Dear Network Partners,

Thank you for your continued hard work in your communities; it’s making a critical difference in the lives of so many. Here is an important update from the Foodbank:

- The Vermont Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has created a form to gather requests and needs of the community. We reached out to them to let them know that the entire charitable food network needs:
  - Hand Sanitizer
  - Gloves
  - Masks
  - General disinfecting cleaning supplies like wipes

- In addition, we shared this update:
  - Some agencies are reducing hours because of lack of volunteers and staff; they are also very concerned about the health and safety of their staff and volunteers, who are more than often retirees and are most susceptible.
  - Our network is continuing to try to move to a grab n’ go or delivery model but it’s proving to be very difficult for a number of agencies; this may be an area where the National Guard could assist in helping to distribute meals/food in the community.
  - The number of housebound seniors and people who are homeless requiring meal services is rising rapidly and we anticipate this trend continuing for months.
  - There is some mobilization with the private sector and restaurants around making meals for homebound folks, but funding is a challenge; this may be an area where the EOC could provide funding to put some restaurant workers back to work preparing and delivering meals in the community

- If there are needs above and beyond this please fill out the form:
  https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5504100/COVID-Resource-Request-Form

- The Foodbank organized a Zoom call with Senator Tim Ashe and 35 Network Partners participated and shared their need for help with the “last mile” of food delivery, from food shelves to clients’ homes.
- We’d like to organize more calls like this so that our network can stay connected and support each other; you’ll hear more from us soon. Hope you can participate.
- If you visit the Foodbank to pick up an order, here are the protocols for our three distribution centers (all of which now have locked doors):
  - Barre: we now have phones installed outside both doors so you can let us know that you’re here without coming in to the building. You can still go to the front first to announce yourself and then drive around back to pick up your order. Order gets brought out so you’ll stay outside.
  - Brattleboro: when you arrive, simply call the office (802-246-0993) to tell us you are here. The staff will get your order; everyone stays outside and six feet apart, some just stay in their car/truck as we load them. Staff ask agencies what they would like for produce and any other things we have available and it gets picked while you wait. Everything is done outside and six feet apart. After everything is complete Foodbank signs paper for our records and gives you their copy.
  - Rutland: Agencies are filling out an order for shelf-stable product before you arrive. When you arrive, you ring the bell. Staff brings the food out to the parking lot for you.
• There are now cardboard boxes, plastic bags and food containers on the shopping list.
• The Foodbank is offering Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Mini – Grants to all Network Partners. You can purchase local produce directly from Vermont farmers! Increased funding available due to COVID-19. We highly encourage ALL of our Network Partners to apply for this grant. Due April 3, 2020. Email Ruby at rbertola@vtfoodbank.org or, call Ruby to fill out the application over the phone Monday-Friday 8am-4pm (802-249-7411). See attached application.
• There has been a tremendous outpouring of generosity from supporters to our COVID-19 Hunger Relief Fund which has allowed us to take immediate action, including:
  o In the past week, we’ve ordered 249,773 lbs of food. All this will be provided for free and delivered for free to food shelves and meal sites across the state. We were notified by vendors of a 10-15% increase in freight costs on our orders. THIS FOOD HAS NOT ARRIVED YET. We anticipate arrival in the next several weeks.
  o We’ve leased two additional trucks (one for Barre and one for Brattleboro), to increase our distribution and storage capacity.
  o We rented a large tent for our headquarters in Barre. It was erected today in the back parking lot, and will give staff and volunteers the space they need to safely pack boxes.
  o The Foodbank will be doubling up on CSFP boxes during the month of April. Everyone will receive their April and May boxes at that time. This means that no boxes will be distributed in May.
  o Our partner food shelves and meal sites have immediate needs and we recognize there is some lag time before our bulk orders will arrive. To address this, we are providing a total of $150,000 in cash grants to 128 food shelves and 42 meal sites in our network. They can use these funds for emergency food and supply purchases, or whatever else they need to keep their doors open.
  o We are immediately spending an extra $75,000 to purchase local produce from Vermont growers. We know that this crisis is impacting our farmers as well and we want to do what we can to support them while getting free, fresh, local foods out to others who are struggling.
  o The Vermont Foodbank is deemed an essential workplace. Even with the “stay home, stay safe order”, our work will continue. As advised in a previous email, your agencies are also considered essential workplaces.

We’ll continue to keep you updated and we hope you will do the same. Please email Joe Dauscher (jdauscher@vtfoodbank.org) with any updates you have. Our very best to you all.

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