

LISTENING INTO ACTION

Community Conversations Across California

OVERVIEW

Every year, Nourish California engages in a process of listening and co-developing with diverse communities to shape policies that ensure Californians have the food they need to thrive. Now more than ever, we believe it is critical that we listen to those most affected by recent federal bills and actions to ensure that our policy priorities are informed, responsive, and co-created with communities we serve.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Impact of federal bills and actions
- ✓ Challenges with accessing food, housing, and other support
- ✓ Experiences with food and nutrition programs
- ✓ Trusted sources for information



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BACKGROUND

Recent federal actions have led to significant barriers and exclusions in our safety net programs. With the passage of the 2025 H.R. 1 “One Big Beautiful Bill Act”, we saw the largest cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or CalFresh as it’s referred to in California) in the history of its existence. Due to these changes, it is estimated that 665,000 individuals subject to the strict work requirements will be disenrolled in CalFresh and experience significant barriers in maintaining their benefits (1), while close to 34,000 humanitarian immigrants will also be disenrolled from the program (2). These sweeping changes put groups such as older adults, parents of older children, veterans, former foster youth, and people experiencing homelessness at risk of facing deeper food insecurity (3,4). In addition, federal actions like data sharing requests and the reinstated public charge rule are eroding trust in the safety net system, discouraging people from seeking services due to fear. These actions have detrimental consequences beyond program disenrollment, impacting communities’ health and well-being.

The impacts of these changes are not just experienced by those who are directly affected – the chilling consequences and ripple effects will harm families and communities throughout the state.

However, we know that even prior to these federal actions, communities in California were already feeling the effects of the high costs of living on their abilities to access food. In previous years, we partnered with an outside research firm to conduct a statewide survey along with regional focus groups. This year, with the support of a capacity building grant, we organized five community convenings in partnership with local organizations. These gatherings created space for participants to share their concerns, lived experiences, and priorities on food access. By centering the voices of those most affected, we gathered insights on the ripple effects of HR 1 and other federal actions, how these federal actions have impacted people, and what communities hope can change.

The convening findings paint a greater picture of the hardships that communities are facing and affirm what we continue to see and hear. Most importantly, our convenings were opportunities to connect with everyday Californians and give a space for community members to be heard and share what they think.

METHODOLOGY

We hosted **four 2 hour in-person regional convenings** throughout the state, in partnership with local organizations, and **one 1.5 hour virtual statewide community convening** with community members and community partners. We also conducted a post-survey following the virtual convening as an opportunity for individuals who were unable to attend to share their perspectives.

The community members who participated in our convenings were individuals with lived experience of poverty, food insecurity, and other outcomes of structural inequities. Community members were recruited by local partner organizations.

Though each convening had a specific focus area, all convenings covered:

1. Impact of federal bills (e.g. H.R. 1) and actions (e.g. immigration enforcement, data sharing)
2. Challenges accessing food, housing and other support
3. Experiences with food and nutrition programs; and
4. Trusted sources for information.

While we spoke with nearly a hundred community members and community partners, these individuals were identified through our network of local partners, and they do not constitute a random and representative sample of Californians. Additionally, for our in-person convenings, we are aware of potential biases and distinct perspectives due to community members' affiliation with partner organizations. As such, their opinions cannot be generalized to the broader population of residents throughout our state.

[For more information around methodology, see Technical Notes.](#)



METHODOLOGY (CON'T)

Table 1. Overview of Community Convenings

Focus Area	Location	Group Size	Community Profile	Language	Local Partner
Access to food for school aged students & their families	Bay Area	15	Immigrant parents and their school-aged children (8 students, 7 parents); most were recent immigrants to the United States	Spanish	Innovate Public Schools
Climate and environmental impacts on food and water access	Inland Empire	15	Community members impacted by climate change and environmental challenges (1 youth, 10 adults, 4 older adults)	Spanish, English	Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice
LGBTQ+ communities and access to food	Central Valley	13	Trans and/or queer community members, ages 18-40	English	The Source LGBTQ+ Center
Impacts of incarceration, retailer/food apartheid on food security	Butte County	15	Community members and advocate partners, ages 18-55, including formerly justice-impacted individuals and people with food systems experience	Spanish, English	Chico State Center for Healthy Communities
General experience of the impact of HR 1 on food access	Statewide virtual convening	50	Community members (17 community members), and representatives from community-based, direct aid, and statewide organizations (33 partners)*	Spanish (community members), English (local partners)	N/A

