



Arizona  
Food Bank  
Network

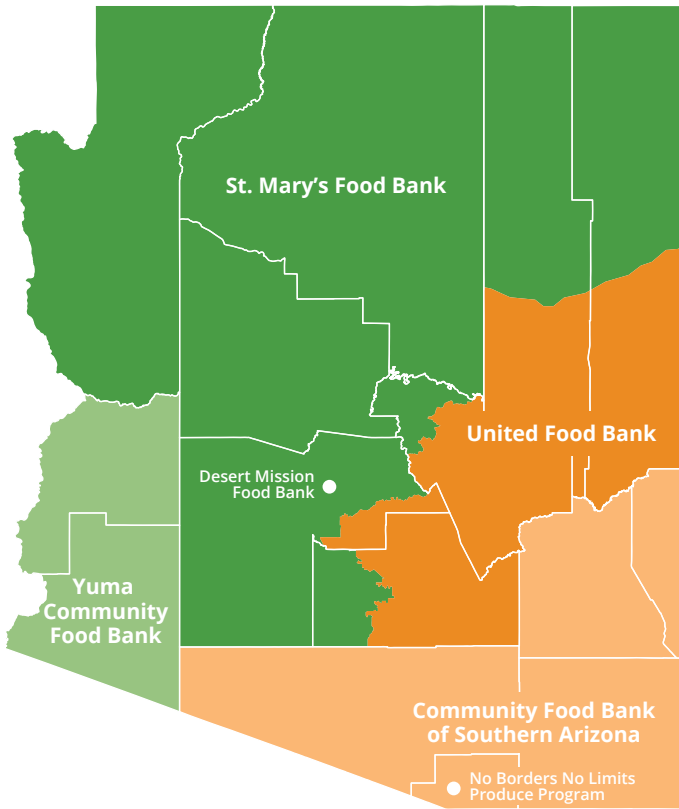
# Anti-Hunger Playbook

56th Arizona State Legislature  
Second Regular Session



A legislator's guide to ending hunger in 2024

# Arizona Food Bank Network & Members



**About Us:** The *Arizona Food Bank Network* (AzFBN) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a hunger-free Arizona. Our mission is to develop solutions to end hunger through food banking, public policy, and innovation. We support our member food banks through the transportation of food, mostly donated fruits and vegetables, to a statewide network of food banks and agency partners. This includes sourcing food—much of which would have been headed to a landfill—and channeling it equitably to food banks across the state and beyond from the AzFBN warehouse in Rio Rico. AzFBN also dedicates resources to protecting the most vulnerable people at risk of hunger in the state, including children and older adults.

**AzFBN Member Food Banks:** AzFBN member food banks provide emergency food assistance to people in all 15 counties through a network of nearly 1,000 food pantries, community centers, homeless shelters, and other partner agencies. Collectively, these food banks distributed **more than 147 million pounds of food**—nearly 192 million meals—to Arizonans in need in 2023.<sup>1</sup> The map above reflects each food bank's service area.

**NOTE:** *HonorHealth Desert Mission Food Bank* is a member within *St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance's* service area. The *No Borders No Limit Produce Program* is a cross-border collaboration between AzFBN's produce rescue team, food banks in the United States and Mexico, and produce donors.

## A Note from April Bradham, President and CEO

Welcome back to the second session of the 56th Arizona State Legislature! We hope you are excited for another year of policymaking and are inspired to continue helping us end hunger.

AzFBN supports our member food banks in the distribution of emergency food; works with policy-makers—like you—to ensure all Arizonans have equitable access to nutritious food; and engages key partners like schools, health care providers, local agriculture producers, and other nonprofits in providing food to our communities and preventing more people from being hungry. As we all continue to cope with rising food costs and high inflation, it is clear that there is much work to do to adequately address food insecurity and ensure we can meet the growing demand for nutrition assistance. As a legislator, you have a significant role in passing and implementing strong nutrition policy. This playbook can be your guide.

