



# Hunger Factors 2015

Hunger and Poverty in Oregon and Clark County, WA

Complete Report



and the Oregon Food Bank Network

# Introduction

Oregon Food Bank's Statewide Services team surveys our clients regularly to ascertain who is seeking services from our network of pantries. We identify barriers to food access and learn how our services are helping. We compare the characteristics of the people we serve with the general population. Surveys are offered during a short window of time, through a wide variety of agencies; we learn about the changing conditions among our community partners and obtain a snapshot view of our Network as a whole.

At Oregon Food Bank we care deeply about people facing hunger and hold them in the center of all we do. The Hunger Factors Assessment survey is just one tool we use to identify the demographic, economic, social, health and related factors that affect people accessing service from a food pantry. Understanding the factors of income, race and place on the people we serve - as well as their coping strategies - allows us to design programing. We are also able to create upstream interventions with clients and community partners that can support longer term food security.

Since 1986, OFB has conducted the Hunger Factors Assessment bi-annually. This year's report is unusual in that it comes three years after the last one. We respect the time and energy of those who are filling out the survey, as well as pantry staff and volunteers who adjust their day-of-service processes to support the survey collection, so we strive to keep it short, comprehensible and easy to complete. All the statistics herein are specific to our network's clients unless otherwise noted.

## Methodology

The findings of this report are based on a survey of pantry recipients conducted in the spring of 2015. Oregon Food Bank Statewide Services selected 181 of 463 pantries for participation. Pantries were randomly selected based on annual agency distribution, rural vs urban status, and geographical region within the network service area.

The seven page, 36-item questionnaire was modified from previous Hunger Factors Assessment surveys. Training packets on distribution of surveys were sent to all participating pantries. Regional Food Bank representatives worked with partner agencies to do the same. Surveys were sent directly to the selected agencies in a quantity based on an estimated number of households served in one week, anchored by 2013-2014 service figures. The number of Spanish- and Russian-language surveys provided were based on advice from Regional Food Bank representatives.

The selected agencies offered a survey to a representative of every household that requested food assistance during a three-week period or until the surveys ran out. Surveys were distributed from April 6 through April 27. Clients were free to decline participation in the survey. Completion of the survey was *not* a requirement for receipt of food. Respondents were assured anonymity and confidentiality. Of the 10635 surveys distributed to the 181 pantries, 5845 were completed and used for analysis. After receiving surveys, 28 pantries declined to participate.

Data analysis conducted in partnership with Portland State University Survey Research Lab.

**Note:** Food pantries distribute a three to five-day supply of food to recipients within their service area. Each agency has its own distribution guidelines; recipients can usually receive a food parcel 6 to 12 times per year, and sometimes more, depending on the pantry's resources. Individuals who experience food shortages but do not seek help from pantries in the Oregon Food Bank Network are not included in this study.

## Need and Access to Food

Analysis shows that many people are still suffering from the effects of the Great Recession. Although fewer people report being unemployed, respondents pointed to continued high costs of living and stagnant wages as reasons for family food insecurity. Pantries are making a significant difference in the lives of food recipients. In fact, more people are visiting a pantry more often. This suggests that this predictable source of nutritious food is an important coping strategy and that pantries are no longer solely serving as an emergency food source.

**36%** of respondents visit a pantry 12 or more times a year, up from 31% in 2012

**80%** of respondents said food assistance made it possible to get through the month, up from 72% in 2012

**56%** of households said regular food support helped with their monthly budget

**55%** of households said cost is the biggest barrier to eating fruits and vegetables

With access to fresh produce and staples at a food pantry clients say they are able to prepare the nutritious meals they prefer, resulting in increased energy and better health.

Need remains high as many people across Oregon haven't seen the end of the recession in their communities. Food assistance distribution levels have not increased dramatically since 2012. However the number of partner agency programs in the OFB Network has grown as more communities try to respond to neighbors' needs in new ways.

**1,144,000** Food boxes were distributed in Fiscal Year 2015, 1,117,000 in FY 2012, and 792,000 in FY 2008 (a 44% increase since the start of the recession)

*"I really appreciate being able to come [to the pantry]. I always do at the beginning of the month to help when we have little food from the end of the month."*

## Poverty

The 2015 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a household of four is \$24,250; 72% of survey respondents report household incomes below the FPL.

**79%** of households w/kids have household incomes at or below the FPL, compared to 72% of overall households

**45%** of households had kids under the age of 17, down slightly from 47% in 2012 (and 52% in 2010)

**CONTEXT** American Community Survey 5-year estimate 2013: 16.2% of Oregonians experienced (lived in) poverty in the past 12 months, meaning they were at or below the FPL.<sup>1</sup> This number has steadily increased, up from 13.6% in 2009, indicating that an improving economy is not helping everyone.<sup>2</sup>

Strong social networks help families and individuals stay afloat.

