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DEQ gives $140,000 grant to Oregon Food Bank to save fresh produce from being wasted

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Statewide, OR—Serving more than 860,000 people each year prior to COVID-19, Oregon Food Bank's network of 1,400 pantries and meal sites are driven by donations of fresh produce, protein, dairy and other pantry staples. In preparing this food for distribution, volunteers devote thousands of hours to sorting and packaging bulk donations from across the Northwest.

Yet the pandemic has added a host of new challenges to food distribution systems here in Oregon and across the country — disrupting industry and volunteer-led operations alike. As part of its effort to ensure nutritious, healthy food reaches communities that need it most, Oregon Food Bank (https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/) was recently awarded a $140,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. (https://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/) These funds will be utilized through May 2021, boosting hunger relief efforts at a time of unprecedented demand while keeping additional food waste out of landfills. The pandemic has affected supply chains for produce, lowering demand from restaurants and other customers, so growers and

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produce, lowering demand from restaurants and other customers, so growers and processors are left with excess food.

“Rescuing food that would go to waste has tremendous environmental benefits — and redirecting that food to feed hungry people is especially important right now,” said DEQ Director Richard Whitman. “DEQ is not only supporting Oregon Food Bank with this grant, but also responding to Gov. Kate Brown’s call to reduce food waste and methane emissions from landfills in Oregon.”

The DEQ grant will cover the costs of transporting and repackaging more than 2 million pounds of fresh produce, including potatoes, apples and oranges, from growers and processors in Oregon, Washington and California. That equates to nearly 1.7 million meals for people experiencing food insecurity, according to Feeding America. (http://www.feedingamerica.org/ways-to-give/faq/about-our-claims) Without this additional support for transit and processing, much of the food would have likely been composted or thrown away. The grant is the latest in a series of DEQ initiatives that have already provided more than $235,000 toward Oregon Food Bank’s transportation and distribution efforts.

“We are experiencing what may be a ‘hundred-year flood’ of hunger — certainly the greatest food insecurity in at least a generation,” shared Oregon Food Bank CEO Susannah Morgan. “The dramatic increase in need for food assistance requires new, creative solutions with longtime partners like the Department of Environmental Quality. This collaboration will help to ensure we all emerge stronger from this crisis — providing much-needed meals to hard-hit communities throughout the region.”

Oregon Food Bank is the coordinating agency for a statewide network of 21 regional food banks and more than 1,400 food assistance sites providing food to people experiencing hunger throughout Oregon and Clark County in Washington.

“Oregon Food Bank has been an incredible partner over the past several years, and we’re excited to be able to award them this grant during an unprecedented time,” Elaine Blatt, senior policy and program analyst at DEQ. “DEQ is focused on reducing wasted food to protect human and environmental health. We rely on the knowledge, compassion and experience of organizations such as Oregon Food Bank to serve the critical social need of redistributing good food that would otherwise be wasted.”

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The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality protects human health and the environment by controlling air and water pollution, reducing the impacts of manufactured products and cleaning up contaminated properties. DEQ engages the public in decision-making and helps communities solve problems in ways that are economically and environmentally sustainable.

From Oregon Food Bank
At Oregon Food Bank, we believe that food and health are basic human rights for all. We know that hunger is not just an individual experience; it is also a community-wide symptom of barriersto employment, education, housing and health care. That's why we work on two fronts in our mission to end hunger in Oregon: we build community connections to help people access nutritious, affordable food today, and we build community power to eliminate the root causes of hunger for good.

To learn more about Oregon Food Bank's efforts to #EmergeStronger go to http://oregonfoodbank.org/emergestronger. (http://oregonfoodbank.org/emergestronger) To find a food bank near you in Oregon go to http://oregonfoodfinder.org/. (http://oregonfoodfinder.org/)

Photo captions
Jason D. Smith, a driver with the Oregon Food Bank, unloads produce in July at the Baltazar Ortiz Family Center in Portland. [Photo courtesy Oregon Food Bank]

A $140,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality will ensure that fresh potatoes and other produce keep coming into Oregon Food Bank during the COVID-19 pandemic. [File photo courtesy Oregon Food Bank]

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Contact Information

Category

Environment & Energy (Newsroom.aspx?category=Environment __ Energy)

Attachments

Images

(https://data.oregon.gov/views/j8eb-8um2/files/dfdec30e-eb89-4fb9-aa73-b4f9588100f4?download=true&filename=Oregon_Food_Bank_grant_truck_2020_0720_thumb.jpg)

(https://data.oregon.gov/views/j8eb-8um2/files/365f4b83-8601-4a6d-9d49-224ac3135023?download=true&filename=Oregon_Food_Bank_grant_file_photo_potatoes_2016_0302_thumb.jpg)

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