

# CFNP Promotes Innovative Anti-hunger Aid

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A little known but important and flexible resource for helping Community Action and its partners address the food and nutrition needs of low-income Americans is the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP).

The purpose of the CFNP is three-fold: (1) to coordinate private and public food assistance resources to better serve low-income populations; (2) to assist low-income communities to identify potential sponsors of child nutrition programs and to initiate programs in underserved or unserved areas; and (3) to develop innovative approaches at the state and local level to meet the nutrition needs of low-income individuals.

CFNP is currently funded at approximately \$7.2 million on a nationwide basis. Approximately 60 percent of the funds are awarded annually to state CSBG agencies to conduct statewide projects on food and nutrition. Roughly 40 percent is retained for a national discretionary competition that allows state and local, public and private non-profit entities to address special community needs. A small amount of funds is also reserved for a nationwide initiative to provide information and technical assistance on food and nutrition concerns for the Community Action network and other groups.

The funding structure of the CFNP – with support for statewide activities and community-based approaches – has encouraged a broad portfolio of projects to flourish in response to each of the program’s objectives. For example:

The Arizona Community Action Association, in coordination with the state Department of Economic Security, designed a web-based food stamp eligibility screening program that has allowed thousands of potential recipients to access assistance more easily.

Hundreds of low-income children in rural northeastern Vermont are getting summer meals thanks to an outreach project sponsored by the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger that helped establish 12 new summer food sites and increased participation at 13 other existing sites.

Weekend food shortages for children isolated in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in northern California are being alleviated by the Food for Kids project at the food bank of the Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency, which provides weekly bags of nutritious, kid-friendly, easy-to-prepare foods distributed in the classroom and carried home on the school bus.

The CFNP helps Community Action and anti-hunger groups contend with increasing food insecurity among the poor by augmenting resources to meet both institutional and family needs. Community Action Nebraska, for example, spearheads an annual statewide food “drive,” taking a

van around the state and stopping in towns to collect donations and encourage ongoing support for local emergency food operations. The effort raises about \$100,000 each year.

The Texas Association of Community Action Agencies (TACAA) uses CFNP to focus on increasing emergency food supplies rather than raising funds. As a supplement to the “SOS” (Share Our Surplus) campaign that collects and distributes nearly two million pounds of donated food annually, TACAA’s “Hunters for the Hungry” program allows local hunters to donate wild game to participating meat processors, who process the animals and birds for a reduced fee and then donate it to local food banks and pantries. As a result, over 100,000 pounds of meat are provided to needy families.

In recent years, CFNP has emphasized health and nutrition education initiatives that address broader societal trends, such as increased childhood obesity and the rapid growth of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Many CFNP projects engage in targeted communications and social marketing to improve dietary behavior through a variety of methods, including classes, newsletters, cookbooks, videos, one-on-one counseling and dietary assessments, and even a radio call-in show. In conclusion, all aspects of the CFNP – state formula funds, discretionary grants, and nationwide support programs – foster the development and delivery of critically needed food and nutrition services for low-income people throughout the United States. Projects funded by the CFNP provide an important source of capacity-building, resources, and information that can make a significant difference in food and nutrition aid for the poor.

For additional, detailed information on the CFNP, visit the web page of the Community Nutrition Institute at <http://www.communitynutrition.org>.