



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 19, 2023

To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Arreguin (Author), Councilmember Harrison (Co-Sponsor),
Councilmember Hahn (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Budget Referral: Berkeley Food Network to address increased demand

RECOMMENDATION

Refer \$200,000 to the November 2023 AAO #1 process to address the increased number of people experiencing food insecurity in Berkeley including people in danger of eviction due to the COVID-19 eviction moratorium expiration and rent debt due to inflation and rental increases. The proposed funding source is FY 2023-2024 Measure P tax receipts.

BACKGROUND

The Berkeley Food Network (BFN) has become the hub organization in the City of Berkeley addressing food insecurity serving 6,500 people per week through its programs, up from 1,600 per week in February 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 3,000 people per week are served through Direct Programs including the onsite pantry, 14 mobile pantries, home delivery and grocery bagging program through Head Start at BUSD. An additional 3,500 people are currently fed through 29 partner agencies with an additional 6 partners in the queue. Since starting food distribution at the West Berkeley Family Wellness Center in April 2023 the demand at that location has increased 6 fold. In the span of just one month April - May 2023 there was a 28% increase in visits to the pantry and a 60% increase in new pantry member registrations.

Funding for this program will support the many low-income households that remain in massive debt that has accrued over the course of the pandemic and have lost their Cal-Fresh benefits. As the Statewide, County and Berkeley's eviction moratorium have ended, the Eviction Defense Center has been referring clients to the pantry in order to offset food costs and prevent evictions which has been a factor in the significant increase in pantry demand.

The purpose of this \$200,000 request is to provide stop-gap funding to BFN while it recruits a new Executive Director and ramps up grant applications and fund raising.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Total allocation of \$200,000 from Measure P tax receipts. Over 350 homeless

(approximately 1/3 of the Berkeley homeless population) are direct recipients of the pantry and BFN provides food to Dorothy Day House and Insight Housing (formerly Berkeley Food and Housing Project) for their daily meals

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

CONTACT PERSON

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