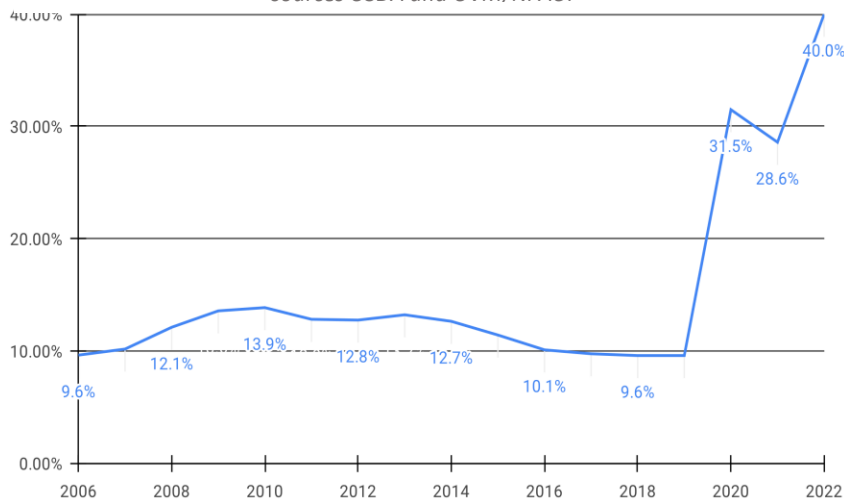


## Vermont Foodbank Base Funding Request

The Vermont Foodbank is seeking \$3 million dollars in base funding to address the sustained, increased need for access to food in communities throughout Vermont. This includes an increased need for food purchasing, distribution, and services due to forces like record-high inflation and continued challenges related to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Chart 1: Food Insecurity Rates in Vermont 2006-2022**

sources USDA and UVM/NFACT



The following request was created using projected expenses based on levels of food insecurity from recent UVM and USDA data regarding COVID recovery and food insecurity. The data shows that **in the past year, 2 in 5 people in Vermont have experienced food insecurity**. This data supports what the Vermont Foodbank and its partners have been seeing in communities across the state – a sustained high demand for charitable food. **Increased funding will support increased capacity to meet the persistent, higher need.**

**Before the pandemic, the rate of food insecurity was *decreasing* in Vermont.**

However, in 2019 food insecurity rates had barely returned to the rates we saw before the Great Recession in 2008. It took a decade for food insecurity rates in Vermont to recover to pre-recession levels. **The COVID-19 pandemic reversed the trajectory of food insecurity, and in 2020, we saw a steep increase in the rate of food insecurity in Vermont. We anticipate it will take at least another decade for Vermont to recover to pre-pandemic food security rates.**

During the pandemic, increased federal and state supports including funding for food boxes, higher SNAP benefits, and stimulus funds supported people across the state and helped to keep people fed. As those benefits and supports ended, and costs of everyday essentials has increased, **we have seen food insecurity increase to levels that are even higher than they were at the height of the pandemic.** To continue to support people across Vermont, Vermont Foodbank requests \$3 million in ongoing general funding to support increased food purchasing and distribution to people in Vermont experiencing food insecurity through our network of 300 network and community partners.

This ongoing support is needed to address the current rate of food insecurity, which is higher than it was even during the height of the pandemic.

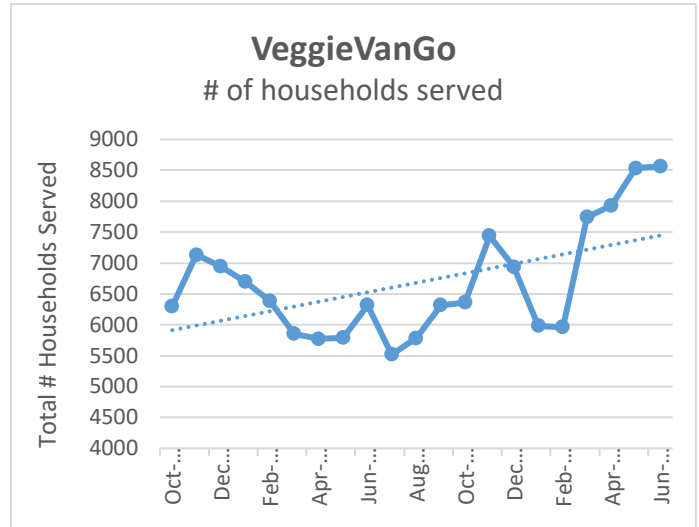


**This funding will:**

- Support increased purchase of foods to meet the sustained, increased need
- Give more support directly to communities through our Network Partners in the form of reduced fees, more food, and increased grant dollars
- Continue the purchase of food from Vermont farms and food producers
- Help to cover increased delivery & distribution costs

