

Food Insecurity is **SOLVABLE**

CFBNJ's FY24-27 Strategic Approach – Executive Summary

At the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ), we understand that new approaches are essential for creating lasting change for those we serve. Food insecurity is solvable. While we have helped millions since our founding, we recognize that our current methods will not end hunger in New Jersey.

Food banking has evolved from an emergency response to immediate need, to a driving force behind systemic change. Factors like income inequality, rising prices, race- and gender-based inequities, and the impacts of recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic have caused a dramatic rise in food insecurity, in the Garden State and nationwide. We must add supportive solutions to food distribution in a way that is measurable and drives significant outcomes for our neighbors. Our dedicated team is committed to listening to and learning from those we serve to better understand their needs and reimagine how we provide support.

We are **excited** for our future.

Our FY24-27 Strategic Plan prioritizes an increase in our effectiveness and impact to achieve our vision of building healthier communities free from hunger across New Jersey



Our HISTORY

and where we are **now**:



CFBNJ began in 1975 in the back of our founder's station wagon and is now the largest anti-hunger, anti-poverty organization in New Jersey, providing food, help and hope for 50 years. While disaster and emergency response have always been part of our work and history — most notably during Superstorm Sandy in 2012 — nothing prepared CFBNJ for the unprecedented needs that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. We pivoted right away, shifting to a 24/7 operation as businesses shut down, people lost jobs, and the reality of those living paycheck to paycheck found many neighbors struggling to pay their bills and keep food on the table.

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

The state and federal government stepped in, and individuals and companies were incredibly generous. CFBNJ worked to protect the health of its employees and re-imagined food supply chains to develop a relevant response that nearly doubled emergency food distribution and other programs. Today, CFBNJ has 300 employees who fight hunger every day alongside 800 partner agencies. We purchase and gather food for distribution; bolster household budgets through SNAP application assistance; invest in our network of community partners; empower people with nutrition education; advance economic mobility via workforce development efforts; reach underserved communities; and give voice to the complex ecosystem and root causes of food insecurity, while encouraging 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. In many respects, New Jersey is leading the way. Our state is committed to public-private partnership and bipartisan solutions. CFBNJ's mission-focused growth and approach throughout the pandemic was made possible largely through grit and passion. As we reflect on the problem of food insecurity, along with its solutions and our capabilities, we acknowledge that unmet needs have hindered our efforts: a need to more deeply understand those we serve, a lack of technology, the limitations of our antiquated physical resources, and the need to measure effectiveness and impact.

Our PLANNING PROCESS

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



Informed by stakeholders and firsthand experience with our neighbors, we first refreshed our Mission and Vision. We then conducted a collaborative, in-depth planning process with a united staff and Board Committee, under the guidance of the Boston Consulting Group. Our team created 27 distinct work plans across programmatic and operational objectives, which we synthesized into key themes and priorities. Each work plan has measurable KPIs and timelines for deliverables which we will track, modify, and report on in the years ahead. We also assessed interdependencies, as well as staffing and technological needs, and prioritized them 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
build healthier
communities free
from hunger across
New Jersey

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 will require a comprehensive approach that addresses specific communities' unique needs. The level of food insecurity post-pandemic is alarming and cannot be solved by food alone. Pandemic recovery will be a slow, multi-year endeavor and our New Jersey neighbors will continue to struggle. Our neighbors need our best solutions working in concert to move the needle for lasting change. We will get food to people who need it by strategically and thoughtfully combining with supportive services and strategic policy advocacy.

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 help 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 having 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 mobility. We aim to increase the percentage of our network partners that offer supportive solutions with food distribution, in order to increase sustainable improvement outcomes for neighbors.
- **Where Are We Not Meeting the Need?** We need to understand need at the county and community levels in order to increase the percentage of communities meeting service targets. Our new dynamic community prioritization tool will drive the prioritization of our efforts and will be key to this new level of understanding, as will collaboration and building local community connections.
- **Reduce Disparities by Race and Place.** Geographic data reveals that communities that are predominantly Black and Brown are less food secure. Our solutions need to work in concert with other partners to address systemic causes of poverty in our state.
- **What Does Our Network Really Need from Us?** We must establish an operating structure to meet the network's needs. Practically speaking, this is likely a significant restructuring endeavor, with incrementally beneficial short-term solutions.
- **How Satisfied Are our Partners and Neighbors with our Collective Response?** Partner satisfaction feedback will be routinely solicited and measured against goals, with less 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 percentage of our partners using these "blue ribbon" standards.

Mission delivery: **priority #2**

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

- **Nutritional Value of Food is Key.** CFBNJ will establish and operationalize a community- and neighbor-informed nutrition policy and deploy it network-wide, in order to improve health outcomes and/or satisfaction with healthy food choices for our neighbors. They recognize the value of nourishing food and are asking for it. We will measure our success by how well we meet demand, specifically the percentage of “choose often” foods requested that we fulfill.
- **Produce and Protein Will Be Our 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 will know how to best tailor their food choices for 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, the ten sites visited by our mobile pantry, or a healthy pantry toolkit 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’ varied 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.** In the same ways that CFBNJ is lacking with technology and capacity, our partners are even more so. We will dedicate technical and financial assistance to building our network’s capacity, as determined by the community and the neighbors they serve.
- **A Significantly Increased Role in Local, State, and Federal Advocacy Efforts.** Leveraging knowledge from our operations, partnerships, and neighbors, CFBNJ can lead the creation of a comprehensive policy platform to inform policies at the local, state, and federal levels that impact food insecurity. For example, we have influenced changes to the state’s policy on ensuring that hungry children receive school lunches and recommended improvements to SNAP application assistance.
- **Incubate and Pilot Evidenced Best Practices of Creatively Fighting Food Insecurity.** We need to know each other better, listen more, stand united and support partners’ varied needs more completely in service of neighbors. The actions outlined in our plan advance these objectives with measurable goals.

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 main building in Hillside is not efficient for our current or any expanded scope of work. Operational challenges, coupled with a 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 term “culture of caring,” and the FoodBank strives to reinforce and embody that sentiment, while upholding its values of compassion, inclusion, accountability, and empowerment. This strategic plan affirms a commitment to develop, promote, and cultivate a thriving culture 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.
- **Financial Stability.** To ensure long-term financial stability, CFBNJ is committed to diversifying and expanding our donor base while strengthening our approach to assessing program effectiveness. By deepening our engagement with new and existing supporters, we aim to build a more resilient funding stream. Additionally, the development of an evaluation tool will allow us to measure program impact, ensuring that resources are directed toward the most effective solutions in addressing food insecurity in our communities.
- **Financial Sustainability.** CFBNJ is dedicated to maintaining financial sustainability through disciplined fiscal management and strategic foresight. We ensure that every dollar is allocated with purpose and efficiency. We model scenarios for various funding streams throughout the year, proactively planning for changes in the state and federal food and funding landscape, donation trends, and other financial factors to anticipate shifts and maximize opportunities. Furthermore, we are continuously enhancing operational efficiency to ensure CFBNJ remains agile and well-positioned for continued impact and long-term success.

SUMMARY



The pandemic 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 KPI's and grounded in the belief 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 will further 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. 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 that 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 community and neighbor engagement, public and private partnership, and many people committed to this life-changing work.

FEEDBACK

Success speaks for itself:

NJ State Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin (from his remarks at a 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 a press conference at CFBNJ): “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.”