



2025 CALFRESH FORUM

WELCOME TO THE 2025 CALFRESH FORUM

We are so glad you're here. The CalFresh Forum has always been a space for reflection, collaboration, and vision— but this year feels momentous . Gathering at Compton College carries deep significance. This campus has long stood as a beacon of resilience, possibility, and community for Los Angeles County, where legacy and progress meet in real time.

Today, we have the rare opportunity to come together—neighbors, collaborators, community leaders, administrators, and advocates—to talk, move, and think honestly about food access, dignity, and belonging. The conversations we hold here touch each of us differently, yet we are all connected by a shared commitment to ensuring that every person in California has access to the food and resources they need to thrive.

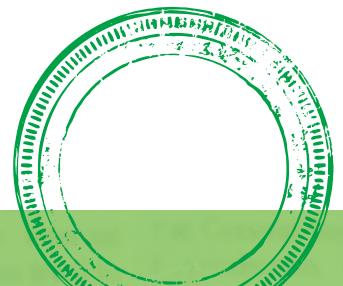
This forum is more than an event. It's a moment we get to co-create together. You are not just attendees; you are part of the story being written today. So bring your full selves—your questions, your ideas, your care for community. Let's listen deeply, dream boldly, and leave here renewed and recommitted to building and sustaining the partnerships that make lasting impact possible.

Once again, we welcome you to the 2025 CalFresh Forum.
Let's make this a day to remember.



AGENDA

- 8:00 am Registration & continental breakfast
- 9:30 am Welcome remarks
- 9:45 am Freshy Award Ceremony
- 10:45 am *Break*
- 11:05 am Breakout Session, Round 1**
- (Instructional Building 2, Room 222) Breaking Bread, Building Power: Food Access with Dignity
 - (Instructional Building 2, Room 223) Translating Regional Food Data into Action: Insights from The Los Angeles Food Policy Council
 - (Instructional Building 1, Room 201) Older Adults in Rural Communities: Nourishment With Dignity
- 11:50 am *Break*
- 12:00 pm Breakout Session, Round 2**
- (Instructional Building 1, Room 201) CalFresh, School Meals, and Hungry Kids
 - (Instructional Building 1, Room 260) The Role of Promotoras and Community leaders in food justice (Spanish Session)
 - (Instructional Building 2, Room 222) Survival in the Shadows: Homelessness, Food Insecurity, and the Role of Community Support
 - (Instructional Building 2, Room 223) Voices from Campus: Strengthening CalFresh Access
- 12:45 pm *Break*



