



Building Capacity in Underserved Communities

Our community is extremely poor—the annual average income is about \$20,000. I think that number alone gives credence to the dire situation of most families,” says Mary, who runs the Vernon Community Food Pantry in Vernon, Florida. Last year, Feeding the Gulf Coast received multiple Retail Agency Capacity grants to invest in its partners. Thanks to this funding, Mary’s pantry received equipment assets such as a cooler to assist with picking up donations from retail stores. The pantry went from serving a handful of families to nearly 100 at a time. They can also now accept fresh produce, meat, and dairy donations. Because of these capacity-building grants, the food bank made significant investments in its partner agencies last year, specifically focusing on traditionally hard-to-reach rural communities facing food insecurity. “If it were not for Feeding the Gulf Coast and the wonderful things they do for us, I don’t know that we would’ve been able to continue this food pantry.”

The pandemic greatly heightened the need for food assistance in our communities, and unfortunately, that increased demand remains. As a result, many of our partners continue to struggle to provide enough food for the growing number of families, individuals, and children facing hunger. To meet this challenge, the food bank has made critical investments to help our partners build capacity and better serve their communities.

Addressing hunger requires more than just food—it involves strengthening the infrastructure of our network to ensure equitable access for all. By equipping our partners to expand their reach and operate more efficiently and safely, we are working to close the gap in access to nutritious food and provide consistent support across our service area. This commitment to capacity investments ensures that our partners can meet the needs of those impacted by hunger. Building capacity in our network means bringing new partners to the table, providing training, procuring new equipment, and inspiring more people to join the movement to end hunger.

Agency partners are vital in helping us achieve our mission. Our network of more than 800 community partners helps distribute more than 32 million meals a year to those struggling with hunger.

When you partner with us, you join a large circle of support, including:



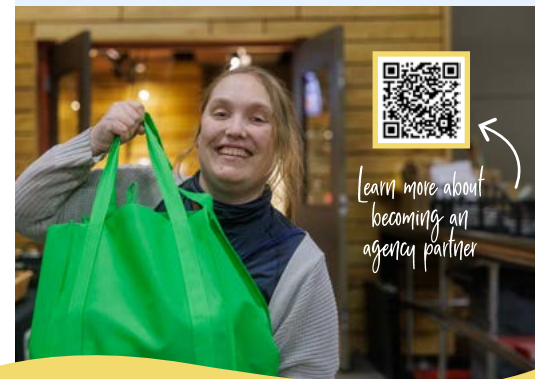
Access to a variety of food and resources to help empower and expand your services



Connection to a community of local like-minded organizations



Opportunity for training and other best practices



Learn more about becoming an agency partner

GET INVOLVED

Visit our website
feedingthegulfcoast.org





FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Recent hunger statistics released confirmed what we have witnessed in our community.

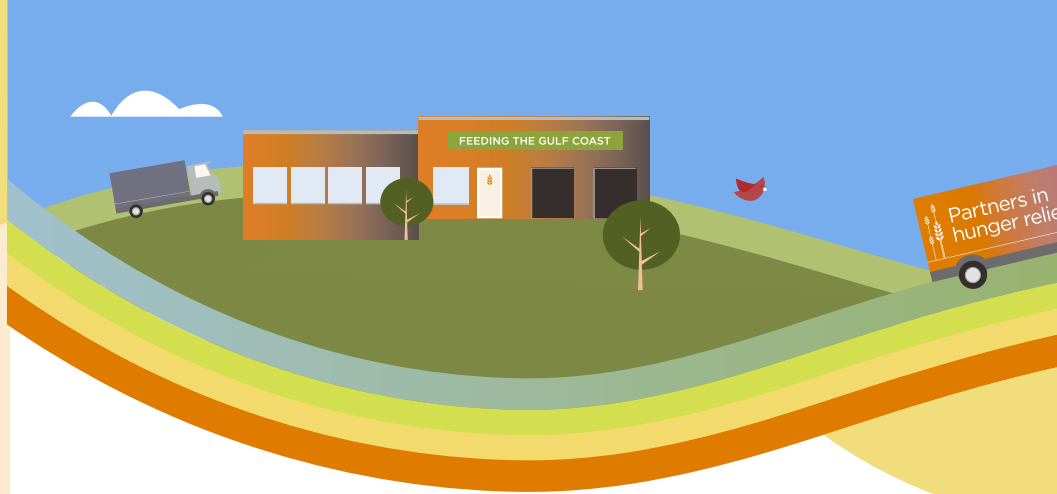
The 31% rise in overall food insecurity alone is staggering. However, particularly distressing is the disproportionate impact on children, with hunger rates soaring by 44% compared to previous years, marking the most significant one-year increase since 2008. A mission of this magnitude requires a thoughtful and strategic approach. That is why this year we took a long, hard look at our current strategic plan to chart a course forward that will be maximally impactful for those we serve and our community. What resulted was a more streamlined plan that built off previous successes but put a stronger focus on efficiency and equity of distribution throughout the communities we serve.

