

# **BOCC Funding Recommendations for COVID-19 Feeding Operations**

## **Durham County Food Security Task Force**

### **May 2020**

#### **Background**

Since the onset of COVID-19 and institution of stay-at-home orders in NC and Durham County in March 2020, Durham County assigned a Feeding Coordinator and formed a Food Security Task Force as part of its Emergency Operations Center to address anticipated increasing levels of food insecurity in the Durham community as a result of school closure, loss of work, reduced public transportation options, and need to self-isolate as part of the stay-at-home orders. Durham County has a significant number and breadth of hunger relief organizations and chose a strategy of supporting and collaborating with non-governmental organizations in feeding Durham residents in need. The partnership of Durham Public Schools Foundation, Durham Public Schools, nonprofit organizations, local restaurants, and other partners, including Durham County, have provided much needed support for families with children. However, additional demand and urgency for community feeding has grown as the crisis has continued along with greater awareness of the risks for vulnerable populations, such as those over age 65 and residents who are food insecure and not eligible for public programs.

#### **Funding Mechanism and Context**

Like many other counties, Durham County could choose to run its own feeding program at much-increased costs in resources and human capital. Instead, by working with non-governmental partners, Durham County has had the advantage of collaborating with organizations that know their communities well, can focus delivery of resources to those most in need, and have some existing capacity to do so. In order to reach more residents who experience higher levels of food insecurity as a result of COVID-19, Durham County may need to invest in targeted feeding efforts where non-governmental organizations and private funding have not been adequate to fill more urgent needs. Some of these expenditures are likely reimbursable from FEMA based on current guidance.

FEMA funding reimbursement is available for specific populations that FEMA has noted are particularly affected by food insecurity as a result of their vulnerability to COVID-19, including individuals over the age of 65 and those with underlying conditions. Other food insecure populations may be eligible based on designation from the local public health official. Durham County can contract directly with nonprofit partners for feeding efforts. Durham County would provide the funds up front to the nonprofit based on the terms of the contract and seek reimbursement from FEMA at a future point. The reimbursement is based on a reasonable per meal cost and is not 100%. The reimbursement would be provided by FEMA at a reduced rate (estimated at 75%). State relief funds and reimbursements may help cover some of the remaining costs.

For other food insecure populations, such as those who have lost work, yet are not eligible for government benefits due to their resident status, reimbursement is not as certain. In this case, every effort can still be made to pursue reimbursement, though it is not assured.

Funding through private sources, such as Duke University's COVID Fund and individual donations, will continue to be an important part of the funding picture for food security.

Many of the non-profit partners we are working with are already applying for those and other funding opportunities. The County Food Security Task Force is also looking closely at opportunities to better enable and promote additional funding options for nonprofit partners. The needs identified in this request are of a particularly urgent nature where conventional nonprofit funding efforts are inadequate to meet the current need for feeding vulnerable County residents. This request is focused on senior adults (65+) who most need to self-isolate and our Latino/Hispanic residents.

**Food Security Funding Recommendation** *(see summary chart below)*

The Task Force recommends that Durham County provide a total of \$152,000 for meals for urgent hunger relief for two organizations serving older adults and a third serving a Latino/Hispanic population that is experiencing high levels of food insecurity due to job losses. It is expected that \$116,000 will be reimbursable based on FEMA guidance regarding the food insecure 65+ population served. For the remaining \$36,000 the County could apply for reimbursement, but it is less certain.

With \$60,000, End Hunger Durham (EHD), a sponsored program of Durham Congregations in Action, in partnership with local caterers, can continue the delivery of healthy delicious meals to 900 low-resource seniors living in 16 subsidized housing communities in Durham. Funds are needed to extend the weekly deliveries of 3-meal kits for an additional month. An equivalent request is being made of the City of Durham and seems likely to be funded. The caterers are Durham businesses, including three black-owned businesses. This request covers 4 weeks of 8 weeks of service through July.

With \$56,000, Meals on Wheels Durham can serve an additional 100 seniors from its growing 450+ waiting list through a combination of weekday and weekend meals, including fresh fruit through August. Individuals removed from the waitlist would begin receiving services, including weekly/weekend meal delivery, check-in/ socialization calls, and food for their pets if needed.

To avoid duplication of effort, Meals on Wheels, DCIA, and EHD have engaged in collaborative conversations. As a result of those conversations, Meals on Wheels will prioritize seniors on their waiting list living outside of communities supported by the Durham Housing Authority (DHA) who are not currently clients.

With \$36,000, El Centro Hispano can continue providing food to 300 Latino families in Durham through the end of July 2020. In order to ensure continued access to food, El Centro partners with local Latino stores to make available culturally appropriate food, making the food purchase and payment electronically. Families then pick up the food directly at the store. Some families that lack transportation receive a food delivery provided by El Centro staff and volunteers. This is supplemented with donated produce from a local farm.

**Note:** The City of Durham is giving \$100,000 to the Durham FEAST effort.

**Partner Organizations**

**End Hunger Durham** (EHD), has been developing community food system strategies, building capacity of grassroots food pantries, and organizing improved food access for seniors in poverty for the past five years with its fiscal partner Durham Congregations In

Action (DCIA). DCIA is a multi-faith anti-poverty non-profit organizing responses to hunger and homelessness in Durham since 1969.

**Meals on Wheels Durham** is a non-profit agency committed to enhancing the quality of life for eligible homebound adults in our community who cannot provide proper nutrition for themselves since 1975. Dedicated volunteers deliver lunches to clients each weekday, with the objective of improving the nutritional status and health of these individuals and helping them remain independent as long as possible.

**El Centro Hispano** is a Latino non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the community, building bridges and advocating for equity and inclusion for Hispanics/Latinos in the Triangle area of North Carolina. Their areas of focus are Education, Health & Well-being, Economic Development and Community Engagement & Advocacy

Summary: Food Security Task Force: BOCC Funding Request - May 11, 2020					
Organization	Item	Amount	Description	Matching Funds*	Potential for Reimbursement
El Centro Hispano	Funding for meals	\$36,000	Funding would support meal purchases for 300 Durham Latino families to use through the end of July.	N/A El Centro has a separate request to Duke for Housing/Rent and Utilities assistance.	<i>Low to moderate</i> Consider identifying residents who lost work and do not qualify for benefits as food insecure.
Meals on Wheels	Funding for meals	\$56,000	Funding would pay for meals for four months for 100 additional Durham residents currently on the 450-person waiting list.	N/A MoW has applied for Duke funding which would remove additional residents from the waiting list.	High Through FEMA
End Hunger Durham	Funding for meals	\$60,000	Funding would pay for half of an eight-week City-County partnership to serve 900 Durham Housing Authority senior residents.	City open to support with \$60,000 match	<i>High</i> Through FEMA
		<b>\$152,000</b>	<b>Total</b>		

**\*Note:** City providing \$100,000 to the Durham FEAST initiative