**Note: Attendance was tracked by Zoom registration record, visual count of participants, and post-survey results. [See Technical Notes for more information.](#)*

KEY FINDINGS

TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Food Access
- ✓ H.R. 1 and Other Federal Actions
- ✓ Trusted Messengers

FOOD ACCESS

Key Finding: Community members are concerned about:



grocery price inflation



high costs of living



impact of climate
change, disasters, and
environmental concerns
on food access



“If people are working... even though they are earning above minimum wage... most of the money goes to housing expenses so there’s very little left over for food and other necessities.”

- Community Member, Virtual Convening

“A lot of them [older adult clients] don’t have a simple thing like juice. A lot of them can’t buy juice. A lot of them, the only produce they had is the produce I gave them once a month... a lot of them run out of food before the end of the month.”

- Community Member,
Virtual Convening



Key Finding: In some areas, **lack of access to nearby grocery stores** is still a concern, and reliable access to public transportation to get to these stores does not exist.

Even when stores are present, **foods are not always affordable, readily available, culturally relevant, or of good quality.**

Key Finding: Due to high costs of living, stagnating wages, and impacts of recent federal actions, lower income communities across California continue to rely on food banks and pantries to get the food they need, and the need continues to rise.

FOOD ACCESS (CON'T)

Key Finding: Community members report **having to make hard choices to get the food they need.**

Some choose to eat less so that their children can eat, while others have to send their children to sleep early on an empty stomach because there isn't enough food. People often have to weigh between paying rent, utilities, and other bills or spending money on food and groceries. Older aged children are trying to find jobs to help their families.



“The paperwork [for CalFresh] is confusing and it takes a lot of time to submit documents and follow up when you are already dealing with high living costs and taking care of children. Even small changes in income require updates, and if something is delayed or missing, benefits can be reduced or stopped.”

- Community Member, Virtual Convening

Key Finding: Community members share that while they are grateful for food banks, several barriers exist in accessing food. They report that lines at food banks and other food distribution centers have been long, and additional challenges (such as culturally appropriate food, no access to transportation, limited hours, fear of immigration enforcement) make it difficult for families to receive food aid.

“Nuestros representantes tienen que implementar proyectos de ley para que las personas tengan apoyo de comida constante (anual, mensual, semanal, etc.) para mantener un ambiente saludable. Donde falta comida, ¿quién va está feliz?

Our representatives need to implement policies that ensure people have consistent access to food (on an annual, monthly, or weekly basis) to maintain a healthy environment. After all, who can be happy when they don't have food?

- Community Member, Virtual Convening



H.R. 1 AND OTHER FEDERAL ACTIONS



“A lot of people are going to be kicked off benefits because this administration doesn’t care if people live or die, but the community cares. And change really starts when we all come together as a community.”

- Community Member, Virtual Convening

Key Finding: Community members are having to **weigh and take risks**, such as going to grocery stores and food banks despite the fear of immigration enforcement, to get the food they need.



"Las familias están teniendo miedo de salir por alimentos a la tienda y ser detenido por ace o casa recompensas. Están sobreviviendo y eso es muy triste."

Families are afraid to leave their homes to go buy food at grocery stores in fear of ICE. They are merely surviving and that is very sad.

- Community Member, Virtual Convening



“[HR 1] is like a bucket of ice water in our face.”

- Community Member,
Climate And Environmental
Impacts on Food and Water
Access*

*Reconstructed quote from session notes. [See Technical Notes for more details.](#)



Key Finding: Immigration and Customs Enforcement deportation actions have **dropped the use of public benefit services**, even for programs where immigration status doesn’t impact eligibility. Community organizations report that there has been a decrease in community members coming to their offices and centers for assistance.

