



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 2/11/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Angela Struckmann 707-565-5800, Norine Doherty 707-565-7186

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Report on the Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment

Recommended Action:

Receive the report from Ag Innovations regarding the Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment

Executive Summary:

The Human Services Department requests that the Board receive the Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment report, which was conducted by Ag Innovations in 2024 and identifies service gaps and unmet needs in the county's food system. The report includes recommendations for the Board to consider regarding the distribution of resources for food and nutrition programs that serve Sonoma County residents.

Discussion:

During budget hearings in 2022, the Board of Supervisors tasked the Human Services Department (HSD) with conducting a countywide food assessment to map out the landscape of the food system in Sonoma County, to identify gaps in the system, and to provide recommendations for future strategies and investments to improve food security for all residents. The Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment was completed by Ag Innovations in 2024 and highlights the significant challenges and opportunities within the county's food distribution network. Local food insecurity is influenced by the high cost of living, geographic disparities, and systemic inequities. Marginalized populations, including low-income families, farmworkers, and communities that identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), experience the most disproportionate challenges.

The assessment found that rising housing and food costs, limited transportation options, and insufficient coordination among food distribution providers exacerbate access issues. Although the county has a robust network of providers, including the Redwood Empire Food Bank and numerous community-based organizations, logistical and financial challenges hinder their capacity to serve diverse populations effectively. Programs such as CalFresh and Meals on Wheels face significant barriers, including long wait times, staff shortages, and limited availability of culturally appropriate or fresh foods, especially for rural and underserved communities. More specifically, critical gaps include:

- Disparities in the availability and accessibility of food distribution services particularly in rural and underserved areas
- Challenges in food distribution program sustainability such as inconsistent funding,

reliance on volunteers, and limited infrastructure resources such as refrigeration and storage

- Barriers for specific populations including older adults, unhoused individuals and immigrant communities, which include language barriers, difficulty with eligibility processes, and a lack of culturally appropriate food options

Strategies and recommendations put forward in the report can help our County move toward a more equitable and efficient food distribution system. Addressing the root causes of food insecurity will ensure that all residents, especially the most vulnerable, have access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food. Recommendations from the assessment emphasize the need for expanded County leadership to coordinate efforts and better focus resources to address the gaps in service delivery.

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.

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:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

10-24-2023: Authorized the Director of the Human Services Department to execute an agreement with Ag Innovations Network to conduct a regional food system assessment for the period of October 25, 2023, through October 26, 2024, in the amount of \$199,955.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 24-25 Adopted	FY 25-26 Projected	FY 26-27 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			

Agenda Date: 2/11/2025

Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$0	\$0	\$p

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None

Attachments:

1. Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment Report
2. Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment Slide Deck
3. Sonoma County Food Distribution System Assessment Executive Summary (English/Spanish)

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None