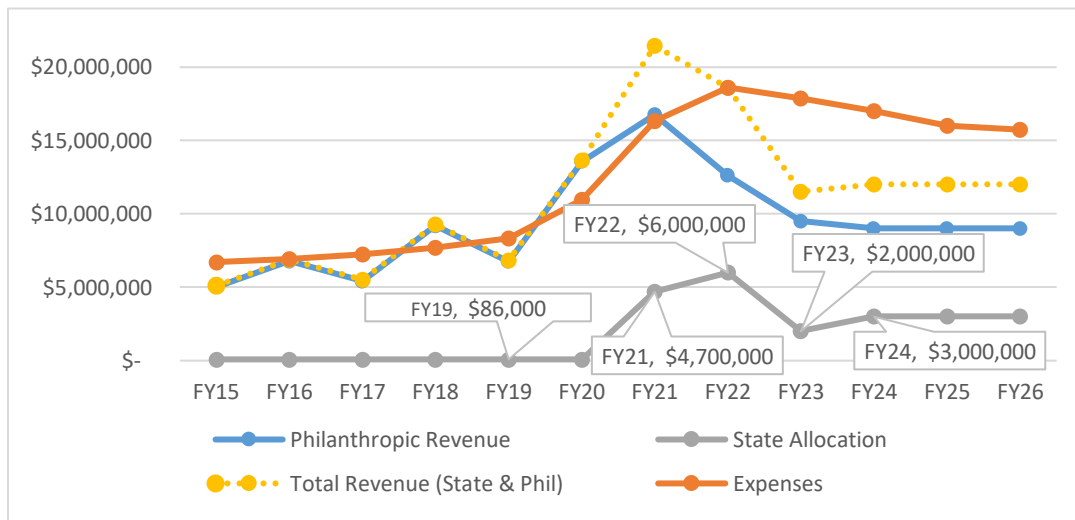
**Benefits of this investment:**

- People living in Vermont who use the charitable food system will have access to food and services they need and want.
- We will purchase produce and other products directly from Vermont farms and producers and distribute directly to Vermont neighbors who need it while acting as an economic support to Vermont farms. In 2021 we were able to distribute 17.6 million pounds of food, of that 4.8 million pounds was fresh fruits and vegetables. There is demand for fresh food across our network.
- By continuing to directly address food insecurity in Vermont, we may help to alleviate the overall burden on state services and continue to refer people directly to more sustainable programs, like 3SquaresVT.



**Chart 2:** Our fresh food direct distributions have seen a large increase in participation since February 2022. State support will allow us to continue to provide fresh food at our distributions.

**The philanthropic sector has stepped up during the pandemic, but philanthropy alone cannot provide the sustained, elevated support needed to address the ongoing high level of food insecurity in Vermont.**



**Chart 3:** Food insecurity rates & Foodbank expenses are projected to decrease over the next 4-10 years, but so are philanthropic contributions, leaving a gap that cannot be filled without the support of the State of Vermont.

**For additional information, contact:** Carrie Stahler, Government and Public Affairs Officer at the Vermont Foodbank, 802-793-4923 or [cstahler@vtfoodbank.org](mailto:cstahler@vtfoodbank.org)



# Vermont Foodbank: Addressing Hunger in VT

## NEED



# 2 in 5

People in VT Are **Food Insecure**

Due to the pandemic and current economic crisis, **food insecurity rates** are **higher** for certain groups of people:

**1.8X** People identifying as women were **1.8x** more likely to experience food insecurity than men.

**3.1X** Households experiencing a job disruption during the pandemic were **3.1x** more likely to be food insecure than households without a job disruption.

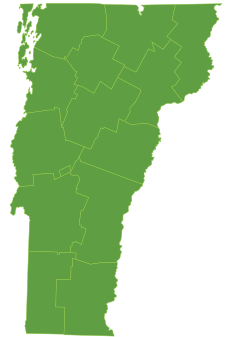
**6.9X** Households with an annual income below \$50K were **6.9x** more likely to be food insecure than households making \$50k per year or more.