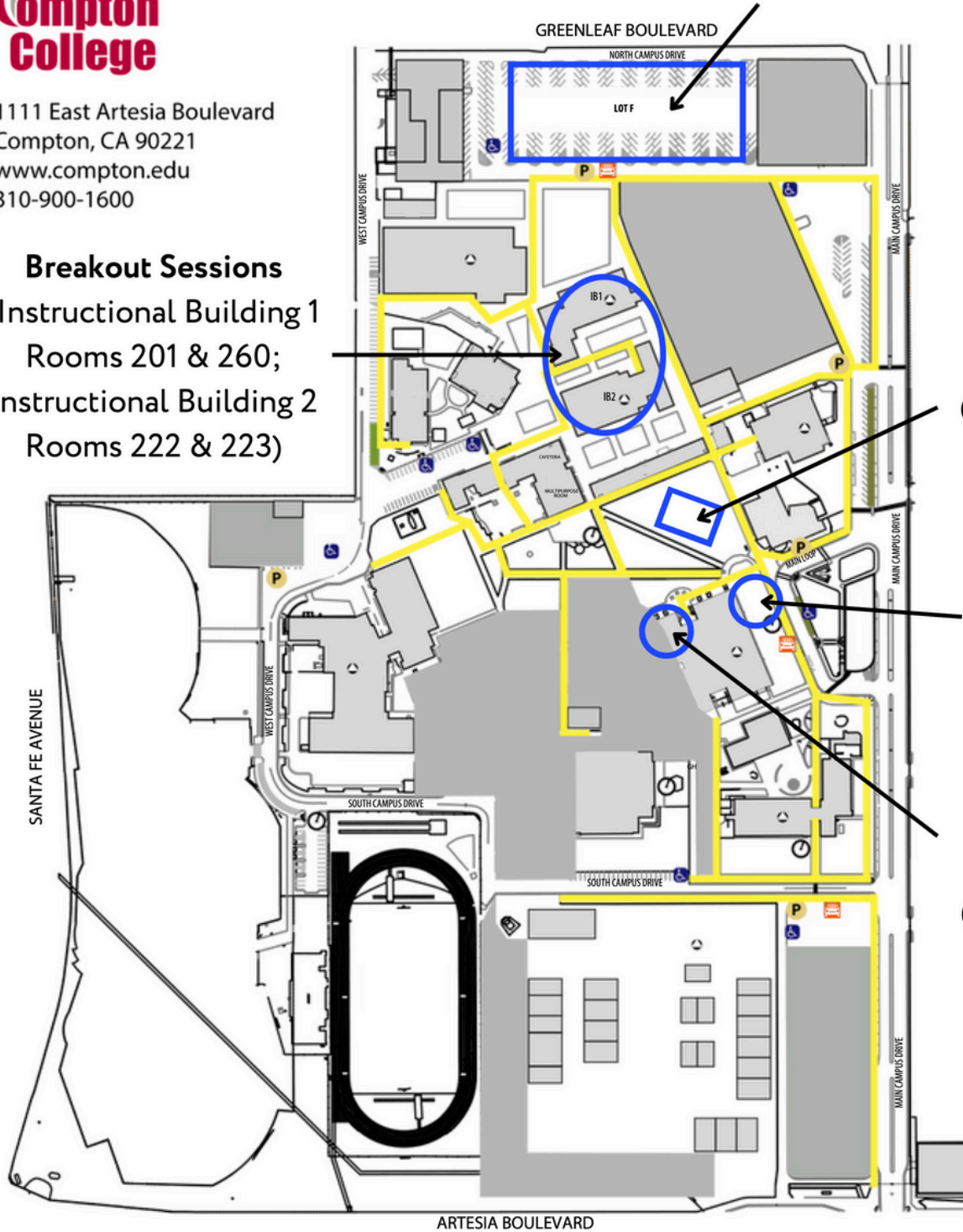
AGENDA

- 12:55 pm Lunch
- 1:55 pm California at the Crossroads: Federal Decisions, Local Impact
- 2:40 pm *Break*
- 2:50 pm **Breakout Session, Round 3 + Office Hours with Emmie: Turning Insight into Action**
- (Main Tent) Rooted Rhythms: Movement, Joy, and Belonging for CalFresh Outreach
 - (Instructional Building 1, Room 201) From Trauma to Trust: Increasing CalFresh Enrollment and Rebuilding Communities through Schools
 - (Instructional Building 2, Room 222) Breaking through cultural barriers, preconceptions, and challenges
 - (Instructional Building 1, Room 260) Office Hours with Emmie: Turning Insight into Action
- 3:35 pm *Break*
- 3:45 pm Closing
- 4 pm End



1111 East Artesia Boulevard
Compton, CA 90221
www.compton.edu
310-900-1600

Breakout Sessions
(Instructional Building 1
Rooms 201 & 260;
Instructional Building 2
Rooms 222 & 223)



Parking Lot

Main Session
(Large Tent in Quad Area)

Registration
(main loop of Parking Lot C)

**Breakfast/
Lunch**
(Art Gallery)

- All gender bathroom locations
- Accessible parking
- Accessible pathway
- Rideshare pickup & dropoff

WHICH BREAKOUT SESSION SHOULD I JOIN?

BREAKOUT SESSION, ROUND 1

(Instructional Building 2, Room 222) Breaking Bread, Building Power: Food Access with Dignity

Christian Davis, Mariel Joy Neri, Dorothy Cardenas, Violeta Lara, Alexis Johnson

Food is more than fuel-- it's identity, memory, and community. This session explores how food justice is tied to housing stability, migrant rights, and educational equity. Through storytelling, reflection, and hands-on activity, we'll explore how to create food systems that honor culture and uphold dignity—while feeding movements for change.

(Instructional Building 2, Room 223) Translating Regional Food Data into Action: Insights from The Los Angeles Food Policy Council

Natasha Wasim, Ana-Alicia Carr

Join the Los Angeles Food Policy Council for an interactive session on translating regional food system data into actionable strategies. Using insights from our State of Good Food Report, we will explore how data can inform equitable CalFresh implementation, identify neighborhood-level gaps, and advance regional food justice. Participants will share their experiences with data, discuss challenges, and co-imagine new approaches to leverage data for meaningful systems change.



WHICH BREAKOUT SESSION SHOULD I JOIN?

ROUND 1

(Instructional Building 1, Room 201) Older Adults in Rural Communities: Nourishment With Dignity

Corinne Jones MAG, Karen Medina, Rosalina Duran

Older adults living in rural communities face unique barriers to food security. Limited income, distance from grocery stores, and lack of access to affordable, culturally relevant foods all contribute to hunger and poor nutrition. This session will explore these challenges and invite discussion on why they matter — not only for the health and dignity of older adults, but also for the resilience of rural communities as a whole.

