communities which are predominantly Black and Brown are disproportionately less food secure. Our solutions need to work in concert with other partners to address systemic issues of poverty in our state.
- **What Does Our Network Really Need from Us?** Instead of making assumptions, we will establish an operating structure to meet our network's needs. Practically speaking, this is likely a significant restructuring endeavor, with incrementally beneficial short-term solutions.
- **How Happy Are our Partners and Neighbors with our Collective Response?** Partner satisfaction feedback will be routinely solicited and measured against goals, with no fear of failure when piloting new ideas.
- **Model Best Practices: Our Role is to Serve as a Resource.** We will actively work to inform and lead on developing operational best practices and grow the percent of our partners using these “blue ribbon” standards.

# Mission delivery: **priority #2**

## Healthy and Nourishing is a **Priority Focus** for Neighbor Wellness

- **Nutritional Value of Food is Key.** CFBNJ will establish and operationalize a community- and neighbor-informed nutritional policy. We will deploy it network-wide with an intended outcome of increasing the number of neighbors showing improved health outcomes and/or satisfaction with healthy food choices. Our neighbors recognize the value of nourishing food and are asking for it. We will measure our success by how well we are meeting demand, specifically the percentage of “green” foods requested that we fulfill.

- **Produce and Protein Will Be Our Purchasing Priorities.** There is tremendous opportunity to work with farmers and retail partners to claim food surplus and expand nutrient-dense food sources throughout our network. There is also opportunity to create new farming partnerships to plant and harvest what our neighbors most want. This is where investments in cold storage, gleaning and nutrition education intersect.

- **Nutrition Education and Medically Tailored Meals Can Lead to Positive Health Outcomes.**

We know that the power of food goes beyond helping someone not feel hungry; it can lead to improved health outcomes and address medical conditions. We will continue to provide nutrition education so individuals know how to best tailor their food choices to promote positive health outcomes, and we will work with our partners to create medically tailored meals to address specific health conditions.

- **Incubating Best-in-Class Direct Services.** Whether it is through our two CFBNJ-run pantries, ten sites visited by our mobile pantries, or a healthy pantry toolkit being deployed to pantries across the state, we are committed to piloting and modeling best-in-class food security practices and investing to implement these services across our network

# Mission delivery: **priority #3**

## Improve and Serve as an Activist and Investor in the NJ Food Security Ecosystem

- **Engaging in Public Policy – Taking a Seat at the Table – Will be Essential.** To achieve our vision, it will take partnership and collaboration across sectors at significantly higher levels than the organization has ever achieved in its history.

- **Our Network is our Most Important Asset.** We need to know each other better, listen more, stand united and support partners' various needs more completely in service of neighbors. The actions outlined in our plan advance these objectives with measurable goals.

- **Serve as a Catalyst for Change.** We know that CFBNJ is lacking in technology and capacity, but these deficiencies are even more pronounced at the partner level. We will dedicate significant technical and financial assistance to building our network's capacity in ways determined by the community and the neighbors they serve.

- **A Significant Increased Role in Local, State, and Federal Advocacy Efforts.** Leveraging knowledge from its operations, partnerships and neighbors, CFBNJ can lead the creation of a comprehensive policy platform to inform policies at the local, state and federal level that that impact food insecurity. For example, we have influenced changes to the state's policy on ensuring hungry children receive supplemental lunches and recommended improvements to SNAP application assistance.

- **Incubate and Pilot Evidenced Best Practices of Creatively Fighting Food Insecurity.** We will share research and findings with other New Jersey food banks and our partner network.

# CFBNJ CAPACITY PRIORITIES



**Our vision** will only be realized if we invest in our own **organizational capacity** to support advancements in our **Mission Delivery priorities**.

- **Data Governance - Knowledge Needed.** Mission delivery decisions, as well as impact measurement, depend on a “Single Source of Truth” in our data and systems to efficiently assess, monitor and report. A successful outcome will be a staff trained in integrated data solutions that meet organizational planning, tracking, and reporting requirements.
- **21st Century Optimized Facilities.** CFBNJ’s physical structure in Hillside is not efficient for our current or any expanded scope of work. Operational challenges coupled with lack of technology result in human error, impact our network relationships and, ultimately, hinder service to neighbors in need. Our Egg Harbor Township facility has land that could be developed into a multi-service community resource. In both cases, new or significantly enhanced physical resources with optimized capacity and functional efficiency will be required to meet strategic goals. Feasibility studies are underway.
- **Our People and Advancing a “Culture of Caring”.** CFBNJ is nothing without its people. Our founder, Kathleen DiChiara, coined the expression “culture of caring,” and the FoodBank strives to reinforce and embody that sentiment in addition to its values of compassion, inclusion, accountability and empowerment. This Strategic Plan affirms a commitment to develop, promote and cultivate a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion in our recruitment, hiring, on-boarding and day-to-day practice. Investments will be made in optimizing talent acquisition across technology, people and process. Staff development and career growth opportunities will be formalized for every hiring level to increase capability and personal effectiveness.

# SUMMARY



**COVID-19** has shown just how much we rely on each other, how **our strengths** and **success** are intertwined, and how **generosity** and **resilience** outperform any obstacles when we **come together in support** of a unified vision.

CFBNJ has developed a transformative plan for its next four years. Goals are measurable and the entire outlook is a bold, new approach, supported by KPIs and grounded in the fact that food insecurity is solvable. Behind every “to do” is an intentional intervention, but these activities need our neighbors to inform their relevance and partners ready and willing to support delivery. CFBNJ has and will continue to develop its broad toolkit of solutions that depend on expanded partnership, collaboration and coordination.

The months and years ahead will continue to bring numerous challenges for our New Jersey neighbors in need. Creating lasting change will not be easy, nor will results happen overnight. We acknowledge many uncertainties in our present social and economic environments. But we know New Jersey is committed to meeting these challenges head on. CFBNJ will continue to be an essential part of the solution, not alone or in isolation, but with community and neighbor engagement, with public and private partnership and with many people committed to this life-changing work.



# FEEDBACK

**Success** speaks for itself:

**NJ State Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**  
(from his remarks at the Hunger Action Day event):

**“I’m proud of what we’ve done together. We’re all committed to making sure that our neighbors can eat and pay the bills and live full lives.”**

**Yolanda (a neighbor):** “The food helps us tremendously, especially with the kids in school. We don’t qualify for free lunch, so this really helps out.”

**Governor Phil Murphy (from his remarks at the November press conference):** “Meeting the needs of our families isn’t something that food banks do alone. Their collective work is dependent upon a diverse range of contributions. These operations couldn’t run without the support of countless individuals, partnering nonprofits, leading corporate citizens, and government contributors from the State of New Jersey.”

**Helping Hands: The Janice Preschel Project**  
(from an interview with Karen McAvoy): “Our pantry is a community effort, and we are so grateful and blessed to have a partnership with the Community FoodBank of New Jersey,”

**Jocelyn (a neighbor and college student):** “Being a student while supporting my own family, I’m on a tight budget, and that doesn’t give me the healthiest food options out there. After starting to come to the food pantry at school, I get nutritious food, and it supplements our income.”