## SERVICE

We Work With **MORE THAN 320**

Food Shelves, Meal Sites, Hospitals, Schools, & Community Partners

Serving All **14 Counties** of Vermont



## IMPACT

More Than



**50 Million Pounds** of Food Distributed Since 2020

More Than



**300 Vermont Farms** Supported Through Purchasing & Gleaning

More Than



**\$2.4 Million** Stayed in the Local Economy in FY22



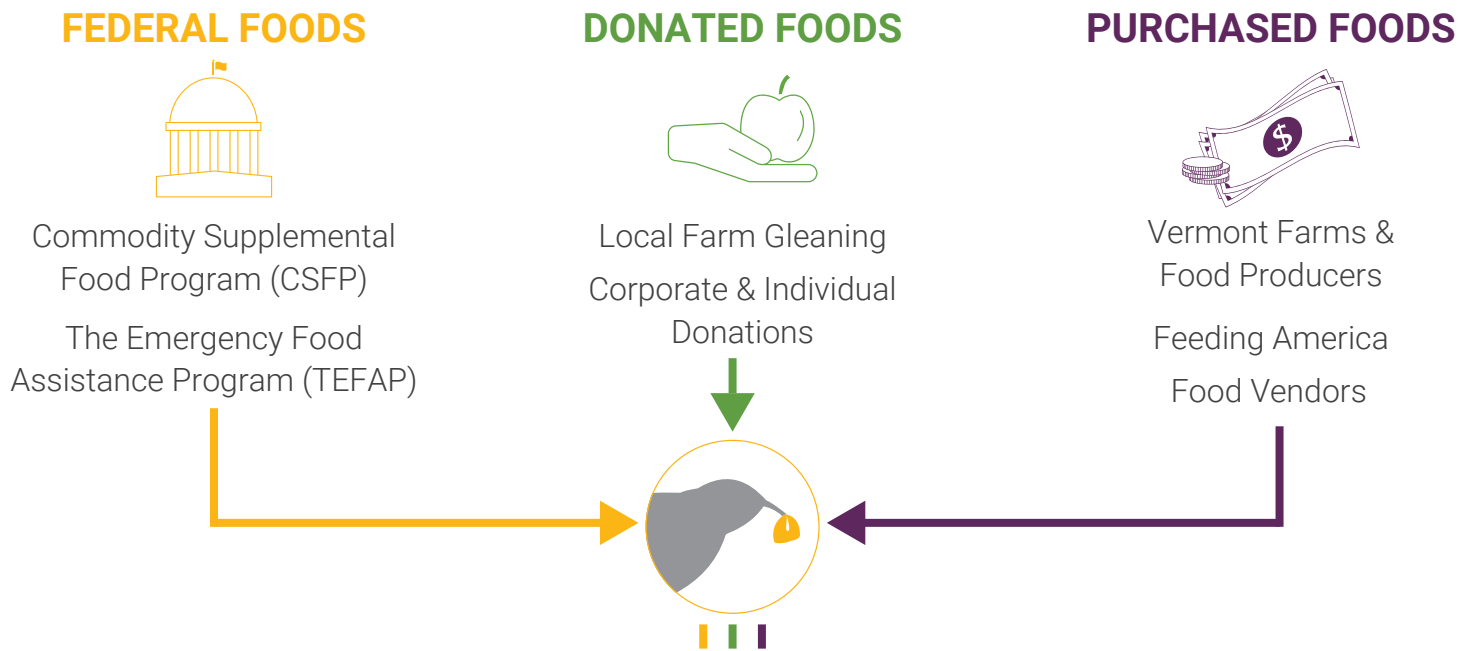


# How Vermont Foodbank Helps Neighbors Access Food

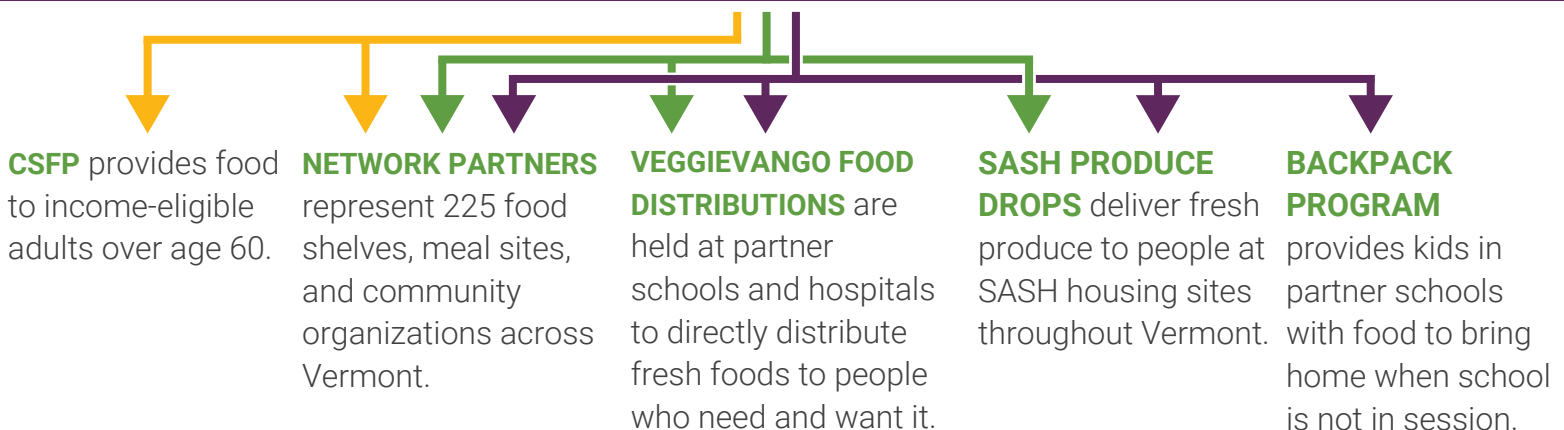
The Vermont Foodbank distributes food to people in Vermont who need it through a network of more than 320 community partners across the state. The Foodbank also hosts its own fresh food distributions in all 14 Vermont counties, administers federal food programs like the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and supports applications to 3SquaresVT (SNAP).