**58%** of respondents said they often or sometimes got food from neighbors, friends, or family

When asked “what would help improve your situation and make charity food assistance less necessary for your family?” top responses pointed to basic economic factors:

**31%** Higher wages (30% in 2012)

**29%** Employment (40% in 2012)

**29%** Affordable housing (29% in 2012)

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701; generated by Tracie Weitzman; using American FactFinder: <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>; (November 2015).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701; generated by Tracie Weitzman; using American FactFinder: <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>; (November 2015).

*“Our economy: wage vs. living costs just doesn’t match. Wages need to meet available rent costs: or we need more public housing.”*

*“I plan for when grandchildren are coming over. I freeze meals (leftovers) which are too large to eat all in one sitting. I garden and exchange in summer with neighbors.”*

Food assistance alleviates a portion of the economic burden, allowing many to put resources towards other necessities.

**35%** of households previously receiving assistance from a food pantry said they were able to pay a utility bill because they got food

**29%** of households were able to pay rent or mortgage

## Unemployment

Fewer people report being unemployed, but that does not mean fewer hungry people. 38% of households say at least one member is working, a figure that hasn't changed since 2012. The number of households that include someone who is disabled and unable to work, or who is retired, has increased to 36% in 2015 from 30% in 2012.

2012	2015	Household unemployment
23%	<b>16%</b>	Unemployed, looking for work
76%	<b>70%</b>	Unemployed anytime during the last two years
26%	<b>35%</b>	<i>Subset of above:</i> period of unemployment lasting more than four years
31%	<b>17%</b>	Unemployment Benefits: have received in the last two years
8%	<b>2%</b>	Unemployment Benefits: currently receiving

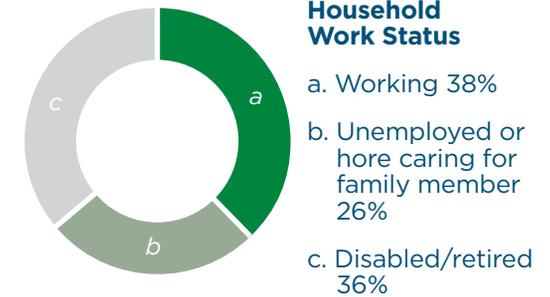
There is no single profile that describes a food insecure household. The underlying economic factors vary according to situation; households have diverse sources of income/employment.

2012	2015	Household unemployment
11%	<b>14%</b>	Retirement: at least one person retired
19%	<b>23%</b>	Social Security: receiving benefits
45%	<b>44%</b>	Income: reporting some kind of employment
61%	<b>49%</b>	Declining income: had a drop in their monthly income in the last two years

*“The food bank can help free up resources to help you manage other financial challenges we all face in one area or another.”*

**21%** of households with children report not working due to being unable to afford or find suitable childcare

**CONTEXT** State unemployment data for September 2015 showed only three Oregon counties (Benton, Hood River, and Washington) at or below the national unemployment average of 5.1%, seasonally adjusted. While the state average is around 6.2% with steady declines in the past few years, recovery has remained slow in Southern and Central Eastern Oregon with Curry, Grant, Crook, Josephine, and Klamath counties all with rates above 8.5%.<sup>1</sup>



## Health

Food pantry recipients suffer from diet-related diseases, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, at a higher rate than the general public. Aside from the increased costs related to poor health, the highest source of family debt continued to be medical bills (39%). However, 52% of households say they were able to prepare healthier meals because of food they received at a pantry.

**27%** of households have at least one member with diabetes (of those households, 37% have a member aged 65+)

**12%** of Oregonians have been diagnosed or are undiagnosed with diabetes<sup>2</sup>

**48%** of households have at least one member with high blood pressure (of those households, 34% have a member aged 65+)

**32%** of Oregon adults have been told by a health care professional they have high blood pressure<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> State of Oregon Employment Department <<https://www.qualityinfo.org/ed-uesti/?at=1&t1=4101000000~unemprate~y~2000~2015>>

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Diabetes Report January 2015 <<https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/ChronicDisease/Diabetes/Documents/OregonDiabetesReport.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> Oregon 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System <<https://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/Surveys/AdultBehaviorRisk/brfssresults/Documents/2013/Hypertension13.pdf>>

The good news is that with food assistance households are in a better position to manage health.

