

April, 13th 2023

The Whatcom County Food Bank Network (WCFBN) wrote to Councilmembers on March 9th, seeking financial support due to 50-100% client growth and a shocking 89,751 client visits in the month of January 2023. The request was \$1,000,000 for the remainder of 2023 and an additional \$1,000,000 for 2024 to purchase food. We are thrilled that Councilmembers initially expressed agreement and support in the request, while being committed to fulfilling their current obligations. We also would like to stress the urgency we are facing as we struggle to consistently stock our shelves. Sadly, and not surprisingly, we did see an *additional significant increase* in visits on March 2023 as the pandemic SNAP benefits ended for all Washington food stamp recipients.

Councilmembers held interest in learning more about the scope of funding for the WCFBN and the roles of other government agencies are playing. The WCFBN aggressively seeks funding from all levels of government. County funding is specifically necessary for rural food banks in our network that struggle to access other funding sources. We have been able to access additional and temporary ARPA funding from local government, but there seems a reluctance to commit non-federal dollars. ARPA funding is desperately needed, is greatly appreciated and frankly, isn't sufficient to meet the current need. We are thrilled all Councilmembers stated their desire to meet our funding request at its March 21 meeting. And, we cannot wait to see that expressed support become a reality.

As a community-driven food bank network, our goal is simple: to give food insecure families access to healthy and culturally relevant food across Whatcom County. Food access is a basic human need and our funding mostly comes from your constituents. As we discussed, the dramatic increase in need comes at a time when some of most critical food partners are struggling to keep their warehouse stocked with food. *Visits to Whatcom County food banks may exceed 1,000,000 in 2023.* That is why we are seeking an additional \$1,000,000 in support in 2023 and 2024 from Whatcom County. How and when can we make this happen?

Thank you for your consideration,

The Whatcom County Food Bank Network

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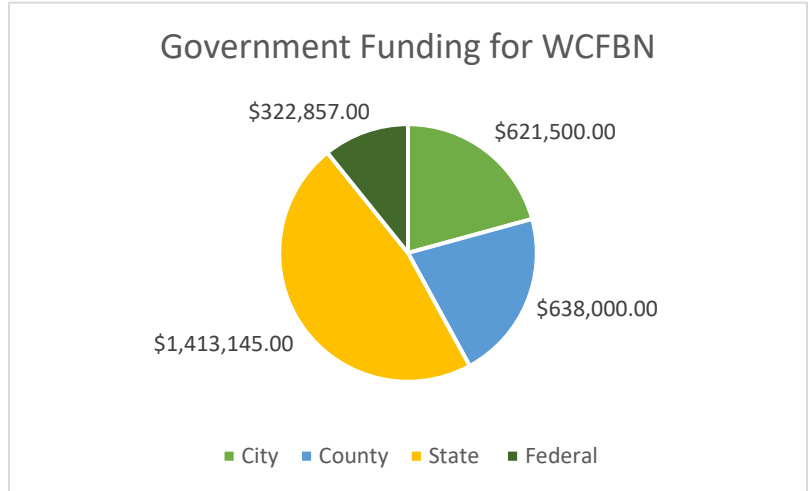
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## Addressing Food Insecurity Reduces Competing Costs

Funding the WCFBN can provide a direct solution to food insecurity and emergency food assistance in Whatcom County while potentially leading to reduced healthcare costs, improved public health outcomes, and savings on social services and criminal justice programs.

### Overview of Government Funding Accessed by WCFBN

The WCFBN's funding request to Whatcom County represents a fraction of the anticipated food bank budgets for 2023 and 2024. The funding we have received or are anticipating is a mix of funding we have historically received and new funds that have ties to ARPA funds—coming to us from state, county, and city resources. While we don't intend to become overly reliant on county funding, we do hope for a sustainable partnership to serve the needs of the community. We understand that the council has many obligations, and we look forward to working together to address food insecurity in Whatcom County. Here you can see the amounts accessed from all levels of government:



### State Funding

The WCFBN accesses two sources of State funding: EFAP Grants and WSDA Grants. It's important to note that many food bank staff are unpaid volunteers who work with limited resources. Access to funding is a result of sustained efforts from dedicated community members who are not lobbyists or grant writers.

### City Funding

Half of Whatcom County Food Banks struggle to access city funding. Foothills Foodbank, for instance, is in a rural food desert and one of the only food access points for a vast area not affiliated with any single municipality. This food bank relies solely on County funding and donations from a small, struggling population. It's crucial to understand the urban-rural divide to grasp the roles of city and county funding for the WCFBN. Without the County's active role in funding, half of the food bank network would be left behind.

### Federal ARPA Dollars

Of funding accessed by the WCFBN, the majority currently comes from federal ARPA dollars. Only one Third of government funding comes from non ARPA dollars

