



APRIL 2022

WHATCOM COUNTY FOOD BANKS



The food bank is the last place most people want to go for groceries. When we see someone here for the first time, we know they probably needed to come weeks ago.

— Mike Cohen, Director Bellingham Food Bank

Across the board, Whatcom food banks are experiencing higher needs and higher costs as well as reductions in grocery rescue food and in some cases, reduced donations, both monetary and in-kind. Every food bank cites the need for help with dairy, eggs and meat, as well as hygiene items. Approximately 13,500 individuals are served each week and trending up.

Please consider donating money or food to one of the organizations below.

[Bellingham Food Bank](#) | Serves 2,600 households per week (~7,800 individuals)

[Blaine Food Bank](#) | Serves 1,443 individuals per week

[Ferndale Food Bank](#) | Serves 200 households per week (~ 600 individuals)

[Foothills Food Bank](#) | Serves 500 individuals per week

[Lynden Food Bank](#) | Serves 125-130 families per week (~375 individuals)

[Nooksack Valley Food Bank](#) | Serves 128 families per week (~384 individuals)

[Salvation Army](#) | Serves 1,015 individuals per week

[Whatcom Council on Aging/Meals on Wheels](#) | Serves 600-700 households/week

[Miracle Food Network](#) | Serves 580 families per week (~1,740 individuals)

Here's what the directors of Whatcom County food banks and organizations are saying.



"We experienced a big jump in visits when the expanded Child Tax Credit program ended at the close of 2021. Another jump in visits began in March when inflation began impacting all households. ...Food costs are up for food banks. If we are going to truly meet the needs and not solely depend on donated food, all food banks need to buy more food. Our food budget for the year is \$1.7M. Based on buying what's needed, plus more visits, plus higher food costs, we will likely spend close to \$3M this year. ...Unlike many other basic needs providers, food banks do not receive any fee for service revenue. When our visits go up, revenue support does not."

— Mike Cohen, Bellingham Food Bank



"We have seen an increase in the number of families visiting the food bank since January 2022. Our most recent fuel cost was \$5.36/gallon for diesel compared to \$4.16/gallon in January. Bread has increased from \$1.00/loaf to \$1.29. Eggs were \$1.30/dozen in January and this past week \$3.00/dozen and continuing to rise. The amount of produce and bakery items we receive through our retail/grocery partners has decreased. If we received support we would use it to increase our purchase of food — more fresh produce, eggs, bread, and if needed meat."

— Amy Steele, Director, Nooksack Valley Food Bank



"Although we have wonderful non-profit partnerships with NW Harvest and Food Life Line, as well as commodities from the federal government, more often than not they all offer the same product. We need a regular supply of fresh produce, dairy, meat protein, eggs, butter, etc. that we can rely on, rather than just hope that we will receive them. Unfortunately, most food banks do not have the resources to purchase these items on a regular basis."

Like everyone else, we are facing increased costs for heat, fuel, and of course food. We, however, have no way to pass on the costs. Our only option is to cut back. We have all worked so hard to provide fresh, nutritious food for families and individuals who struggle against hunger. It is wrong to have to go back to the days of top ramen and mac and cheese as main entrees for our families because we don't have the resources to keep our trucks on the road, or the funding to drop grocery rescue and purchase nutritious food."

— Sally Church, Operations Manager, Blaine Food Bank



"Our numbers of people visiting the food bank have gone up. We are seeing more seniors than we have in previous months. We need additional food items – meat, cheese, shelf stable items (like pasta, sugar, etc.), juice, personal hygiene items, toilet paper."

— Dave Edenfield, Food Bank Director, Lynden Food Bank (Project Hope)



"[We are seeing a] drastic increase in number of clients, double our 2021 numbers. Also, lots of folks showing up early, indicating a high level of food/resource-related stress in the community."

— Evan Anderson, Ferndale Food Bank



"We continue to experience sustained demand for home-delivered "Meals on Wheels" that is more than 30% above pre-pandemic service levels. This spring we are transitioning from a primarily frozen to-go meal program to the reopening of Senior Community Meals throughout Whatcom County. We are in the process of creating a hybrid program to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of seniors who have benefitted from the to-go meals but who will not regularly participate in the Senior Community Meals."

We have an immediate need for funding for dish machines at the Bellingham, Blaine, and Ferndale Senior Centers. We have also experienced the effects of food and supply cost increases. This makes it even more challenging to incorporate (often higher priced) local products into our meal program. Funding to help purchase and/or offset the increased cost of locally and NW grown and produced foods would benefit both our clients and local producers."

— Julie Meyers, Director of Meals on Wheels and More



"We need staff pretty desperately. Currently [we have] only one paid individual responsible for the entire operation. For us to improve accessibility ... we need more people. Volunteers help and we need more paid staff to maintain a regular schedule. There's also high turnover with volunteers, so training and orientation are a significant time expenditure. If we expanded our operations and admin capacity, given our current infrastructure with the new building, we believe we would see a significant increase in utilization. We're currently serving the Columbia Valley region (Maple Falls, Kendall) one day a week, but our service area is 600 square miles. People from Acme, Van Zandt, Deming, etc. cannot readily access our location due to distance, transportation, operating hours, and other factors."

— Sam Norris, Director, Foothills Food Bank



"Client intake has risen over the past two months; we expect numbers to continue to rise. Accessing affordable foods and being able to keep shelves stocked is becoming more difficult."

To help our operations effectiveness, we could really use an electric pallet jack and pallet racking to assist in storing and organizing our food. With these items we could bring in more food, store it properly while maximizing space."

— Elizabeth Hicks, Social Services Director, Salvation Army

