



## COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

### SUMMARY REPORT

---

**Agenda Date:** 11/4/2025

---

**To:** County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** County Executive's Office and Human Services

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Christina Rivera (707) 565-2431; Angela Struckmann, 707-565-5800

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Federal CalFresh Benefits

**Recommended Action:**

- A) Receive update from staff on the federal suspension of Cal-Fresh benefits; and
- B) Delegate authority to the County Executive or designee to execute a one-time funding agreement from General Fund Contingencies with the Redwood Empire Food Bank to augment food supplies for the month of November 2025.

**Executive Summary:**

During the October 28, 2025 meeting, the Board directed staff to return on this date to discuss CalFresh benefit suspensions. Additionally, given that the Board's next meeting is not until December 9, 2025, the County Executive is requesting delegated authority to enter into a one-time funding agreement with the Redwood Empire Food Bank for up to \$200,000 to finance increased food supplies.

This approach provides a mechanism to augment food supplies and distribution capacity during the CalFresh benefit suspension period.

For immediate assistance, text "FOOD" to 707-353-3882 for up-to-date food distribution information from the Redwood Empire Food Bank.

**Discussion:**

On October 1, 2025, the federal government shut down because Congress did not pass the annual appropriation legislation needed to fund the federal budget. One of the many impacts of the government shut down is that federally-funded CalFresh food assistance benefits will not be provided to eligible recipients for the duration of the shutdown. Typically, CalFresh benefits are provided via EBT cards between the 1st and the 10th of each month. Due to the federal shutdown, the benefits disbursements normally scheduled to go out on or after November 1 will not occur. It is expected that once the federal government reopens, CalFresh benefits will be replenished, retroactive to November 1. However, in the interim, qualified residents will not receive these benefits to purchase food.

As of September 2025, just under 43,000 county residents were receiving CalFresh benefits, which are

administered by the Human Services Department. During the same month, CalFresh benefits to the community totaled a little over \$8.2 million, with the average household receiving \$300 in benefits.

The anticipated suspension period aligns with a time of year when local food-assistance providers typically experience increased demand. Food banks have communicated that they expect a measurable rise in requests for assistance during this period from residents temporarily unable to access Cal-Fresh benefits.

In 2024, the Redwood Empire Food Bank (REFB) distributed enough food for over 25.8 million meals to local communities. They directly serve 45,000 people per month in Sonoma County, at a cost of approximately \$500,000 per month. The REFB is expecting a 20-30% increase in households seeking additional assistance, and is preparing for up to a 40% increase, due to the suspension of CalFresh benefits.

County staff from the Human Services Department have been monitoring potential impacts and coordinating closely with the REFB to prepare for the increased community needs. Staff have compiled CalFresh client data by ZIP code to inform strategic deployment of food assistance, ensuring resources can be targeted efficiently to areas with the greatest anticipated need. See attachment A.

In order to support the REFB and local community food needs during this time of delayed benefits, staff recommends providing the County Executive, or designee, with delegated authority to execute a funding agreement with the REFB in an amount up to \$200,000, which represents an estimated 40% increase in their monthly costs due to the expected surge in households relying on the REFB during the month of November.

#### **Status of Litigation and State Activities:**

The USDA's shutdown contingency plan allows the agency to tap into reserve funding to keep SNAP operating if the federal government remains shut for longer than a month. However, the Trump administration said it would not utilize contingency funds to continue SNAP benefits in November. Several states, including California, have initiated litigation against the federal government for the delay in benefit payments. The timing and outcome of this litigation is unknown.

Separately, the State of California is fast-tracking \$80 million in previously allocated funds for food banks, with the goal of increasing capacity to address the increased needs in local communities.

Additionally, on October 27, 2025, a coalition of 71 non-government entities including Bay Area food banks wrote to the Governor, Pro Tem McGuire, and Speaker Rivas requesting their continued leadership, by investing state resources to prevent an unprecedented hunger and economic crisis. The organizations urged the legislators to provide state-funded CalFresh benefits as soon as possible, and replace the full \$1.1 billion in November SNAP benefits. The coalition committed to requesting the USDA to reimburse California for these benefits that are clearly a federal responsibility, and any interim investments must not affect state commitments to continuing other vital programs.

