
Northwest Harvest

■ **Response to Hunger During Covid** ■

PRESENTED BY:

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■ *Our work*

- Independent, **statewide food distribution**: over 300 food pantries & meal programs
- Equitable access & distribution, **centering BIPOC experiences**
- **Strengthen supports for BIPOC market actors** in our food system
- Achieving a **right to food** in Washington
- Change the dominant narrative: hunger's **root causes are in systemic racism** and oppression



■ *COVID Response: Early Pandemic*

March-April 2020:

- Shifted resources to support more access points in community- new, grassroots community response efforts
- Advocacy with the State to direct unspent allocations of COVID public health appropriations to support emergency food system; federal advocacy focused on waiver authority & relief packages
- Food Security Coordination Team

May-December 2020:

**Contract/Partnership with WSDA, Food Lifeline & Second Harvest:
emergency food boxes concentrated to assigned parts of state**

COVID Response: Innovations & Changes

- Partnership with Inaba Family Farms/Yakama Nation: CSA-style produce boxes
- Partnership with Safeway: grocery gift cards
- BIPOC Market Voucher Program
- Harvest Pantry
- We Feed Washington



■ *Lessons Learned*

- **Opportunity is not enough**
 - **Stronger investments & infrastructure overhaul to support BIPOC farmers & food distributors**
- **Resource allocation should incentivize increasing access to reduce hunger rates**
- **Reimbursement style grants pose challenges to infrastructure growth in under-served communities**

■ *Lessons Learned*

- We need regular coordination & assessment of data across food assistance resources
 - Improves allocations and distribution models
 - Informs new opportunities for local food access outside of barriers that exist within emergency food system
- Emergency preparedness
 - Process for expediting resources from the state
 - Rapid assessment of supply and demand
 - Move food to singular distribution model, once/twice a year drill

Lessons Learned

- Sourcing food locally helps mitigate some national supply chain issues while investing in local food economies
- People experiencing hunger need more flexibility, i.e., cash assistance & local points of access and options
- Human-centered design to define food distribution points to facilitate access, e.g., food pantries in schools and utilizing the infrastructure of schools and other resources
- Food insecurity and hunger will persist independent of an economic recovery. We need to use this opportunity to innovate with the goals of strengthening local food systems, improving overall coordination of resources, and designing programs to close racial disparities.