

**Colorado Springs Food Rescue
State of Colorado COVID-19 Grant 2020**

Location of Services

El Paso

Target Population

- Children from families living on low income (e.g., at or below the poverty line) who are impacted by school or childcare closures
- Communities of color
- Minimum or low-wage employees displaced by business closures
- Older adults living on low income (e.g., at or below the poverty line)
- People with limited English proficiency
- People with disabilities
- People without health insurance
- Victims of domestic violence or child abuse
- People living on low income (e.g., at or below the poverty line)
- People experiencing homelessness

Are the activities being coordinated with local Office of Emergency Management?

No

Grant Narrative

Planned Activities

As the state of Colorado surpasses 228,000 cases and 3,000 deaths due to the virus, many Coloradans are faced with economic hardship. A survey published in July from Hunger Free Colorado, found that 1 in 3 Coloradans are struggling to afford food, and 40% of households are seeing a decrease in income. The first wave caused economic hardship to much of the working population, as seen by the 8.8 million unemployment claims filed last spring. With the state entering a second stage of lockdowns, there will be an increased need for food emergency food distribution in 2021. There are elderly and immunocompromised populations that cannot risk going to local grocery stores for fear of exposure; this fear both adds barriers to these populations and requires an increase of advanced distribution models. Across this city, there are vulnerable populations who have already or will soon face reduced income, food shortages, and possible eviction. Colorado Springs Food Rescue has been able to help many vulnerable people in the Colorado Springs area and continues to implement distribution methods. CSFR has been able to serve 25,000 people through active programs in 2019 and strives to continue the implementation of safe and healthy food redistribution. Unfortunately, 9 of CSFR's partners have closed indefinitely and cannot receive healthy groceries to redistribute. As a result of

these closures, the need for program expansion is necessary to compensate for the lack of redistributors and to combat the unusual challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Colorado Springs Food Rescue is committed to aiding these vulnerable populations by helping them acquire food in a safe manner, at no cost to the individual. Our main office, located at the Helen Hunt Nonprofit Campus in the Hillside Neighborhood, has been converted to a food management center, open 4 to 5 days/week. Food items from all 9 of the closed partners have now been rerouted to this location and CSFR is taking the responsibility of distributing them in a safe and efficient manner. CSFR has redistributed over 5,777 meals since the start of the pandemic in mid-March. These meals are distributed primarily in a pick-up style format, where groceries are sorted, packaged into meal boxes, and then handed out. In addition to on-site distribution, CSFR is seeking additional funding for home deliveries to reach at-risk clientele who may not feel safe leaving their homes. In order to maintain a healthy and active volunteer base, CSFR launched its Mutual Aid Hunger Response Team that received over 140 willing volunteers within the first 72 hours of the call to action.

Desired Outputs

Colorado Springs Food Rescue's guiding mission is to ensure stable access to healthy food to all Colorado Springs residents who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As citizens continue to face economic hardship and food shortages become an increasing reality, CSFR has made changes to our core programs to reflect the needs of the community. Our core goal throughout this new programming is to ensure that anyone who needs a box of food is given one.

CSFR is helping vulnerable populations obtain food safely. Research has proven that COVID-19 disproportionately affects minorities and persons of color. The Hillside neighborhood contains census blocks with the county's highest percent of Black Non-Hispanic children/families (22-35%) & highest percent impoverished households (39-56%). CSFR is committed to continuing its safe and effective distribution of food to help ensure a clean and reliable food donation experience.

To limit contact, the programs have been designed to comply with state health regulations. Depending on how much food is donated in a day, it is distributed in either drive-through or walk-in format. Over the past few months, CSFR has also developed a vetting system for volunteers to find out who can allocate food, package food and deliver food to senior citizens and other vulnerable populations.

CSFR is fortunate to report that the increased number of distributed food boxes has been met. Currently, CSFR is supplying about 60 meal boxes per day, on a 4 to 5 day/week basis. Since our last round of funding, we have been able to increase our number of daily meal boxes by 50% and in this next round we are hoping to increase that number even further. Additionally, CSFR will increase its food distribution by increasing our capacity to deliver food boxes to homes and local communities.

