

Making the Pieces Fit for Arizona:

The Case for our Social Services Safety Net

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publication from the

ASSOCIATION
OF ARIZONA
FOOD BANKS

FIRST, THE CURRENT REALITY ABOUT HUNGER AND POVERTY IN ARIZONA:

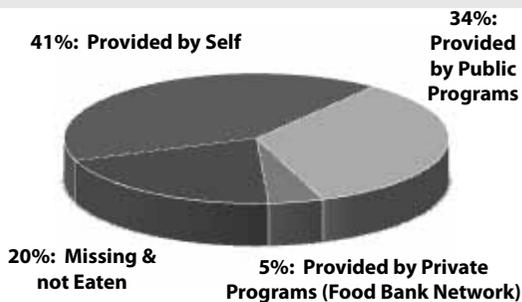
- 1 in 5 live in poverty, including 1 in 4 children (defined as living on \$22,050 or less annually for a family of four).
- Over 125,000 unduplicated Arizonans seek emergency food each week; almost half (46%) are children.
- Half of all Arizona school age children qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

BUDGET WOES and calls for government reforms have resulted in proposals to severely slash or alter our social services safety net. Many expect the private sector will assume more responsibility for providing for those in need. While some of these responses may be reasoned and appropriate, it is important we take well-researched and reasoned actions to address the challenges we face in meeting the needs of over two million Arizonans in working poor households. Creating additional, potentially devastating challenges does not solve our problems.

To that end, it is crucial advocates, business partners and the general public have a greater understanding of how food banks and the social services safety net work, as well as how they relate to other public and private programs, organizations and allies. It is equally important we understand who uses our social services safety net, why they use it, and how our choices today impact their future ability to better themselves and their families.

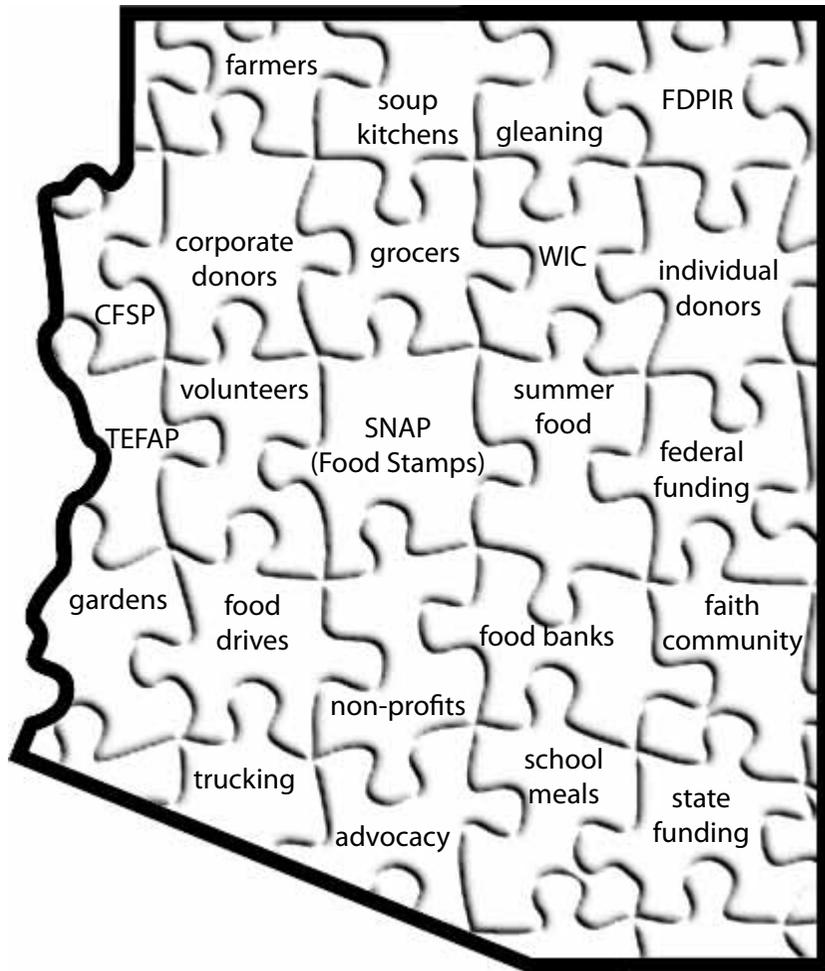
Having this understanding allows us to better see all the options available, so we can tackle the very real issues that lay before us while not demonizing or ignoring practical, efficient solutions that already exist.

Where do our meals come from?



In Arizona, it is estimated that over 2.2 billion meals are needed each year to feed every man, woman and child in working poor households three meals per day. These meals come from a variety of different sources, as the chart to the left illustrates. Missing Meals, accounting for approximately 20% of all meals, are meals that go unprovided by food banks or any other source. In these instances, it is assumed the meals are skipped, a central component of Food Insecurity. In 2009, nearly 15% of Arizonans were food insecure, with almost 25% of them children under 18.