H.R. 1 AND OTHER FEDERAL ACTIONS (CON'T)



Key Finding: Communities are afraid to apply for benefits or seek assistance out of **fear of public charge** or how that would affect their families. Communities are also wary of government surveillance, privacy, and **data sharing**.

Key Finding: Administrative hurdles and complicated paperwork needed to maintain benefits are already notable barriers in accessing CalFresh. Community members expressed **concern around the CalFresh work requirements** and that it will make it even harder for families to get the food they need.

“[It’s] unknown how California is implementing the changes and requirements and therefore [we] don’t really know how to respond or prepare. We are doing our best but there’s a lot of unknown.”

- Community Partner, Virtual Convening

Key Finding: The government shutdown in late 2025 led to an increase in food pantry usage, less customers at farmers markets, and difficult decisions for community members in choosing between paying for food or other bills.

“When I’m hearing people’s experiences about how they fear to go outside to get food, because there’s a chance that they could get kidnapped by ICE, it is so upsetting to hear. But it is a harsh reality that we all must face because it impacts everybody.”

- Community Member,
Virtual Convening

“Me preocupa la reducción de tiempo de beneficios que algunas personas tengan, también me preocupa que los beneficios de muchos otros ya no van a tener.”

I am concerned about the reduction in the time period that some people are able to receive benefits, I’m also concerned that many others will no longer receive benefits at all.

- Community Partner, Virtual Convening

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

Key Finding: Schools, direct aid organizations, non-profits, churches and other groups that directly work with communities are trusted resources. **But there is no single trusted source across California** – instead, people look to their local community organization who is already doing the work for messaging and support.



Key Finding: Communities express **extreme frustration and distrust of the federal government**. Some trust their local and state governments more because there is organizing power and movement for community input in local and state governments.

Key Finding: Community members prefer to get news from social media (specifically from influencers and trusted organizations) rather than traditional news sources due to misinformation, confusion, and lack of transparency.



Key Finding: Community members shared that they feel more comfortable seeking benefits and support **when information comes from trusted messengers**, and **when they know their information will remain confidential**.

BOTTOM LINE: Community members trust a range of sources for information with no single source trusted by everyone. In our current hostile environment full of information and misinformation, trust is fragmented.

CONVENING SPECIFIC FINDINGS

TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Access to Food for School-Aged Students & Their Families: Bay Area
- ✓ Climate and Environmental Impact on Access to Food and Water: Inland Empire
- ✓ LGBTQ+ Communities and Access to Food: Central Valley
- ✓ Food Systems and Reentry: Butte County

ACCESS TO FOOD FOR SCHOOL-AGED STUDENTS & THEIR FAMILIES: BAY AREA

Key Finding: Students described how **hunger and limited time to eat affected their ability to**



Families emphasized that access to nourishing meals is not only a nutrition issue but also an educational issue that directly impacts students' health, well-being, and academic success.

Key Finding: Almost all the students felt school meal lines were too long.

**"La mayoría del tiempo se va en la fila para agarrar comida.
Entonces me queda poco tiempo para comer."**

We spend most of our time in line, and then there is not enough time to eat.

- Student, Access to Food for School-Aged Students and Their Families



"No come en la escuela, llega de malas y con hambre."

When my son doesn't eat at school, he arrives home in a bad mood and very hungry.

- Parent, Access to Food for School-Aged Students and Their Families

Key Finding: Parents reported experiencing stress knowing that their children were spending the school day hungry and unable to fully enjoy school and participate in learning. They reported feeling worried when they saw their kids unwell after school.