(Instructional Building 1, Room 201) CalFresh, School Meals, and Hungry Kids

Ken Hecht, Christina Hecht

At this time when CalFresh benefits are being restricted, the school meal programs, which are offered in California without charge to every student, can help make up some of the nutritional loss and stretch family food budgets. How can we raise awareness of and participation in the school meal programs?

(Instructional Building 1, Room 260) The Role of Promotoras and Community leaders in food justice (Spanish Session)

Veronica Arciga Barriga, Ana Guzman, Maria Talavera, Evelyn Pacas

(Session will be offered in Spanish with English Interpretation) In this workshop, participants will engage in a conversation with promotoras in how to build trust in the community, while combating disinformation, fear and lack of trust to government entities after the proposed federal and state cuts and changes (including the exclusions) to social programs like Cal-Fresh and the recent personal data access.

BREAKOUT SESSION, ROUND 2

WHICH BREAKOUT SESSION SHOULD I JOIN?

BREAKOUT SESSION, ROUND 2

(Instructional Building 2, Room 222) Survival in the Shadows: Homelessness, Food Insecurity, and the Role of Community Support

Joshua Kleinbergs, lived experience speaker, Roxy Soto

This panel will explore how homelessness, lack of resources, and food insecurity intersect to impact survival. It will feature two case workers and a client experiencing homelessness, providing first-hand insights into navigating government programs such as CalFresh, shelters, and food assistance initiatives.

(Instructional Building 2, Room 223) Voices from Campus: Strengthening CalFresh Access

Brandi Simonaro, Paola Villareal, Franchesca Valdes Rankin, Rigo Estrada

This panel will center student voices and Basic Needs staff insights on navigating CalFresh access, highlighting effective outreach, county partnerships, and the CHC Resource Hub. Attendees will explore the LPIE exemption, real-world student scenarios, and strategies for student-centered implementation.

GENERAL SESSION

(Main Tent) California at the Crossroads: Federal Decisions, Local Impact

Ty Jones Cox, Vice President for Food Assistance, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Federal policy choices ripple quickly through California, shaping programs and resources that millions rely on for food and economic security. In this session, Ty Cox of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities will unpack the latest federal developments, explore their implications for California communities, and discuss what advocates can do to respond.

WHICH BREAKOUT SESSION SHOULD I JOIN?

BREAKOUT SESSION, ROUND 3

(Instructional Building 1, Room 201) From Trauma to Trust: Increasing CalFresh Enrollment and Rebuilding Communities through Schools

Evette Lugo, Andrea Cuellar, Miranda Lauzon, Aime Hernandez

Schools across the nation are becoming one of the last trusted institutions in our society. Closer to home, schools are proving that they can be one-stop-shop for community and family resources and legislation is slowly paving a way to strengthen this system. In this session, you'll hear directly from three trailblazing program leaders who have pioneered creative ways to bridge the gap between CalFresh outreach and schools—from formal contracts with government agencies to technical assistance on application intakes. Each speaker will share the practical strategies, partnerships and best practices that has impacted their school nutrition program and overall community. You'll leave with new tools, peer-tested approaches and inspiration to strengthen and expand your own CalFresh outreach by going to school.

(Instructional Building 1, Room 260) Office Hours with Emmie: Turning Insight into Action

Emmie DiCicco, State Strategies Manager, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Following Ty Cox's overview of federal decisions and their California impact, join Emmie from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for an interactive space to further explore the issues raised. This session will offer an opportunity to ask detailed questions, clarify implications for your work, and consider how to put federal policy insights into practice in California communities.

WHICH BREAKOUT SESSION SHOULD I JOIN?

BREAKOUT SESSION, ROUND 3

(Main Tent) Rooted Rhythms: Movement, Joy, and Belonging for CalFresh Outreach

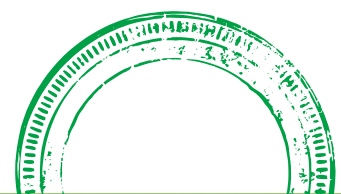
Nneka Okeke

In this interactive session, participants will experience a dance- and movement-based workshop grounded in joy, cultural connection, and accessibility. Together, we'll explore how the rhythms of our bodies and communities can inspire nourishment and belonging and how we can carry that energy into our CalFresh outreach and organizing.

(Instructional Building 2, Room 222) Breaking through cultural barriers, preconceptions, and challenges

Anastasia Herrera-Tan, Bryan Espinoza, Willow Mendoza, Darnel Smith, Drew Dailey, Berta Zepeda

Stigma and preconceptions around safety net programs unfortunately still play a huge part within people's experiences in accessing CalFresh and other similar benefits. In this joint panel, we'll talk about our perspectives of how societal barriers impact students, single parents, and broader groups in their abilities to access food. We will also share opportunities to promote awareness, normalize the conversation, and encourage communities to seek the help they need.