In the past, legislation and resource allocation have been critical to addressing food insecurity. In addition to ongoing support for storage and distribution within our network, the state has invested funds to help food banks meet high demand during the pandemic and to increase access to healthy school meals. Additionally, AzFBN's farm-to-food-bank program, *Friends of the Farm*, launched in 2020 with state resources; currently, *Friends of the Farm* has contracts with 29 small farmers and ranchers in seven counties to bring a wide variety of Arizona-grown produce, dairy, and protein to food-insecure Arizonans in 11 counties. The program also supports local economies and promotes local food purchasing. State support also helps AzFBN's *No Borders No Limits Produce Program*, which prevents waste while getting as much fresh, healthy produce as possible from donors in the Nogales area to people in need across Arizona.

We know many legislators have questions about resources to address hunger. In addition to the up-to-date statistics about hunger in our state and what our network does to address it, this booklet includes details about key federal nutrition programs and how they operate in Arizona. You will also read insights from Arizonans struggling with food insecurity to better understand how the decisions you make affect our neighbors.

We appreciate your continued commitment to improving nutrition policy in Arizona and look forward to working with you during the 2024 session. Please consider AzFBN a resource, and thank you for all that you do.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'April Bradham'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

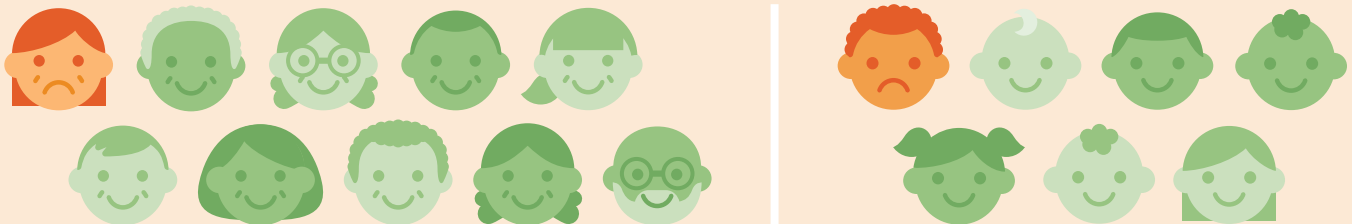
April Bradham  
President and CEO

### What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is the inability to reliably access sufficient nutritious food to support an active, healthy lifestyle, due to a lack of physical, social, or financial resources.<sup>2</sup> Solving food insecurity requires both immediate relief, such as emergency food assistance from food banks, and long-term solutions, such as policy that supports every person's ability to meet their basic needs.

### Who is food insecure in Arizona?

Feeding America's most recent *Map the Meal Gap*<sup>3</sup> estimates that approximately **751,690 Arizonans (10.3%) are food insecure** and **226,080 children (14%) are food insecure**.



**1 in 10 Arizonans & 1 in 7 children are food insecure.**

### Who goes to food banks?

AzFBN and its member food banks served **nearly 570,000 people per month in 2023**, which is 14 percent more than in 2022 and 20 percent more than before the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Food banks see a wide range of neighbors in need, including seniors, people living with disabilities, families with children, employed and unemployed individuals, college students, seasonal workers, veterans and active military members, and more.

### Who lives below the poverty line in Arizona?<sup>5</sup>

Food insecurity and poverty are inextricably linked. Last year, **12.5 percent of Arizonans were living in poverty**, according to the most recent census data. This is the lowest rate in the past 10 years.<sup>6</sup> This is definitely encouraging, but with one out of eight Arizonans still struggling to meet their basic needs, there's more work to be done.

## What is SNAP?

Food banks play a critical role in meeting the immediate nutritional needs of children, families, and older adults. But they can't fight hunger alone. Rather, they collaborate with crucial federal nutrition initiatives, including the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and those outlined on the following pages.

**SNAP is the largest and most impactful anti-hunger program in America.** Eligible families use an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card to purchase food at more than 4,200 grocers, convenience stores, and other retailers across Arizona, as well as from 20 online outlets.