We hope as you see the impact of our work, you see examples of this plan in action. We provided over 32 million meals with more healthy foods while maximizing efficiency. We invested in our partners providing more support and equipment so they could better address the need. We expanded our outreach to help more children, seniors, families, and impacted military members. We launched our Community Health and Nutrition Department to focus on the long-term health impacts of a poor diet. We met with legislators and convened with community members to call attention to the needs of our community and to inspire action.

You—our donors, volunteers, and friends, made this monumental effort possible. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your continued partnership and recognize that we are truly stronger together.

MICHAEL LEDGER

PRESIDENT & CEO, FEEDING THE GULF COAST



Establishing Pathways to a Better Future

Earlier this year, we developed a new Strategic Roadmap, a five-year plan designed to enhance our impact and advance our mission. Building on the accomplishments and lessons from our previous strategic plan, we refined our approach while maintaining the foundational pillars that have guided us so far.

These four pillars—**FEED**, **NOURISH**, **EQUIP**, and **ENGAGE**—set the framework of our renewed strategy. Each is supported by measurable objectives to ensure accountability and progress as we strive to assist the 1 in 6 individuals in our community facing food insecurity.

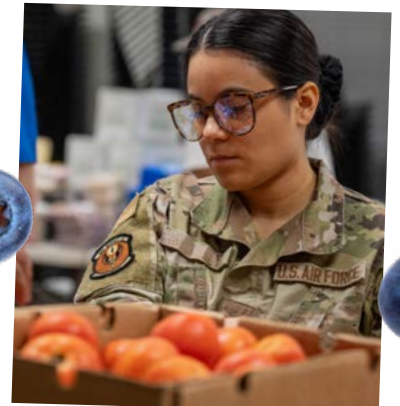
At the core of reducing food insecurity, the **FEED** pillar emphasizes sustainable food sourcing, fair distribution, and expanded access to nutritious meals. By focusing on operational efficiency, we aim to ensure no one in our community goes hungry.

Recognizing the importance of nutrition, the **NOURISH** pillar prioritizes access to healthy food options. Through data-driven strategies and community education, we are working to improve health outcomes while addressing hunger.

To break the cycle of poverty, we are leveraging technology and strengthening connections to community resources so that our partners and neighbors are better supported. The **EQUIP** pillar focuses on empowering individuals and families to move toward greater stability and self-sufficiency.

Ending hunger requires collective action. Through the **ENGAGE** pillar, we aim to inspire support by building strong partnerships, raising awareness, and encouraging involvement through fundraising, advocacy, and volunteer efforts.

Our Strategic Roadmap is more than a plan—it's a call to action. It embodies our commitment to work smarter, more efficiently, and with renewed energy to tackle not only food insecurity but the systemic challenges that perpetuate it. Together, we can create a future where every neighbor along the central Gulf Coast has access to the food they need to thrive.