COMMUNITY IMPACT LEADER

2025 Freshy Award Nominees



Abel Lora



Alma Wilcox



Briana Maturi



Britt Gutierrez



Elianna Friedman



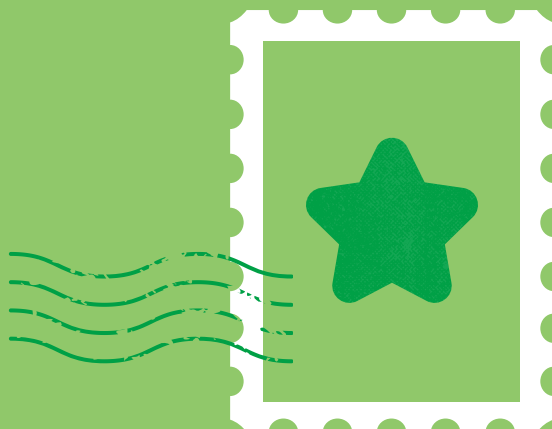
Liz Gomez



Natalie Caples

FOOD ACCESS POWERHOUSE

2025 Freshy Award Nominees



Bernetta Sadakov



Diego Fajardo



Ellie Perry



Emelia Avila



LauraAnn Jones



Maci Jo Lee



Mirelly Vargas

LIVING THE MISSION

2025 Freshy Award Nominees



Albert Benson



Bryan Espinoza



Elizabeth Garcia



Jacqueline Villalta



Jessica Blan



Maria Elena de Leon



Paola Villareal

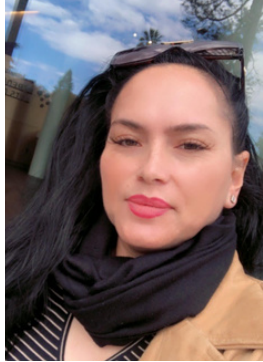


Stephany



BEYOND THE TABLE INNOVATOR

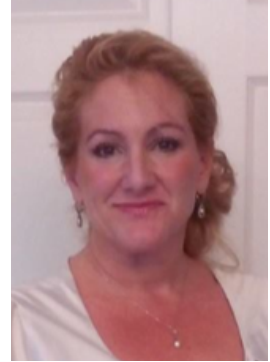
2025 Freshy Award Nominees



Alissa Moore



Amy Ferrell



Julie Ann Cleveland



Rick Nahmias



Sharon Lee



MOBILIZING OUR COMMUNITY

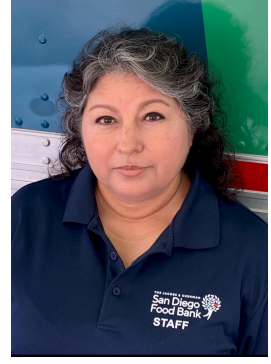
2025 Freshy Award Nominees



Alexandra White



Che Yang



Irma Guerrero



Mim Michelove



Pamela Larry



Sujatha Venkatraman

POWER IN PARTNERSHIP

2025 Freshy Award Nominees



Humboldt County DHHS'
Eligibility Specialists and
Eligibility Supervisors



The Conard House
Food Kiosk



John Nguyen &
Vivian Hernandez



Sen. Laura Richardson



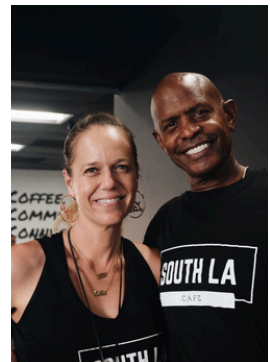
Asm. Alex Lee



Operation Healthy Hearts



Richard Flores



Joe & Celia Ward-Wallace

THANK YOU!

This year's CalFresh Forum is a unique collaboration between community members, critical partners, and local businesses. We are grateful to everyone who came together to create a Forum that is centered on community voices.

We want to thank Compton College for not only hosting us today, but for their tireless effort to address student basic needs, like food, on their campus.

Thank you to our Advisory Committee for sharing your wisdom and crafting a CalFresh Forum where a diverse range of proposals can be celebrated.

Much gratitude to the LA Food Policy Council for including us in their Food Day celebrations and partnering with us to host LA Foodscapes.

Thank you to our amazing food vendors who nourished our community as we engaged in exciting discussions and imagined the future of food access in California.

Huge applause to our speakers for carefully planning conversations and activities for us to engage in together. Lastly, thank you to everyone who attended. The CalFresh Forum can only happen when each of these puzzle pieces come together to create conversations of hope and solidarity. Thank you for playing a critical part.

Sincerely,
the CalFresh Forum planning team