Key Finding: Students felt they needed between **15-30 minutes each day for breakfast**, and between **30-40 minutes each day for lunch** to comfortably receive their meals and have enough time to eat.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON ACCESS TO FOOD AND WATER: INLAND EMPIRE

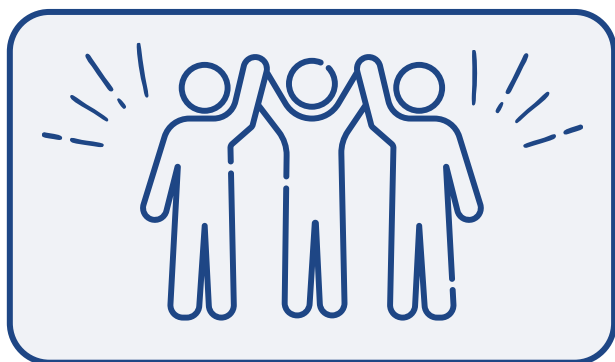
Key Finding: Communities in the Inland Empire want access to food that is more nutritious and better supports overall health, particularly in areas that are heavily impacted by longstanding environmental challenges. These areas still see a **lack of grocery stores** and places for individuals to shop for foods that are **culturally relevant** for themselves and their families.

Key Finding: Most people in the Inland Empire group **were not aware** of Disaster CalFresh or replacement benefits.

One individual reported experiencing a power outage for 14 days, where all of their food spoiled.

Key Finding: Communities need more timely and relevant information and resources during disasters and crises, as most often, **help from the government doesn't come fast enough.**

When disasters and crises happen, communities report having to lean on mutual aid and community-based support because government resources are not readily available.



CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON ACCESS TO FOOD AND WATER: INLAND EMPIRE (CON'T)

Key Finding: Community members in the Inland Empire want to see an investment in resources for community-led solutions instead of funding for warehouses and corporations that harm the environment. They are interested in conversations on food justice, food sovereignty, and what it would look like for community to reclaim their food system.



“[Give] people back the knowledge of how to cultivate & maintain their own food rather than relying on big corporations that are not concerned with our best interest or our health & well-being.”

*- Community Member,
Climate And Environmental Impacts on Food and Water Access*



“Tener programas que eduquen y ayuden a ser compartidos en diferentes maneras de mejoras y beneficios en una crisis.”

[We need] to have programs, shared in different ways, that educate and provide assistance about improvements and benefits available during a crisis.

- Community Member, Climate And Environmental Impacts on Food and Water Access

Key Finding:

Community members living in the Inland Empire see greater value in local and state governments subsidizing food, putting money into community gardens, and prioritizing green spaces.



LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES AND ACCESS TO FOOD: CENTRAL VALLEY

Key Finding: For LGBTQ+ communities and others that live in the Central Valley, food access is tied to **availability, proximity, and quality of foods**. Reliable access to transportation is also an issue, but even when individuals are able to drive longer distances to stores, the produce quality is low, or the only affordable produce options are frozen or canned.

Key Finding: LGBTQ+ communities face multiple barriers in accessing food, including:



lack of safe spaces
to access food



hostility when seeking
public benefits



discrimination



bias/stigma

Communities specifically state a need for **safe, accessible spaces for trans individuals to access food without fear or hate**.

Key Finding: Complicated rules and policies within safety net programs prevent LGBTQ+ communities from participating. Communities also expressed frustration about how irregular and unstable job hours made it more difficult to report accurately for programs like CalFresh and CalWORKS.

Key Finding: Disabled, LGBTQ+ communities face additional barriers in accessing food. For disabled individuals, access to meals and funding often depends on the government. For those that can't prepare food, ready-to-go foods are often more costly and processed foods are stigmatized.



“[We need to] stop the stigma of getting help for food resources and support in general.”

*- Community Member,
LGBTQ+ Communities and
Access to Food*

FOOD SYSTEMS AND REENTRY: BUTTE COUNTY

Key finding: Many people want to shop local, but purchasing produce at farmers markets is not affordable. CalFresh benefits and efforts to expand access at farmers markets, such as Market Match (a program that doubles CalFresh benefits at participating farmers markets), make a real difference.



Key finding: Those who work within the food system and help grow and/or harvest food feel the impacts of recent federal actions. One farmer shared that roughly 20% of their income comes from programs like CalFresh and Market Match.

Key finding: **During the federal government shutdown, farmers reported seeing fewer customers** coming to weekly markets when individuals did not receive their CalFresh benefits in a timely manner.