Learn more at [vtfoodbank.org](http://vtfoodbank.org).

## Where the Food Comes From



## Where the Food Goes



Learn More at [vtfoodbank.org](http://vtfoodbank.org)

Could you or a friend use more money to put nourishing food on the table?

# 3SquaresVT can help and is here for all of us when we need it.

## What is 3SquaresVT?

3SquaresVT is a federal nutrition program that gives eligible Vermonters money each month to purchase food at grocery and convenience stores, farmers markets, and co-ops.

## How do I use 3SquaresVT?

Monthly benefits come on a card that works the same way as a regular debit card, so a trip to the grocery store with 3SquaresVT benefits looks like any shopper's experience. If everyone in your household is 65+ or receives SSI, benefits can be deposited into your bank account.

## How do I qualify for 3SquaresVT?

Many of us may not know we qualify for 3SquaresVT! Individuals, families, older Vermonters, people who are working, and people with disabilities can qualify. Benefits are based on household size, income, and expenses such as rent and childcare.

## When we use 3SquaresVT, we help the whole community.

Receiving 3SquaresVT benefits does not take away from anyone else. We all pay into programs like 3SquaresVT, so we've earned these benefits when we need them. And when we buy groceries with 3SquaresVT benefits, we bring millions of federal dollars into our local economies to help local farmers and businesses every month!

## Find out if you are eligible for 3SquaresVT!

Visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) to learn more, request a paper application, or apply online. Or, call **1-800-479-6151** to speak with a Benefits Specialist or to request an application. Help is available! To get help applying dial **2-1-1** or text **'VFBSNAP'** to **855-11**. If you are 60 or older, call the Helpline at **1-800-642-5119** for personalized assistance.

*This message is funded in part by the USDA.  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

October 2022



You may be eligible for 3SquaresVT if your gross monthly income is at or below the following income limit:

Household size	Gross monthly income limit
1	\$2,096
2	\$2,823
3	\$3,552
4	\$4,279
5	\$5,006
6	\$5,735

For each additional member add \$729

*\*Income limits are based on 185% Federal Poverty Level. These limits are for October 1, 2022- September 30, 2023.*





***What are 3SquaresVT Emergency Maximum Allotments?***

Emergency maximum allotments are extra SNAP (3SquaresVT) benefits authorized by the federal government through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to help households through the pandemic. Emergency maximum allotment benefits are supplemental benefits to bring households up to the maximum benefit allowed for their household size based on federal law. To date, since March 2020, Vermont has issued over \$175 million in emergency maximum allotments (approximately \$6.5 million each month currently).

***Why and when are they ending?***

The federal 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act ends emergency maximum allotments with the February 2023 benefit month. In Vermont, we pay emergency maximum allotments mid-month, following each benefit month. The last emergency maximum allotment benefit for February 2023 will be paid on March 15, 2023. Beginning in April, households will not receive any extra mid-month payments. They will only receive their regular 1<sup>st</sup> of the month 3SquaresVT benefit payment.