\$1.94	SNAP benefit per person per meal (2023 monthly average) <sup>7</sup>
\$277,190,692	infused into Arizona's economy each month (2023 monthly average) <sup>8</sup>
932,425	Arizonans participating in SNAP each month (2023 monthly average) <sup>9</sup>
43%	Arizonans who participate in SNAP are children <sup>9</sup>
24%	Arizonans who participate in SNAP are older adults or people living with disabilities <sup>10</sup>
46%	SNAP participants in Arizona are in working families <sup>11</sup>
75	farmers markets and grocers accept Double-Up Food Bucks, the nutrition incentive program that helps SNAP participants access more fresh fruits and vegetables <sup>12</sup>

## School Meals



The *National School Lunch Program* (NSLP) provides healthy free or reduced price lunches to children from low-income households. Last year, approximately **1,052,450 students in Arizona participated in NSLP** and **55 percent were eligible for free or reduced price meals.**<sup>13</sup>

In December 2022, the Arizona Department of Education announced that the fees for reduced price meals—30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch—were waived through June 2024. This change has made an estimated 12 million school meals accessible to kids in low-income homes, which has been shown to improve attendance, academic achievement, test scores, food security, and health. It has also greatly reduced unpaid school meal debt in districts across the state.

### Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines\*<sup>14</sup>

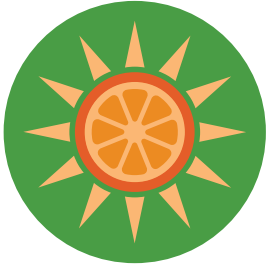
#### *Annual Household Income at or Below*

Household Size	Federal Poverty Line (FPL)	Free Meals (130%)	Reduced Price Meals (185%)
1	\$14,580	\$18,954	\$26,973
2	\$19,720	\$25,636	\$36,482
3	\$24,860	\$32,318	\$45,991
4	\$30,000	\$39,000	\$55,500
5	\$35,140	\$45,682	\$65,009
6	\$40,260	\$52,364	\$74,518

\*Guidelines are effective from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024



## Summer Meals



To address the rise in child hunger during the summer, the *Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)* provides meals at participating schools, food banks, parks, and other sites. This summer, **1,138 sites provided 3.2 million meals** to children and teens across the state, which is nearly 30 percent fewer meals than in the previous summer, when flexibilities for grab-and-go options and mobile distributions were more accessible.

## Summer P-EBT



A pilot program to provide children with access to food during pandemic-related school closures through a preloaded *Pandemic EBT* card launched in 2020. The program quickly reduced food hardship for children in eligible households by 30 percent.<sup>15</sup> Due to its impact, Congress reauthorized *Summer P-EBT* through 2023, and it reached hundreds of thousands of children across Arizona. The \$120 benefit helped families keep food on the table during the summer months.

## Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)



WIC provides nutrition education and breastfeeding support, supplemental nutritious foods, and referrals to health and social services. The program serves pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children under five. In 2023, the Arizona WIC program, administered by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), served an average of 140,000 participants each month.<sup>16</sup>

To provide maximum flexibility, WIC appointments can be provided virtually, by phone, or in person, and many WIC clinics offer extended evening and weekend hours. In 2023, Arizona WIC launched [WIC In A Click \(WIAC\)](#), an on-demand appointment option for existing WIC participants, allowing them to complete their appointments anytime, anywhere. WIAC is available in English and Spanish.

## Our Stories: Advocates with Lived Expertise



### Kathy

As the former food service director of Paradise Valley Unified School District, Kathy has devoted her career to feeding children healthy meals. When she learned that one of the kitchen managers in her district kept a can opener in her desk drawer to open cans of refried beans for three siblings each day at lunch, she called the principal and said, “Hey, what’s the story with this?” She learned that a working single dad gave his kids cans of refried beans for lunch because he couldn’t afford the reduced price school meals they qualified for, since he earned just over the income threshold for them to receive meals at no cost. “While it broke my heart, I admired that he provided them with something filling and high in protein. But I decided I was going to eliminate or reduce the meal copays for every child I can,” Kathy says.



### Eugene

When Eugene was released from prison, he believed he was starting a new chapter in his life. After serving more than 14 years behind bars for a drug felony conviction, Eugene moved into a halfway house and applied for SNAP. “If I could get some help with food expenses,” he says, “it would be one less thing to worry about.” He set out to tackle the many challenges of reentry: finding housing and a job, addressing health issues, and rebuilding relationships. “You have to drug test and submit all this extra paperwork, so they’re still treating you like a criminal, and it makes you feel humiliated,” he adds. “I thought, ‘Wait a minute, I finished my sentence. Why am I still being punished?’ You shouldn’t miss a meal because you were incarcerated or have a history of drug activity. That doesn’t seem right.”