Key Finding: Farmworkers face substantial risks to their safety and job security due to low wages and irregular work hours, along with the fear of losing their jobs and constant deportation threats from the federal administration that create stress and instability.



FOOD SYSTEMS AND REENTRY: BUTTE COUNTY (CON'T)

Key Finding: For individuals and communities transitioning out of prisons & jails, barriers to accessing resources include a lack of:



**identifiable
documentation**



**awareness around what
resources are available**



**ability to describe
work history or
provide supporting
documentation**

Specifically for individuals who have been incarcerated for long periods of time, they operate under the knowledge of how programs existed 10-20 years ago.

Key Finding: Inequities in language access persist.

Though many outreach workers have worked to simplify language, some English words do not translate well in other languages.



Key Finding: While communities rely on CalFresh, they recognize that programs like CalFresh alone will not solve hunger, and they express a desire to look for longer-term solutions (such as lowering food prices) to address food access challenges.



“Being healthy is the privilege of the rich.”

*- Community Member,
Food Systems, Reentry, And Impacts Of Recent Federal Actions**

**Reconstructed quote from session notes. [See Technical Notes for more details.](#)*

VIRTUAL CONVENING ON GENERAL EXPERIENCES OF THE IMPACT OF H.R. 1 ON FOOD ACCESS

Key Finding: Food banks and outreach organizations report that community members are more hesitant to apply for CalFresh due to immigration-related fears. More individuals than in previous years have asked to be disenrolled from the program.

Communities have always been worried about applying for programs, but now parents are even **worried about participating in programs that do not collect immigration status information**, such as SUN Bucks and school meals.

Community organizations shared that even for programs that don't collect immigration data like the Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), **families at enrollment sites are asking to be removed from WIC** due to fear or advice from legal providers.

Key Finding: College student partners are concerned about how federal changes will lead to increased stigma for students when accessing services and public benefits. New rules, such as the work requirements for students enrolled in under half time, may lead to more confusion alongside the pre-existing rules around student eligibility.



Key Finding: The **closing of food retailers**, such as farmers markets and even stores like RiteAid and CVS, are impacting families' abilities to afford and access food.

Key Finding: Community members state that CalFresh rules are overly complicated. They would like more transparency behind decisions around policy changes, as they are often told what the rules are, but not why they exist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS

✓ General Recommendations

✓ Policy Recommendations

- Reducing Barriers to Food Access
- Boosting Benefits
- Food4All
- Every Kid, Every Day
- Thriving Transitions
- Listening for Solutions: LGBTQ+ Californians and Food Security
- Recovery & Resilience: Ensuring Food and Water Access for Californians Impacted by Climate Change, Crises, and Disasters

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were informed and shaped by our conversations with community members. We aim for these recommendations to guide our policy campaigns and ongoing approach to community engagement. **We will share programmatic recommendations with respective partners and agencies.**

Meet Community Where They Are

1. Effective approaches must adapt to evolving community needs. Services, practices, and organizational systems should be flexible and shift in response to current needs and circumstances, rather than defaulting to set structures. This means learning and responding in real time, and continuously seeking community input as a pulse for what needs to change.
2. Organizations and agencies must remain nimble as policies, regulations, and funding landscapes shift quickly. Defaulting or relying on best practices may not accurately reflect the current environment.
3. Community input must be integrated into organizational structure, decision-making, and the shaping of organizational programs and policies. Organizational structures must meet community needs by supporting decision-making, ensuring that hours of operation are flexible, and making intake and other procedures simple and easy to navigate.



Center Community Voices

1. Policy, communications, and community outreach solutions must be grounded in community. They should be shaped and informed with the people they intend to serve, not just designed for them. When trust in government is low, meaningful buy-in from community members is especially important.
2. There needs to be a narrative change in the way we talk about food and who deserves access to food. Communities are already working hard to meet their basic needs, yet they continue to face numerous barriers in purchasing food that is nutritious and supports overall health, accessible, and/or affordable.
3. Communities express a strong desire to come together to enact meaningful change. Efforts should focus on building solidarity across intersectional movements and supporting collective action to get Californians the food they need.
4. Transparency and consistent communication is important to rebuilding and strengthening trust. This means not only communicating more frequently, but explaining the reasoning behind the rules, questions, and decisions. Help communities understand the “why,” not just the “what.”

