



Hunger is Unacceptable

Memo

To: Whatcom County Council
From: Mike Cohen, Executive Director
Re: Increased Costs Related to COVID-19

First, thank you so much for the critical direct and indirect support Bellingham Food Bank and other hunger relief providers have received from What County during the pandemic. The financial support and help we have received via Unified Command have been essential.

The purpose of this memo relates to an email I recently received from Ann Deacon with Whatcom County Health Department. She stated that there may be up to \$95,000 available to support our food bank for new costs directly attributable to COVID-19. The easiest costs to identify and forecast are related to supplies and staffing directly related to new operating activities due to COVID-19 for the time period January 1-June 30,2021.

Bellingham Food Bank will spend at least \$64,100 on cardboard boxes from The Boxmaker. We are working with staff from The Boxmaker facility in Ferndale. When COVID-19 began Bellingham Food Bank quickly shifted to a pre-boxed distribution model so we could follow public health guidelines. Standardized, strong, boxes allow us to efficiently fill boxes with critical food, wrap those boxes onto pallets, and eventually drive those pallets to distribution sites to load into families' cars. We selected a vendor who excelled with on-time delivery, could scale to our need, and make adjustments as needed. Bellingham Food Bank distributes about 4,000 boxes per week and the forecasted cost of these boxes for the first six months of 2021 is \$64,100.

Bellingham Food Bank uses a team of 10-12 volunteers, Monday-Friday, to fill boxes of food for distribution. We needed to add a new staff member who's responsibilities include, managing all volunteers, keeping the packing floors organized and filled with product, coordinating pallet wrapping, staging full pallets in the warehouse, and daily site prep and clean-up. She is also responsible for daily COVID-19 protocol meetings with all volunteers and ensuring safe materials handling each day. A portion of the staffing costs associated with her position is \$30,900 for the first half of 2021.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. Also, please know there are other significant increased costs associated with or COVID-19 practices. We selected these two cost centers because they were quick and easy to identify and hit the financial target we were provided.

If there are any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.