### Linda

Linda is a mom, a grandma, a wife, and a proud volunteer at Tempe Community Action Food Pantry. “It brings me joy and personal fulfillment,” she says. Not long ago, Linda was a client at the same food pantry. She moved to Arizona to be closer to her grandson, but her first few months here were tough. The heat was a bit of a shock, so electric bills were high, and her retirement savings were quickly depleted by medical bills, basic needs, and, unfortunately, a scam that wiped out tens of thousands of dollars. Getting help at the food pantry was critical until she could get back on her feet. Now that she’s found stability, Linda loves to give back to the community where she found a home. “A community is priceless,” she says. “Knowing that my work helps others is good for the soul.”



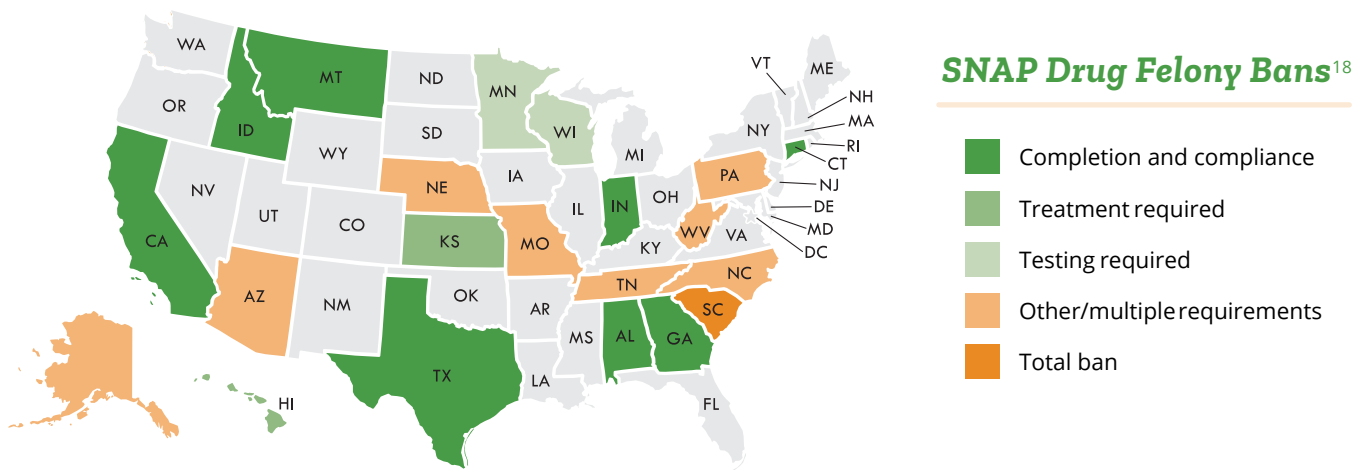
## Support HB2054: Eliminate Duplicative Requirements for SNAP Applicants



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps Arizonans put food on the table during times of need. People reentering society after serving time in prison struggle to make ends meet and rebuild their lives, and access to SNAP reduces recidivism. Drug offenders who are eligible for SNAP at release are 13 percent less likely to reoffend the following year.<sup>17</sup>

But SNAP applicants with a criminal record related to drug use or possession face additional requirements. These extra steps are duplicative with state law and the probation rules mandated by the Arizona courts, which already require people with drug use or possession convictions to participate in a substance abuse treatment program. They also agree to random drug testing, making current statute related to SNAP ([ARS §46-219](#)) duplicative of both of these requirements. This means state resources at the Department of Economic Security (DES) are dedicated to additional processing of verification documents to demonstrate compliance. Simply confirming that these formerly incarcerated individuals are compliant with the terms of their probation would ensure the requirements are met, save DES staff time and money, and speed up the application process.

**Support [HB2054 \(SNAP eligibility; probation compliance\)](#) sponsored by Rep. Tim Dunn (LD-25), to reduce burdensome bureaucracy and improve access to temporary food assistance for Arizonans during reentry.**



### **Continue Funding to Cover Reduced Price School Meal Copays for Arizona Families**



In April 2023, the *ASU Food Policy and Environment Research Group* published a [comprehensive assessment of healthy school meals in Arizona, including benefits, cost scenarios to improve access, and community perspectives](#). Findings demonstrated that school meals improve student food security, health, attendance, academic achievement, and test scores.