REDUCING BARRIERS TO FOOD ACCESS

Address food affordability challenges for families across California.

1. Communities feel that current food prices are too expensive, and express support for policies that address rising grocery prices and improve food affordability.
2. High costs of living are one of the biggest barriers for communities in accessing food. CalFresh income guidelines should consider the true cost of housing when determining eligibility and benefit amounts for CalFresh households.



Mitigate harm from H.R. 1 cuts and other federal actions

1. Expand state-funded food assistance to individuals that are excluded due to federal policies, such as humanitarian immigrants and those impacted by work requirements.
2. Maximize flexibilities for community members to be able to access and stay connected to safety net programs.
3. Utilize state options and resources to protect safety net program data and information. Ensure that participant information is not shared with outside sources unless needed to determine program eligibility.
4. Oppose and demand action against the new public charge rule, which will lead to more confusion and fear among immigrant communities. This rule will also decrease enrollment among groups who are eligible, including families with U.S. citizen children, due to increased chilling effect.
5. In coalition with federal partners, delay the impact of federal actions, such as the shared administrative and CalFresh benefit cost, on state budgets.



Simplify access to essential supports

1. Reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. This can help ensure that individuals can more easily access the resources they need to achieve stability and better support themselves and their families.
2. Simplify the process of applying to safety net programs like CalFresh. When forms, questions, and processes are too difficult to understand, many community members decide not to apply.
3. Ensure equity in language access across safety net programs. Throughout the process of applying for and keeping CalFresh benefits, people should be able to access information in their preferred language, and materials should be available in simple, plain language.



BOOSTING BENEFITS

Make fruits and vegetables more affordable for Californians year-round through programs like the CalFresh Fruit & Vegetable EBT Program.

Expand the program to reach additional regions across the state so that more Californians can participate.



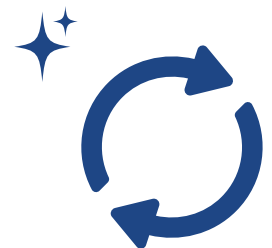
FOOD4ALL

Fully fund Food4All for all ages so that everyone, regardless of immigration status, has a state-funded and protected pathway for accessing food support.

Continue with the planned expansion of our state-funded CalFresh program, the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP), to all Californians ages 55 and over, and ensure that California immigrants ages 0-54 also have access to food assistance.

Remove barriers for immigrant communities in accessing food assistance benefits.

1. **Restore benefits to humanitarian immigrants** who lost access to CalFresh due to H.R. 1 through CFAP.
2. **Remove the discriminatory eligibility rule of sponsor deeming** from our state-funded food assistance program. Food assistance eligibility should be based solely on a household's actual financial situation, without xenophobic and unnecessary barriers to food assistance.



EVERY KID, EVERY DAY

Ensure students have Adequate Time to Eat during the school day.

1. The time that students have to eat for breakfast and lunch should be 20 and 30 minutes (or more), respectively.
2. State and local school administration should explore policies and implementation strategies to ensure students have sufficient time to eat the meals they need to grow, learn, and be healthy.



THRIVING TRANSITIONS

Invest in trusted community partnerships.

Expand funding for community-based organizations to provide reentry support for individuals returning home from incarceration. Trusted community partners can help reconnect people to essential resources, navigate complex systems, and build stability.



Strengthen coordination across systems through greater collaboration among state agencies, counties, community-based organizations, and other partners involved in reentry.

Stronger coordination can improve continuity of support, reduce service gaps, and create more seamless pathways to housing, employment, healthcare, education, and the safety net supports.

Recognize skills, training, and work experience.

Develop pathways to formally recognize the education, vocational training, certifications, and work experience that individuals gain while incarcerated. Creating greater recognition of these accomplishments can strengthen employment opportunities, support economic mobility, and affirm the progress people have made toward rebuilding their lives.

