



EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD Altamont Landfill Settlement Agreement

Grant #: 20-35

Date report submitted: January 5th, 2021

Grant Name: Berkeley Food Network Food Recovery Program

Grant Contact: Sara Webber

Grant Period: July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

Amount funded: \$20,000

Amount Requested: \$33,050

Grant Objectives (Brief summary of grant):

For this grant period, we have four objectives:

1. Expand food recovery in Berkeley and surrounding municipalities to 250,000 pounds recovered between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
2. Disseminate safe food handling protocols for donated food to our donors, our membership network food recovery recipients, and volunteers on an ongoing basis.
3. Increase the amount of food available to food-insecure residents in Berkeley, both housed and unsheltered.
4. Provide volunteer opportunities to Berkeley youth.

COVID-19 Impact on our Project

Due to the current times we are facing, please provide a brief explanation of how COVID has affected your project.

When shelter-in-place first hit in March, we faced some initial challenges when adjusting our mobile pantry from client choice farmers' market style distributions to pre-packed bags of groceries to majority bag-packing as a COVID-19 precaution. We also paused our food recovery from Cal Dining when their campus dining halls closed, but have since resumed these regular donations to 3 times a week beginning in August 2020.

COVID also resulted in an outpouring of community support for our project. Specifically, a number of initial one-time donations from food producers and restaurants in the area during the first shelter-in-place turned into recurring weekly donations. We also continue to have a large and supportive team of volunteers that allow us to pick-up, process and sort, and distribute recovered food. With this support we have grown to nearly 40,000 pounds of food rescued each month.

Has your project objective changed due to effects of COVID? If so, please write new objective.

Our project objectives have not changed significantly. With the shift to distanced learning in BUSD schools, we have had to pause our formal internship programs with Berkeley High School and Berkeley Technical Academy, but have continued to welcome Berkeley youth in to volunteer in the warehouse. We continue to have a regular group of high school students volunteering to support food recovery work on a weekly basis.

Do you think you can complete the project in the allotted timeline (June 2021)?

Yes, we believe we will still be able to complete our project in the allotted timeline.

Narrative Report

1. Please report the mid-year outcomes of the funded project. In doing so, please refer to the grant objectives included above.

Goal One: Expand food recovery in Berkeley and surrounding municipalities to 250,000 pounds recovered between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

During the 1st half of the grant period—from July 1st, 2020 to December 31st, 2020—we have recovered 215,261 pounds of food. Of that, 3,929 pounds were composted through the City of Berkeley’s composting program and 1,010 pounds were diverted as animal feed.

As we continue to grow our Food Recovery Program, we are now recovering an average of 40,000 pounds of food each month. With this, we are on track to meet and exceed our goal of recovering 250,000 pounds recovered during the grant period.

With COVID-19, our sources of recovered food continue to grow and shift. We are now recovering from Trader Joe’s 4 days a week and Sprouts 1 day a week, in addition to our ongoing twice weekly recovery from Safeway. We also continue to work closely with local farms in the area. In the growing season this summer and early fall, we were receiving weekly or bi-weekly donations from 7 local farms whose traditional distribution pathways were disrupted by COVID-19. Finally, we are working closely with our network members to facilitate food recovery of any surplus food they have during meal services and food distributions. With these shifts, our recovered food is about 50% produce, 20% prepared food, with the remaining 30% being dairy products, dry goods, and meat, and baked goods.

Goal Two: Disseminate safe food handling protocols for donated food to our donors, our membership network food recovery recipients, and volunteers on an ongoing basis.

We have updated our formal protocols and printed materials for accepting, handling, and processing recovered food. We have posted updated information in our warehouse for all volunteers and continue to share this information with our donors and food recovery recipients.

We received health permits from the City of Berkeley’s Environmental Health Department for our warehouse and Hub Kitchen operations in October 2019. In March, we were able to continue our food recovery efforts during Shelter-in-place and COVID-19 due to our formal protocols for handling donated food safely.

Our Director of Operations, Food Recovery Manager, and Hub Kitchen Manager have up-to-date ServSafe Food Manager certification. In addition, our Warehouse Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator have up-to-date ServSafe Food Handler certification. Our staff ensures that all volunteers who handle recovered food receive additional training in best practices for handling recovered food using our own training materials (developed in partnership with the City of Berkeley’s Environmental Health Division) and those of the Alameda County Community Food Bank.

Goal Three: Increase the amount of food available to food-insecure residents in Berkeley, both housed and unhoused.

We are now producing an average of 1000 frozen, ready-to-heat-and-eat, individually packaged meals produced using recovered food each week through our Hub Kitchen Program. We are also redistributing 15,000+ pounds of recovered food each month to our network members and their clients.

We are continuing to cook with social-distancing measures in place in our kitchen and, with the support of our strong volunteer base, have been able to continue producing an average of 1,000 meals each week. Currently, the meals made in our Hub Kitchen are distributed to:

- BFN's own On-Site Pantry
- South and North Berkeley Senior Centers, we are also contracted to provide 80 breakfasts/week made primarily with recovered food.
- Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA) senior housing, we provide 180 meals a week to either Strawberry Creek Lodge or Amistad house
- Berkeley Technical Academy, who hold their own client-choice pantry
- Berkeley Youth Alternatives, who keep meals on site for youth
- Oregon Mutual Aid
- Berkeley Drop-in Center

In addition, we have continued our partnerships with network members to provide them with recovered food for direct distribution and for hot-meal distribution. Through our grocery store and wholesale food recovery donors, we provide Indigenous Permaculture, UC Village, and the UC Basic Needs Pantry with recovered produce and packaged, prepared foods multiple times a week. We also provide bulk, prepared food to our network members that have their own cooking and meal distributions. This includes Dorothy Day House, Berkeley Food and Housing Project, Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency, and Food Not Bombs.