**Comparable Agency Information:**

For reference, below represents a sample of actions other California counties are planning or considering, in order to support their local communities during this time:

- Alameda - Approved \$10 million in funding, including \$8.3 million for the Alameda County Community Food Bank and partner organizations, and \$1.7 million for meals for seniors.
- Napa - In conjunction with the local community foundation, is providing up to \$1 million in gift cards to CalFresh beneficiaries for the months of November and December 2025 to support 10,700 eligible residents.
- San Francisco - In partnership with a private foundation, is providing up to \$18 million in gift cards to 112,000 CalFresh eligible residents in November. This is a public-private partnership funded from a city reserve established during the adopted budget process for state and federal uncertainty. Crankstart Foundation is matching the city funding with an additional \$9 million contribution. The partnership includes GiveCard and the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank.
- San Mateo - Providing \$900,000 to fund the purchase and distribution of food through community-based organizations to support 35,000 CalFresh eligible residents over the next year.

**Additional Community Support:**

First 5 Sonoma County has indicated interest in supporting CalFresh beneficiaries with young children, aligned with their mission, in partnership with the Human Services Department. Should this initiative proceed, Human Services will identify eligible CalFresh beneficiaries with children in the household under the age of 6 years old. First 5 will purchase the gift cards and Human Services staff will be responsible for distributing the gift cards.

**Next Steps:**

Should the federal government shut down and delayed benefits extend beyond the month of November, staff will return to the Board with additional data on actual November impacts and needs, and to consider additional community support. Staff will collaborate with the Community Foundation Sonoma County to explore opportunities to seek partnership and support from local philanthropic partners.

Further, the County encourages County employees to consider donating and volunteering with the REFB in support of our local community.

**Strategic Plan:**

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

**Pillar:** Healthy and Safe Communities

**Goal:** Goal 1: Expand integrated system of care to address gaps in services to the County's most vulnerable.

---

**Agenda Date:** 11/4/2025

---

**Objective:** Objective 2: Identify gaps in the Safety Net system of services and identify areas where departments can address those gaps directly and seek guidance from the Board when additional resources and/or policy direction is needed.

**Racial Equity:**  
N/A

**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**  
No

**Prior Board Actions:**  
None

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

| <b>Expenditures</b>                | <b>FY25-26<br/>Adopted</b> | <b>FY26-27<br/>Projected</b> | <b>FY27-28<br/>Projected</b> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses                  |                            |                              |                              |
| Additional Appropriation Requested | \$200,000                  |                              |                              |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>          | <b>\$200,000</b>           |                              |                              |
| <b>Funding Sources</b>             |                            |                              |                              |
| General Fund/WA GF                 |                            |                              |                              |
| State/Federal                      |                            |                              |                              |
| Fees/Other                         |                            |                              |                              |
| Use of Fund Balance                |                            |                              |                              |
| General Fund Contingencies         | \$200,000                  |                              |                              |
| <b>Total Sources</b>               | <b>\$200,000</b>           |                              |                              |

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

Up to \$200,000 from General Fund contingencies will be programmed via a funding agreement and the budgetary adjustment will be included as part of the next Consolidated Budget Adjustments board action. In the meantime, existing appropriations will be used to expedite disbursement of funds.

| <b>Staffing Impacts:</b>                       |                                            |                               |                               |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b> | <b>Monthly Salary Range<br/>(A-I Step)</b> | <b>Additions<br/>(Number)</b> | <b>Deletions<br/>(Number)</b> |
|                                                |                                            |                               |                               |
|                                                |                                            |                               |                               |
|                                                |                                            |                               |                               |

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**  
None

---

**Agenda Date:** 11/4/2025

---

**Attachments:**

Attachment A - Cal Fresh Clients by Zip Code

**Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:**

None