LISTENING FOR SOLUTIONS

LGBTQ+ CALIFORNIANS AND FOOD SECURITY

Allocate resources to create a statewide LGBTQ+ food access network.

This network would focus on increasing food access in their communities, strengthening coordination among existing and prospective service providers, and identifying gaps in access across the state.

Identification & Documentation Reform.

Policies should remove barriers that prevent people from accessing food assistance.

These reforms could include:

- Making it easier to obtain IDs without a permanent address
- Accepting alternative forms of identification
- Reducing barriers related to mismatched appearance and ID
- Decoupling food access from rigid ID requirements



RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

ENSURING FOOD AND WATER ACCESS FOR CALIFORNIANS IMPACTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE, CRISES, AND DISASTERS

Improve communication about what resources and information are available during emergencies and crises through resource hubs.

Resource hubs could provide up-to-date information on available food, water, shelter, financial assistance, and other services during disasters and crises.



Strengthen emergency preparedness, resiliency, and food & water access before, during disasters and crises.

Communities want stronger systems in place before, during, and after emergencies, and they should be actively engaged in disaster planning and resiliency efforts to better reflect local needs and priorities.

1. **Expand application periods for Disaster CalFresh and replacement benefits** to ensure more households can access them. Oftentimes, the timeframe is so short that communities don't know about these benefits until after the deadline passes.
2. **Streamline enrollment and application processes** to reduce barriers and enable Californians to quickly access essential resources during disasters and crises. Explore opportunities to leverage existing systems to improve the speed and efficiency of accessing food during disasters and crises.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Innovate Public Schools, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, The Source LGBT+ Center, and Chico State Center for Healthy Communities for their partnership in hosting the in-person community convenings.

These convenings were made possible through the support of The California Endowment.

We also want to express our deep gratitude to the Nourish California team for their time, dedication, and for making this project possible.



Participants, recruitment, and data collection

We convened with a total of 58 community members **in-person** between December 2025 and February 2026, as well as 17 community members and 33 community partners **virtually** via Zoom in January 2026.

We also partnered with local community organizations to identify and recruit participants for our in-person community convenings. Participants for our virtual convening were recruited from an existing supporter list. Attendance for the virtual convening was tracked by Zoom registration record, visual count of participants, and post-survey results. Supporters were contacted through an interest form as well as a newsletter. Though there was no formal eligibility criteria, we strove to speak with individuals with lived experience of poverty, food insecurity, and other outcomes of structural inequities. Community participants received a stipend for their time, expertise, and contribution.

An interview guide was developed based on our primary research questions and past focus group guides from previous years. All convening groups were asked the same general set of questions, while each individual in-person convening also had additional questions that were asked based on the focus area. Additionally, we conducted a post-survey following the virtual convening to collect further insights from individuals who were unable to attend any in-person or virtual conversations. The post-survey included the same general set of questions from the in-person convenings. All convenings also intentionally included time to not only gather insights and feedback, but brainstorm solutions for actualizing the changes they wanted to see.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, all identifying information about each participant was removed. Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and participation could be declined for specific questions and activities at any time. Convening sessions were not audio or video recorded, but each session had a designated notetaker to capture important findings and quotes.

Limitations

While we spoke with nearly a hundred community members and community partners, they do not constitute a random and representative sample of Californians throughout our state. Additionally, because community members were recruited by local partner organizations for

our in-person convenings, we are aware of potential biases and distinct perspectives due to their affiliations with these organizations. As such, these opinions cannot be generalized to the broader population of residents with any kind of statistical precision.

This report includes both verbatim quotations from written sources and close approximations reconstructed from detailed notes and surveys. The reconstructed quotations are distinctly identified throughout the report. Because convening sessions were not recorded, and therefore verbatim transcripts do not exist, the reconstructed quotes intend to convey participants' meanings but may not reflect their exact wording. Any included reconstructed quotes should be understood as reflections of participants' comments and perspectives.

To ensure that the included insights, findings, and quotes were accurate and representative of what was shared in each convening, draft versions of this report were shared back with local partners for review and feedback. Their input was incorporated to verify that the report accurately reflected the discussions and themes from each convening.

References

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