How many people do you hope to reach or serve? 11,500

How do you ensure that you are reaching the vulnerable members of your community?

CSFR's offices are located in the Hillside Neighborhood where ⅓ of residents do not have access to a car. CSFR is accustomed to accommodating the needs of clients who do not have reliable transportation. This is why our Hillside location is so important to the distribution model. About half of the citizens in the Hillside area do not have access to reliable transportation. By hosting these distributions in the heart of this neighborhood, the barrier of transportation is being eliminated which increases an individual's ability to access these distributions. In addition, there are other actions that CSFR is taking to reach vulnerable members of the community:

Advertising – CSFR has a relationship with 211 Colorado, in which they refer callers in need of food to our programs and locations and we provide them with our updated ours. CSFR communicates with a well-developed network of local non-profits and organizers to send us vulnerable constituents in need of food. CSFR utilizes exterior communications like social media and newsletters to spread facts about food shortage, nutrition, and our general operating procedures.

Reducing the Transportation Barrier

Vulnerable members of the community can experience difficulty obtaining essentials like food. CSFR has developed the "Savvy Seniors" program, which allows for the delivery of food to elderly persons who may not be able to leave their home for fear of contracting the virus.

No-Cost Groceries

By providing healthy and fresh food at no cost to the consumer, we allow for anyone to access our services. The no-cost model allows for vulnerable clientele to conserve their limited income for other necessities such as clothing, housing, education, transportation, etc.

How are you coordinating your activities with other organizations and partners in the community?

CSFR has an extensive network of 60+ partners that include nonprofits, small businesses, churches, foundations, and individual contributors. As a result of business closures, CSFR has assumed the role of redistributing food from partners to the community.

- **Food donation network:** CSFR takes in food donations from local organizations and grocery stores including Trader Joe's, Natural Grocers, Whole Foods, and Safeway.
- **Savvy Seniors:** CSFR utilizes a consistent volunteer base to deliver meals to seniors' homes at no cost to them.
- **Food redistribution:** Various local nonprofits and organizations partner with CSFR to store, deliver, and distribute food. These partners include: Servicios de La Raza, the Mesa House, Atlas Preparatory School, and Sleepy Valley Mobile Home Park.

The majority of food distribution is carried out in the heart of the Hillside community, one of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in the city. Over 1/3 of the residents do not have access to reliable transportation, and the median household income is around \$31,069. The people in this neighborhood do not have access to healthy grocery stores, with the closest outlet being a 7/11. By housing our food distribution in the Hillside neighborhood, CSFR is able to mitigate the barriers of travel and disburse healthy food directly.

What other sources of funding are available to support your work, and how are you leveraging them?

Currently, Colorado Springs Food Rescue obtains funding through grants and individual contributions. CSFR is not taking corporate donations at this time due to the strain that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on many of our small business partners. Since the start of the pandemic, we have restructured our website to highlight our commitment to continue to help those affected by COVID-19. The homepage now features a volunteer section as well as an urgent call for donations. Individual donations have seen an uptick since the start of the pandemic and our volunteer base has become larger and more reliable.

CSFR has raised a grand total of 59,064.93 via individual contributions since March 13th (the date when many businesses and individuals began to experience the impact of COVID-19). Several emergency grant funds have been awarded since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and are listed below:

REDACTED FOR PRIVACY REASONS

CSFR is currently in the middle of funding a capital campaign for the Hillside Hub, but many of our donors have shifted their focus towards emergency funds. These funds are utilized for emergency food distribution expenses, while others are being allocated in the Hillside Hub capital campaign.

The second wave of positive cases is threatening vulnerable members of the Colorado Springs community and is continuing the need for additional funding. With El Paso county officially entering “level red”, thousands of people will now find themselves with reduced hours at work or displaced from their job entirely. Colorado Springs Food Rescue will continue to utilize funding for emergency food distribution and to bolster the Hillside Hub capital campaign to ensure that more people can rely on our organization for healthy food.