



**AzFBN 2022**

## **Successes & Accomplishments**

Arizona Food Bank Network is proud and grateful to share the following highlights of our work during 2022. **Your generosity and thoughtful support helped make these recent achievements possible.** Thank you for continuing to join us in pursuit of our shared vision of a hunger-free Arizona!

As we have for many years, AzFBN supports our member food banks in many ways, including:

*Arranging transportation of donated food*

*Coordinating donations through Feeding America*

*Purchasing food*

*Providing technical support to regional food banks and agencies*  
(MOSTLY SMALLER FOOD PANTRIES)

Working in partnership to end hunger, AzFBN supports smaller agencies that directly serve clients. Our team provides training to help ensure their sustainability and offers technical assistance on topics such as board governance, fundraising, and volunteer retention. To help build the capacity of our partners across the state, AzFBN also coordinates the efforts of a cohort of 33 Americorps/VISTA volunteers who each dedicate a year-long term of service to supporting local hunger relief efforts and special projects.

A critical component of AzFBN's efforts to bolster the work of our member food banks and their distribution partners is our ongoing commitment to supporting logistics. On a daily basis, this includes tractors and trailers, drivers, warehouse staff, fuel, dispatching, load management, and much more. **Your vital support enables AzFBN to make this commitment to logistics — during Arizona's produce season and throughout the entire year.**

During the past year, our team was very focused on an exciting new area of work. For the first time in its history, and through an agreement with food banks across the state, AzFBN took on an operational role in produce sourcing. These activities, which were previously managed by the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona (CFBSA), were centered in Nogales, Arizona. CFBSA determined that the benefits and burdens of capturing excess produce (many times preventing this product from going to a landfill) reached far beyond its service area. Therefore, on July 1, 2022, this work officially transitioned to AzFBN.

Now called the 'No Borders No Limits Produce Program', this work is a substantial expansion of AzFBN's operations. As a result, AzFBN needs to identify significantly higher levels of ongoing financial support. **We are so grateful for your generous and consistent support which helps make it possible for us to meet the challenges and pursue the opportunities the No Borders No Limits (NBNL) Produce Program represents.**

Throughout 2022, many AzFBN team members were deeply involved in long-term project planning, onboarding new staff, and managing the transition of the NBNL program. Shortly after the official transition, AzFBN moved the operation from Nogales, Arizona to a rented warehouse in nearby Rio Rico, Arizona. This strategic move will enable more temperature-controlled storage, expansion of programming, and exploration of revenue producing activities. Tens of millions of pounds of produce flowed through the NBNL program during the latter half of 2022. This included more than half a million boxes of fresh, healthy produce packaged in family-friendly ready to go containers.

During 2022, your support helped AzFBN accomplish the following:



Coordinated the transportation of **23,824,277 pounds of food** to Arizona Food Banks, and added an **additional 11 million pounds** of food to this total through the NBNL program.



Produced **694,680 family friendly produce boxes** that were sent across Arizona and farther when Arizona's need was met.



Purchased more than **170,000 pounds of locally grown food** from **25 small farms** in six counties for distribution to food banks through the Friends of the Farm program.

Another critically important area of focus for the AzFBN team is supporting and promoting interventions that reduce food insecurity in the state, including:



**Free-and-reduced-price meals** for students at school



**Summer and after school meals** for children



Expanded access to **healthy meals** for seniors



Helped Native communities form **food sovereignty committees**

A highlight of this work during 2022 included a partnership with SOS/No Kid Hungry which funded AzFBN's outreach to all charter schools in the state to educate them about the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In addition to educating schools, AzFBN also supported their efforts to enroll in the NSLP and provide meals at school. The team helped charter schools understand the applications and regulations and connected them to caterers and traditional districts they could contract with to provide meals for their students.

While AzFBN is not a grant making organization, we nevertheless assumed this role for the past 3 years in order to enable smaller hunger fighting agencies to access funds from large federal grants that they may not otherwise be able to access. Since the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we have served in this role, vetting proposals and securing the paperwork necessary to ensure cash from relief programs flowed to the local level, eventually awarding millions of dollars to agencies who were on the frontline of getting food to hungry Arizonans. Throughout our grantmaking operations we have attempted to strike a balance between speed, simplicity, flexibility, and accountability to ensure that the funding would do the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people in need. Thanks to the generosity of some of our most loyal donors and remaining funds from local and federal government, we were able to continue this aspect of our work through 2022 and award \$4,368,502 to agencies across the state.

These grants supported a wide range of agency needs while they still were recovering from the effects of COVID-19 and the aftermath of skyrocketing inflation and supply chain issues. Here are just a few examples of how smaller organizations used these funds:



Replacing old or broken commercial kitchen appliances to **expand food storage and increase the capacity for feeding clients**, or to make distributions more efficient and safer for staff and volunteers.



**Salaries for critical staff and to support operating expenses** such as utilities, supplies, insurance rates, and fuel.



**Purchasing new appliances** (such as refrigeration units) to ensure that agencies can safely store more healthy food at one time, ensuring less waste of product and more consistent food distributions.



The purchase of **food delivery and food pick-up vehicles**, and other essential equipment like pallet jacks, freezers, shelving, and fork lifts.



The **purchase of healthy and fresh foods** to supplement shelf-stable distribution items.



**With your support, AzFBN educates members of the public and policymakers about the needs of individuals who struggle with hunger and helps to set solid nutrition policy.** We are pleased and proud to note that recent AzFBN-led advocacy efforts led to significant improvements in programs that serve vulnerable populations.



**We hope you will join us in celebrating increased access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for older adults!** Knowing that SNAP participation among eligible older adults was low (only 33%), AzFBN set out to educate officials about what was keeping people from accessing this vital resource. The barriers to participation included a complex 23-page application that required countless support documents, limited access to technology, overall mobility challenges, and a general lack of awareness about SNAP and who qualifies. Thanks in part to four years' worth of administrative advocacy efforts by the AzFBN team, the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) eliminated many barriers to SNAP access for older adults. Beginning July 1, 2022, older adults have a streamlined six-page SNAP application, longer certification periods, fewer renewal interviews, and a dedicated helpline.



AzFBN also advocated for more resources for families through the Summer Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer PEBT) Program. This program provided funds to help fill the summer-meal gap left by the absence of school breakfast and lunch during the summer. These funds provided much-needed assistance to families stretching budgets to make ends meet in a time of record-high inflation.



Another important victory in late 2022 will help many families struggling due to the sunset of pandemic relief programs. **AzFBN advocated for “Universal Meals” (free breakfast and lunch for all NSLP enrolled schools) for students throughout the school year. Our voice was heard!** The Arizona Department of Education has enabled NSLP participating schools to eliminate the “reduced” price category for the rest of this school year and next year as well. This means families who were on the edge of qualifying for free meals for their children will no longer face school lunch debt or be denied access to food due to a lack of funds.

**We are grateful for your unwavering support which has helped us achieve the accomplishments highlighted above.** AzFBN offers a variety of programs that represent the depth and breadth of approaches necessary to successfully address the problem of hunger in Arizona. Preventing people from needing food banks ensures that those who do rely on the emergency food network can find enough fresh, healthy supplies to meet their immediate needs. Collaboration and connection are the hallmarks of this work and AzFBN's approach ensures a community-wide commitment to hunger relief. **We are truly grateful to you for being a vital part of this community and for your ongoing commitment to our shared vision of a hunger-free Arizona.**