This assessment led the *Arizona Department of Education* to invest in covering reduced price school meal copays for eligible families—30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch—through June 2024 to make meals more accessible. These resources made an estimated 12 million meals accessible to low-income families and significantly reduced unpaid school meal debt across the state.

School meals are often the only hot meals—and the healthiest meals—food-insecure children eat all day,<sup>19</sup> and the current investment has already had a significant positive impact: A high school student in the East Valley who said he “used to go without, unless [he] could find money in the couch cushions” was able to get lunch every day last year before he graduated. A second grader in north Phoenix whose mother was incarcerated had received an “alternate meal” (sack lunch) for 38 days in a row because she had no lunch money, according to a food service director, until this policy was implemented. Now she eats hot meals in school every day.

Additionally, by streamlining the application process and eliminating unpaid meal debt, food service staff can spend more time feeding kids. This allows for more scratch cooking, culturally relevant menus, and local procurement of produce and protein from Arizona growers.

**We urge you to support the extension of funding for reduced price school meal copays on behalf of Arizona’s children and families.**

1. Monthly data collected from AzFBN member food banks, Jan.–Oct. 2023.
2. USDA-ERS (United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service). *Measurement: What Is Food Security?* [www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement](http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement).
3. Feeding America. *Map the Meal Gap Study*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/overall/arizona>.
4. Monthly data collected from AzFBN member food banks, Jan.–Oct. 2023.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior HHS Poverty Guidelines and Federal Register References. In 2023, the federal poverty line was \$14,580/year for an individual and \$24,860/year for a family of three.
6. U.S. Census Bureau. *Poverty & Income Data: Arizona*. [www.census.gov/quickfacts/AZ](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/AZ).
7. DES, Family Assistance Administration. *Statistical Bulletins January 2023–November 2023*. Available for download at <https://des.az.gov/documents-center>.
8. According to Moody's Analytics, every \$1 in SNAP benefits spent generates \$1.70 in economic activity. The figure cited is an average of the monthly “total issuance” of SNAP statewide in 2023 multiplied by 1.7.
9. DES, FAA. *Statistical Bulletins January 2023–November 2023*.
10. DES, Family Assistance Administration. Public Records Request: “SNAP Recipients: Seniors & People Living with Disabilities, Jan.–Nov. 2023.”
11. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Feb. 13, 2023. *A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP*: [www.cbpp.org/research/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Arizona](http://www.cbpp.org/research/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Arizona).
12. Double Up Arizona. *How It Works*. [www.doubleupaz.org/how-it-works](http://www.doubleupaz.org/how-it-works).
13. Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Health and Nutrition Services. *Free and Reduced Price Percentage Report: SY 22-23*. [www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2023/02/SY22-23%20Free%20and%20Reduced-Price%20Percentage%20Report.pdf](http://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2023/02/SY22-23%20Free%20and%20Reduced-Price%20Percentage%20Report.pdf).
14. Brookings Institution. July 30, 2020. *The Effect of Pandemic EBT on Measures of Food Hardship*.
15. ADE. May 2023. *Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines, 2023-24*.
16. U.S. Department of Agriculture. WIC Data Tables. AZ average Jan.–Sept. 2023. [www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program).
17. Yang, Crystal. “Does Public Assistance Reduce Recidivism?” *American Economic Review*. May 2017. 107(5): 551–555.
18. Collateral Consequences Resource Center. Dec. 6, 2023. *Accessing SNAP and TANF Benefits after a Drug Conviction: A Survey of State Laws*.
19. Liu, J., Micha, R., Li, Y., and D. Mozaffarian. “Trends in Food Sources and Diet Quality among US Children and Adults, 2003–2018.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*. April 2021.

### Contact the Arizona Food Bank Network

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# Save the Date!

## Anti-Hunger Advocacy Day at the Capitol

Wednesday, February 21, 2024  
11:30am–1:00pm

Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza  
1700 W. Washington St.  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

**Learn more & register:**

[https://bit.ly/AzAHA\\_DATC24](https://bit.ly/AzAHA_DATC24)



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