***How much are households losing in addition to their regular payment because of this change in federal law?***

Emergency maximum allotment benefit amounts range from the minimum amount of \$95/household to over \$2,000 each month. Because 3SquaresVT benefits are calculated based on a federal formula that factors in income and deductions, the impact of the loss varies greatly depending on individual household circumstances. The average loss per person is \$93/month. From the December payment, the following data is available:

- 29,667 out of 41,314 households (72%) received the minimum \$95 emergency maximum allotment payment. These households will see a \$95 reduction beginning in April.
- 11,647 (28%) out of 41,314 households received anywhere from \$96 to \$2,055 (one HH of 11 people received \$2055). Please see the following average emergency maximum allotment payments for this group of 11,647 households:
  - Average for HH size of 1 = \$176
  - Average for HH of 2 = \$292
  - Average for HH of 4 = \$443
  - Average for HH of 5 = \$528
  - Average for HH of 7 = \$641

These households will lose this amount going forward starting in April.

***What is Economic Services Division doing to communicate this change?***

In order to implement this change in federal law, DCF's Economic Services Division is:

- Issuing a mass mailing to customers in January informing them of this change and providing information about how to contact the Economic Services Division if any household has a change in circumstances that could increase their regular monthly 3SquaresVT benefit amount (such as decrease in income or increase in out of pocket expenses like medical expenses or childcare), as well as information about other food resources that may be available and other ESD programs that could help to cover household expenses
- Issuing a press release explaining these changes
- Recording a message on our 1-800 call center phone line explaining this change
- Informing community partners of the change to help with messaging and support of 3SquaresVT households



38 Eastwood Drive, Suite 100  
South Burlington, VT 05403

P: (802) 865-0255  
F: (802) 865-0266  
[HungerFreeVT.org](http://HungerFreeVT.org)

## **FY 2024 Funding Priorities to Address the Ongoing Crisis of Hunger and Food Insecurity**

Prepared for the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Anore Horton, Executive Director

[ahorton@hungerfreevt.org](mailto:ahorton@hungerfreevt.org) / 802-231-1293

4/4/2023

Hunger Free Vermont respectfully submits this request for funding support for two specific measures we believe are critically needed to address the current hunger crisis in our state, which is about to become much worse for those of us living on the lowest incomes. Two in five (40%) of people in Vermont have reported experiencing hunger and food insecurity during 2022, the highest rates ever recorded, according to studies carried out by UVM researchers. The decision by Congress to end the pandemic Emergency Allotments for SNAP (3SquaresVT) this month means that beginning in April, Vermont will lose \$6.5 million a month in food benefits. **Every one of the more than 41,000 households / 72,000 individuals are now experiencing a significant drop in their 3SquaresVT benefits following the final Emergency Allotment payment in March.** The average loss per 3SquaresVT household will be \$100-\$500 per month, with some households losing much more.

### **Help Vermont's Charitable Food Network Mitigate the End of SNAP Emergency Allotments**

**Please fully fund the Vermont Foodbank's request for \$3 million.**

Vermont's network of 225+ food shelves and community meal sites and 25+ direct distribution sites are reporting increased need that is stretching their capacities to the limit. People are deeply worried about how they will continue to provide enough food for themselves and their families as food costs remain so high and the Emergency Allotments end. Food shelves are reporting that they are seeing a significant increase in working families with children using these charitable food resources, and overall increases in usage between 20% and 84%. The funding that the Foodbank is requesting is especially important because it is the lowest barrier to access to food for individuals and families who need it, and it specifically supports people in getting the fresh foods and staples they need every day. For those losing a portion of their 3SquaresVT benefits, and for the many who aren't eligible for 3SquaresVT but whose income is still far below JFO's basic needs thresholds, the charitable food network is essential and currently pushed to the brink.

### **Increase Funding for Meal Programs Serving Older Vermonters and People with Disabilities**

**Please increase funding for "Meals on Wheels"**

About 15% of older Vermonters are food insecure, and low-income households living on fixed incomes are in many cases facing some of the steepest cuts to their 3SquaresVT benefits with the end of Emergency Allotments. In some cases, these households will see their food support drop from over \$280 per month to just \$23 per month starting in April. Meals on Wheels providers, along with senior centers and other organizations that operate congregate meal sites are already struggling to meet the requests for the healthy meals they provide. This program supports two very specific and vulnerable populations in a very specific way, and coupled with support for the charitable food network supported by the Foodbank, it can help to make sure that as many Vermonters as possible are getting the support they need for food security.

Thank you for considering these funding priorities. Hunger Free Vermont understands that ending hunger in permanent and dignified ways requires funding multiple systems of support, like the Vermont Foodbank and Meals on Wheels because ending hunger requires providing meals when and where people need them.

We appreciate so much all of the conversations you have been having about addressing basic needs of Vermonters, including housing, child care, paid leave, and all the human services supports. We know your task is monumental, and that you understand and are considering all of these needs. We ask you to include these two critical needs in your Committee's FY 2024 budget request.