With the increase of fresh produce in our food recovery program, we have also been able to include more abundant and nutritious food recovery produce in our mobile pantry bags and on our On-Site Pantry.

Goal Four: Provide volunteer opportunities for Berkeley youth.

We continue to engage young people in all aspects of our work, including in the Hub Kitchen Program.

With distance learning still in place, we have not been able to directly engage any students from the Career Technical Education (CTE) Program at Berkeley High Schools and Berkeley Technical Academy in our warehouse, but continue to work closely with them. For example, Berkeley Technical Academy students have taken ownership of a monthly client-choice pantry distribution held on-site for the school's neighborhood. We are planning to resume our high school internship programs in the 2021 school year if learning resumes in person.

From the beginning of Shelter-in-place in March, we were also able to support internships for high school students in our warehouse. The 2 students who worked in our warehouse to support our

food recovery and pantry program throughout the summer have been able to continue volunteering weekly with us since the school year has started. We also work with our partners at Berkeley Youth Alternatives to provide a work internship for 2 of their youth, who work in the warehouse once a week.

We are also finalizing our Berkeley Food Network Internship Program for high school aged students that we will launch Summer 2021. With this program, we will be able to provide more volunteer opportunities for Berkeley youth. Our teams of volunteers continue to include Berkeley youth, as well.

2. Describe what you did to accomplish your objectives and any significant course changes you have made so far.

We have done several things throughout the first half of the grant period to accomplish our objectives:

- We have teams of regular volunteers who support our evening pantry and are developing these teams for other volunteer shifts in our warehouse. We have 5+ regular weekly volunteers who support our food recovery work. Our Volunteer Coordinator manages our growing volunteer base.
- Expanded and formalized our staff structure by hiring a full time Director of Operations, Food Recovery Manager, and Warehouse Coordinator, as well as part-time Volunteer Coordinator and Hub Kitchen Manager. These staff members will work collaboratively to support food recovery efforts. In the second half of the grant period, we will hire a Warehouse Associate to support food recovery pick-ups and distribution.
- Continued to develop new and existing food recovery relationships throughout COVID-19.
- Worked with existing network members who have their own food distributions to accept their excess food that would otherwise go to the landfill at the end of these distributions. We also have reciprocal relationships, where we provide them with rescued food and refrigeration and freezer space when needed.

3. What methods were used for evaluating and documenting progress towards these outcomes?

To evaluate our Food Recovery Program, we weigh all our recovered food by category and then, after sorting, weigh the unusable food. We log all our recovered food weights. We keep a count of all individually packaged meals produced and where they are distributed and the weights of recovered food distributed to our partner agencies for use in their programs.

We have continued to work with the City of Berkeley's Environmental Health Department to keep our food handling protocols and materials up to date during COVID-19. We continue to work with our partners at Edible School Yard, Berkeley High School, and Berkeley Technical Academy to evaluate and improve our engagement with Berkeley youth.

4. What were the most important things you learned? What do you expect to learn in the second half of the project?

We are continuously learning that there is a deep support for food recovery in our community. When Shelter-in-place began, countless food businesses in Berkeley and the wider community donated their food to us. We have continued to develop these partnerships since March.

The need for food-assistance in Berkeley continues to grow, as unemployment checks and stipends dwindle. On average, we are serving 5,000 unduplicated Berkeley residents/week, with the majority of our clients receiving food from us twice a month.

We learned that we are uniquely positioned to accept a variety of food recovery donations and find the best matching partner organization to distribute it to. We are continuing to identify new partner organizations who can accept recovered food.

5. Please outline any significant changes in your organization since the grant was made. In particular, please describe any changes in key leadership positions in the organization and/or program.

We hired a Food Recovery Manager in April 2020 who was promoted into the role of Director of Operations on July 1st to replace our former Director of Programs who moved out of the area in June. We then hired a new Food Recovery Manager in August 2020. We also hired a Warehouse Coordinator in October 2020.

6. In addition to measuring the outcomes of the funded project, we are interested in how grants directly improve the lives of the people in your community. Please share one or more stories or quotes that show how this project has made a difference in the lives the people your program serves.

Through our Hub Kitchen program, we transform recovered food into nutritious and tasty individually packaged vegetarian frozen meals. Now, these meals are a big hit with our senior clients, but this wasn't always the case. At first, at the SAHA location Strawberry Creek Lodge, seniors were reluctant to take the meals because there were unfamiliar foods like vegan meat substitutes and tofu. Slowly, as individuals started trying out meals and telling their friends, we began distributing more of these meals. The residents were excited to see the new meals each week and try them out. Recently, we have also begun distributing 80 breakfast meals a week to seniors through Aging Services. We have heard good reviews so far and are hoping to expand this contract soon.

While our senior clients were reluctant to take these meals at first, they were slowly open to trying these new meals and love them now! This is a testament to how our Hub Kitchen model works at both reducing waste and addressing hunger in the community.

Please send completed progress report forms in PDF format to Lauren at altamonteab@gmail.com with "Progress Report-Grant #20-xx" in the subject line before December 31, 2020.