How the Puzzle Fits Together to Feed Arizonans Struggling with Hunger



EACH OF THE PIECES to the left comes together to form Arizona's emergency food response system, or the 'food part' of our social services safety net. Each piece plays an important and integrated role, allowing the others to do their part to serve those in need. If some pieces are significantly altered, reduced or eliminated, it has a measurable negative impact on the remaining pieces.

Food banks are at the helm of this complex system that ensures Arizonans have enough food to eat. Contrary to a common portrayal of food banks as 'mom and pop' outfits relying solely on canned food drives, the food banking network is a professional, efficient one that offers many different types of solutions to combat poverty and hunger.

Today, Arizona food banks work in a wide variety of operations: direct client service, food resourcing and solicitation, warehousing, nutrition and health management outreach, trucking and logistics, harvesting and gleaning, and building public awareness about hunger.

ONE IN THREE ARIZONANS, out of our six-million-plus population, is considered 'working poor'. This means they live at 185% of poverty or lower, slightly less than \$40,800 annually for a family of four. They come from all walks of life, residing in communities large and small, in virtually every age group and from all ethnic populations, in each of Arizona's 15 counties. They are the most impacted by the recession and lingering economic uncertainty. A large portion of them remain unemployed or underemployed, or are otherwise unable to provide for their families as they once were. Many struggle to put enough food on the table and thus rely on one or more of the resources comprising the social services safety net. Since they have such a slim margin for error, cuts to programs they rely on have a disproportionately adverse impact on their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

FOOD BANKS are not the solution to the larger hunger issue; they are the temporary short-term fix. Providing an Emergency Food Box (3-5 day supply of food) to a family makes an enormous impact at that moment of their lives. But what happens 3-5 days later?

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS such as SNAP (Food Stamps), WIC (Women, Infant & Children), school meals and others make up a much larger slice of the meal pie, providing over one-third (34%) of Arizona's meals for working poor households (see chart below). These proven programs are what enable families to have more sustainable access to food, allowing them to rise out of a poverty situation brought on by job loss, foreclosure, medical emergency or other life-changing events. Yet some of these programs currently face an uncertain funding future and potential cuts at the Federal level.

Continued economic uncertainty combined with further budget cutting will ensure the need in Arizona--which has already reached unprecedented heights--will increase. Through strategic collaboration and innovation, Arizona food banks have responded to move more pounds of food than ever before, including a record 134.1 million pounds of food in 2010, nearly a 55% increase over pre-recession 2007 levels.

Our food banks have been able to keep pace with demand because of tremendous support and generosity of individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations which recognize the value Arizona's food bank network provides. But they cannot support us alone. The social services safety net provides much needed resources to combat hunger. Stripping those resources under the assumption the other puzzle pieces will be able pick up the slack, even in the best of economies, is misguided and false.

Public Programs Critical to Combating Poverty

	FULL PRICE					
	Food Secure: 200% FPL					
185% FPL	REDUCED PRICE		WOMEN & CHILDREN			
150% FPL	Minimum Wage Earner					
130% FPL		FREE			SENIORS	
100% FPL						
50% FPL						
No Income \$0						
Program	SNAP	School Meals	WIC	Summer Food	CSFP	TEFAP
Population Served	Eligible Individuals & Families	Children in Participating Schools	Pregnant Women & Children under 5	Children 18 & under	Pregnant Women, Children < 6, Seniors 60+	Homeless & Low Income
Budget Status	Entitlement		Appropriation or Caseload Limited			

Learn more about each of these programs, what they do and who they serve, by visiting our website at www.azfoodbanks.org

Why Your Voice Is Critically Important

PROPOSED STATE AND FEDERAL BUDGETS are including plans to cut or eliminate programs in an effort to reduce spending or address other challenges we face. Though some hunger relief programs may not be directly impacted, if these proposals are adopted, there will be many more people needing assistance to meet their basic food needs.

The Feeding America Hunger in America 2010 report illustrated just a few of the tough choices faced by working poor households in Arizona who rely on food banks and the emergency food network:

- **43%** were forced to choose between paying for food vs. paying for rent/mortgage
- **49%** were forced to choose between paying for food vs. paying for utilities
- **32%** were forced to choose between paying for food vs. paying for medicine/medical care
- **77%** were forced to choose between paying for food vs. transportation/fuel costs

When households struggle to put food on the table, they almost certainly face other challenges as well. Federal and State budget solutions that reduce or eliminate funding for social services create more hardship and increase demand on our social services safety net. If funding for emergency food and related resources is significantly cut, then what?

ELECTED OFFICIALS need to hear your voice in support of hungry and poor Arizonans and the programs that serve them. We must solve our problems without creating new, equally severe problems. We ask you to:

- Speak up! Talk about these issues with your friends, neighbors, co-workers and fellow worshippers.
- Use social media to join AAFB, food banks and other anti-hunger organizations to help spread these messages.
- Vote and be an active participant in the political process, at the city, state and federal level.
- Visit **www.votesmart.org** and enter your zip code to get a list of your elected officials and contact information.
- Call, email or visit your elected officials and tell them these issues are important to you as their constituent.
- Take pride in working for your community to adequately feed and provide for all its diverse members.

For more additional copies of this report, visit us online or contact us at:

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