



FOOD ACCESS

in San Luis Obispo County

Powered by the experiences and knowledge of over 350 SLO County residents and service providers, we designed the health equity project to better understand the food access challenges faced by Latinos, seniors, unhoused individuals, and low-income residents. By learning about their everyday experiences, we aim to overcome barriers to nutritious food access and build a healthier community. We are grateful for their insights.

COST OF LIVING

The primary reason respondents in SLO County could not access the food they needed was the overall increasing cost of living, not just the rising price of food.

LOGISTICS

Respondents universally shared that transportation logistics, including cost of fuel, long distances to walk and bike with heavy groceries, and challenges coordinating bus schedules created barriers to accessing nutritious food.

TRUST

Distrust and stigma are significant barriers to accessing food. This was particularly significant for Latino residents who expressed reluctance to access English-only hunger relief services.

LIMITATIONS OF BENEFITS

Many benefits and services require an intake process that was discouraging to non-English speakers as well as those needing urgent assistance. Additionally, people shared they were ineligible for helpful benefits like CalFresh because of their immigration status or because their income was slightly too high, even though they desperately need help.

INFORMATION FLOW

People mentioned that outdated printed information, along with well-intentioned but inaccurate word of mouth and social media posts, make it difficult to know when, where, and how to access free food and support.

Working together, we can overcome barriers to nutritious food.

The SLO Food Bank incorporated strategies for making hunger relief more effective into our 2023 -2028 Strategic Plan, but we can't do it alone. Join us in building a healthier community!

Build **reciprocal relationships** with people experiencing food insecurity and leverage insights to improve support.

- Invest in multilingual and multicultural engagement.
- Prioritize personal experience with food insecurity when hiring staff and recruiting Board leadership.
- Regularly collect data and share conclusions with participants.
- Compensate those who share their perspectives and feedback.

Expand **client choice** to ensure dignified experiences, gather food preference data, and ensure food reaches those who will eat it.

- Add shopping or farmers' market-style options at pantries and distributions.
- Encourage more food businesses to accept CalFresh.
- Communicate what types of food are available so people know what food they are getting, even if it is pre-packaged.

Increase **awareness of what it's like to experience food insecurity** in SLO County and advocate for policies that alleviate hunger.

- Provide opportunities for locals to share their experiences.
- Promote awareness of CalFresh and advocate for proven solutions to improve enrollment and utilization.
- Educate the community on ways that food insecurity is tied to policy decisions.
- Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for policies that can ease food insecurity in SLO County.

Design **food distribution hubs** – both temporary and permanent – with the logistics of daily life in mind.

- Consider proximity to public transit and safe bike paths.
- Consider the schedules of families, people who work in different industries, and those who commute long distances.
- Provide bags, carts, or other means of transporting heavy food.
- Create a 'one-stop-shop' to provide food alongside other support services.

Improve the distribution of **timely, accurate information** about hunger relief and other services.

- Translate to multiple languages.
- Use digital and printed channels.
- Utilize written, visual, and verbal formats.

