

**The Jack Webster Grigsby Foundation
Houston Food Bank
General Operating Request
September 2023**

Organization Description and Purpose

Houston Food Bank (HFB) is the largest food bank in the nation by distribution. Established in 1982, our mission is food for better lives. As a proud member of Feeding America, HFB collaborates with over 1,600 food pantries, shelters, social service providers, and schools to distribute nutritious meals to individuals and families in need. In the past fiscal year, HFB enabled access to more than 120 million meals across 18 southeast Texas counties. HFB offers programs to empower participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to fill their pantries now and reduce their need for food banks in the future. Ultimately, HFB's fundamental objective is to realize a world without food banks by acknowledging and addressing hunger as a symptom of poverty.

Statement of Need

In the last year, the cost of food has increased by 8.5%¹. Texas has one of the highest rates of food insecurity in the nation, with one million people experiencing food insecurity, which means men, women and children lack consistent access to enough nutritious food for a healthy, active life. Among this population, one in three individuals are children. Data collected from HFB clients reveals that 78% of individuals receiving assistance regularly compromise nutritional value for affordability. Certain populations, such as seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities, are more vulnerable to food insecurity due to factors like limited mobility, low income, and related health issues. HFB tailors its programs to meet each population's unique needs and provide them with the resources they need to access healthy food.

Despite the significant progress that has been made in reducing food insecurity, many individuals and families still face significant challenges. Each county within HFB's service territory has experienced natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, within the past five years, resulting in damage to local crops and infrastructure and increased food costs across the region. On March 1, 2023, Texas also announced the conclusion of the emergency allotment of SNAP funds to Texans as a result of COVID-19 affecting 1.6 million households across the state². The conclusion of pandemic assistance and the impact of inflation have made it more difficult for individuals to afford food. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of people relying on HFB for assistance.

By providing general operating support in the amount of \$15,000, The Jack Webster Grigsby Foundation can help HFB expand our capacity to provide fresh and healthy food to our neighbors experiencing hunger. With your support, we can ensure that individuals and families in our service area have access to nutritious food, which is critical for maintaining good health and well-being. Your contribution will enable HFB to sustain and enhance vital services, addressing the growing demands of our community and providing transformative resources to break the cycle of poverty.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Retrieved May 8, 2023

² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 2023

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Core Function and Programs

Food Distribution - HFB's primary mission is to distribute large quantities of food and other essential products, such as personal hygiene and cleaning items. With the assistance of partner agencies, approximately 800,000 low-income individuals are directed served each year. In recent years, HFB has placed a greater emphasis on providing nutritious food, including fresh produce and protein, to promote healthy eating habits among those in need. Last year, we distributed an impressive 63 million pounds of fresh produce, helping to address the critical issue of food insecurity in our community.

Backpack Buddy - Backpacks filled with kid-friendly food are provided to children who would otherwise go hungry over the weekends. Last year, more than 237,109 backpacks were filled for students in need.

Kids Cafe - Healthy meals and snacks are served on weekdays to low-income children at after school programs. Last year, more than 814,017 meals were served to hungry children at local afterschool programs, community centers, and churches.

Nutrition Education - Nutrition Educators use USDA materials and guidelines to address food insecurity and hunger, helping participants achieve nutritional goals. Last year, Nutrition Educators reached more than 17,400 individuals through interactive healthy eating activities.

Community Assistance Program (CAP) – Advocates raise awareness and offer application assistance for available social and health services. Last year, HFB assisted in completing more than 15,000 SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) applications in southeast Texas.

Food for Change – HFB, in partnership with social service programs, implements an innovative strategy that goes beyond emergency food assistance to address the root causes of hunger. The strategy utilizes data to study the effects of food availability and economic opportunities on health outcomes.

Operational Capacity Needs

To maintain our high level of service in reaching our food insecure neighbors, we have identified key areas that will better serve our neighbors. Our program staff and leadership are considering a range of initiatives, including the following examples:

- **Healthy Food Collaborations** - Partnering with local farmers and food producers to provide more fresh food and healthy produce to food-insecure families. HFB aims to distribute a minimum of 40% fresh produce in our overall food distribution. The nutritional value of locally sourced food such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, onions, and citrus, cannot be overstated. Last year, 63 million pounds of produce were distributed to families in need.
- **Culturally Responsive Food Distribution** – In recognizing the diverse cultural needs of our community, HFB has initiated a Culturally Responsive Food Distribution program. This program ensures that food distribution is sensitive to the cultural preferences and dietary restrictions of the communities we serve. By collaborating with local leaders and community members, HFB tailors its food offerings to align with the tastes, traditions, and

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nutritional habits of various ethnic and cultural groups. This not only respects and honors the identities of those we serve but also ensures higher acceptance and utilization of the food resources provided.

- **Child Hunger** - Child hunger remains a pressing issue in our service area, with one in three individuals facing food insecurity being children. Recognizing the long-term implications of food insecurity on children's cognitive and physical development, HFB has intensified its efforts to directly address child hunger. Our programs are designed to provide children with consistent access to nutritious meals, especially during critical periods such as weekends and school holidays when they might not have access to school meals. By focusing on child hunger, HFB aims to give every child an equal opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive, ensuring a brighter future for our community.

Evaluation

Houston Food Bank prioritizes evaluation and measurement seriously, using key internal metrics to continually assess its programs and operations. Monthly evaluations help track progress and make data-driven decisions to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Specific metrics have been established for each program area, enabling the organization to track performance against monthly targets. These metrics are not only used to improve operational efficiency, but also to ensure that HFB is meeting its distribution goals and providing the highest level of service to those in need. HFB compiles data into comprehensive reports that are submitted to The Jack Webster Grigsby Foundation, as required, and shares this information with other stakeholders to demonstrate its commitment to transparency and accountability.

Sustainability

Houston Food Bank recognizes the importance of ongoing fundraising efforts to sustain its operations over time. The organization is committed to a diversified approach, utilizing direct mail campaigns, grant requests, special events, social media outreach, marketing, and major gift solicitation to raise funds. HFB's management team values transparency and accountability, measuring and evaluating key internal metrics monthly to ensure efficiency and performance. In the event of any funding shortfalls, HFB can access its endowment fund to provide additional support. By supporting Houston Food Bank, donors can be confident that their contributions will be used efficiently and effectively to provide crucial assistance to those in need in the community.