Key Strategies:

Feed:

Distribute 35 million lbs. annually.
Develop a community-based tool to measure service adequacy.
Maximize mission impact by using key performance indicators.

Nourish:

Enhance food sourcing to increase the availability of nutritious options.
Grow community health and nutrition programs focused on our neighbors.
Leverage community feedback and service data to develop neighbor-focused hunger solutions.

Equip:

Increase number of annual SNAP applications through focused outreach to the most vulnerable.
Make it easier for people facing hunger to access community resources.
Expand efforts to connect more people with benefits across our service area.

Engage:

Raise awareness about hunger, its effects, and our efforts to combat it.
Strengthen partnerships to make key programs and resources more accessible.
Amplify the voices of neighbors facing hunger to influence policies that strengthen the food system.

Learn more



FOOD AS MEDICINE

HABITS OVER DIETS: Rethinking New Year's Health Goals

The start of a new year often motivates people to get healthier, and many people turn to diets as their first step. However, traditional diets—especially calorie-restrictive ones—can be more harmful than helpful in the long run. They often lead to frustration, burnout, and even negative physical or mental health outcomes.

Instead of focusing on restrictive eating, let's prioritize adding sustainable habits that promote physical and mental well-being. The key to lasting health improvements lies in building positive habits rather than focusing solely on restrictions.

Prioritize Nutrient-Rich Foods:

Add a serving of vegetables or fruit to each meal.

Drink More Water:

Start your day with a glass of water.

Focus on Movement:

Instead of aiming for an intense workout routine, find enjoyable physical activities like walking, gardening, or dancing.

Improve Sleep Hygiene:

Establish a calming bedtime routine, such as reading or meditating.

Mindful Eating:

Slow down during meals to savor flavors and recognize fullness cues.

Cultivate Mental Wellness:

Incorporate stress-relieving activities such as yoga or journaling.



Scan for seasonal healthy recipes



WINTER 2024



Feeding the Gulf Coast serves 24 counties spanning South Alabama, South Mississippi, and the Florida Panhandle.

Annually, the food bank distributes more than 32 million meals through our network of more than 800 community partners. As a 4-star rated organization by Charity Navigator, Feeding the Gulf Coast is one of the most efficient nonprofits nationally, with over 98% of all donations going back into the community.

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL STATEMENT



25TH ANNUAL

Chef Challenge

A CHALLENGE TO END HUNGER
SAVE THE DATE for APRIL 3, 2025



SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE

Visit FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG for more information.

GET INVOLVED

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSISSIPPI BUSINESSES HOUSE BILL 1723

Mississippi House Bill 1723 provides eligible businesses that support Feeding the Gulf Coast to receive tax credits equivalent to their donation. These credits offset Mississippi state income tax liabilities dollar for dollar, providing a valuable incentive to support our essential work.

For guidance on utilizing these tax credits and understanding your business's benefits, visit our website or call us at (251) 653-1617 x130.

BECOME A HOPE HARVESTER

Hope Harvesters is Feeding the Gulf Coast's Monthly Giving Program. This group of committed supporters significantly impacts our fight against hunger through their monthly support of funds.

Giving monthly is convenient and guarantees your generosity is felt year-round. Your recurring support allows us to effectively plan and sustain our work to end hunger in our community.

To get started, visit our website and use the Get Involved tab.

APRIL 3: 25TH ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE, 6 - 9 PM MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER

Join us for the silver anniversary of our signature event. This year there will be an optional VIP event prior to doors opening.

Chef Challenge brings together some of our area's most celebrated chefs and restaurants for an evening of superb food and drink, live entertainment, and silent auction—all in the name of ending hunger along the central Gulf Coast.

To purchase tickets, scan the QR code above or visit our website.



visit FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG | (888) 704-FOOD

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other: _____

☐ I would like to join the Hope Harvesters Monthly Giving Club.

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Feeding the Gulf Coast's federal identification number is 63-0821997.

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☐ Please make check payable to: **Feeding the Gulf Coast**

☐ Give online at www.feedingthegulfcoast.org/donate

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