- 82%** say they cook at home daily
- 52%** report preparing healthier meals because they got food from a food pantry
- 20%** had more energy for work and family
- 18%** report being able to buy needed medicine
- 8%** their children missed fewer days of school
- 15%** often, **25%** sometimes: pantry households also accessing Free Produce Program

**CONTEXT** In the 2012 report *It's Dinnertime: A Report on Low-Income Families' Efforts to Plan, Shop for, and Cook Healthy Meals*, Share Our Strength researchers found that 85% of low-income parents in America said that eating healthy meals is important to their families. The report also found that 61% of households are making dinner from scratch each night, indicating that access to pantry staples is crucial.<sup>1</sup>

When asked, "What are some of the challenges to eating fruits and vegetables at home?" respondents answered:

- 55%** Cost
- 18%** No challenges
- 15%** Limited food storage
- 14%** Limited availability
- 6%** Knowing how to prepare
- 2%** Don't like the taste

*"Knowing that there is a place to help us get food takes away the stress of every day medical bills."*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nokidhungry.org/cmstudy>

**CONTEXT** OFB is pursuing a strategic goal of increasing produce distribution by 50% in 5 years. Our survey indicates that cost and availability are the most likely factors keeping clients from accessing healthy food.

Fresh, perishable foods are very desirable to clients accessing food assistance.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all households have some way to store and prepare this healthy food. Of those households that do not identify as homeless:

**98%** have a refrigerator

**97%** have a stove

**95%** have an oven

**91%** have a microwave

**85%** have a freezer

## Insurance

Survey results indicated more individuals and children are covered by medical insurance. This year, 73% of households included at least one person receiving coverage under the Oregon Health Plan or Basic Health Washington, a 15% increase since the 2012 survey.

**60%** of adults have health insurance in 2015, compared to 36% in 2012

**82%** of kids do have health insurance, compared to 71% in 2012

**CONTEXT** Nationwide, the number of people without health insurance had dropped to 11.9% at the time the survey was conducted, according to a recent Gallup poll.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, E., H. Hudson, K. Webb, and P. Crawford. 2011. *Food preferences of users of the emergency food system*. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 6(2):179–187.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.gallup.com/poll/182348/uninsured-rate-dips-first-quarter.aspx?utm\\_source=Well-Being&utm\\_medium=newsfeed&utm\\_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/poll/182348/uninsured-rate-dips-first-quarter.aspx?utm_source=Well-Being&utm_medium=newsfeed&utm_campaign=tiles)

## Food Insecurity

Despite the improving economy, lower unemployment rates, and better access to health care, many families still struggle to put food on the table.

- 28%** worry always or often about where their next meal is coming from
- 82%** report that there have been times in the last 12 months when they did not have enough money to buy food that they or their family needed
- 38%** of households reported watering down food or drinks to make them last longer
- 31%** of households with kids report cutting kids meals, trending down from 37% in 2012

**CONTEXT** Oregon's food insecurity rate continues to remain above the national average. For Oregon households, 16.1% are considered food insecure according to the USDA ERS 2014 Food Insecurity Report. The national average is 14.3%.<sup>1</sup>

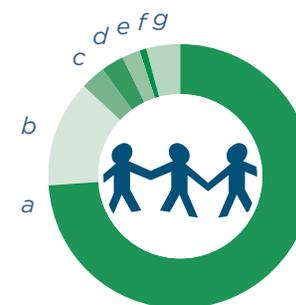
## Demographics

The average household size is 3.4 individuals. Of all individuals served, 32% are children aged 17 or younger. 46% of respondents report some kind of education beyond a high school diploma.

- 10%** share of households are 65 or over, up from 8% in 2012
- 18%** of respondents were 65 or over, up from 15% in 2012
- 19%** households have a veteran, compared to 20% in 2012

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err194.aspx>

*“Keeping a positive attitude is key to being happy during your struggles. Give more to your children than you give to yourself. They are our future, our everything. Without them life couldn't continue.”*



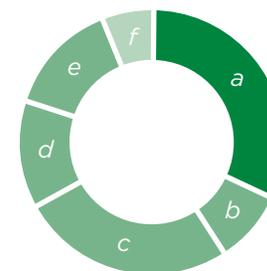
- a. White: 74%
- b. Hispanic: 13%
- c. African American: 3%
- d. American Indian or Native Alaskan: 3%
- e. Asian: 2%
- f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 1%
- g. Mixed: 4%

# Housing

A majority of people visiting food pantries indicated they owned or rented a place to live, but it appears many may still be in transition. 29% said they moved to find housing they could afford in the last two years, while 11% had been evicted or received an eviction notice. 18% indicated they had moved to find work.

2015	Housing situation
39%	Renting
27%	Own Home or Mobile Home
12%	Subsidized Housing
11%	Shared Housing
11%	Unhoused

2015	Household composition
52%	Families with children
29%	Single
16%	Couples
17%	Other



- Age**
- a. Youth 0-17: 32%
  - b. Young adults 18-23: 9%
  - c. Adults 24-44: 26%
  - d. Adults 45-54: 13%
  - e. Adults 55-69: 14%
  - f. Seniors 70+: 6%

*“This food bank has literally saved the lives of my two sons and myself. It is a great asset to our community and we could not make it each month without them.”*

## SNAP

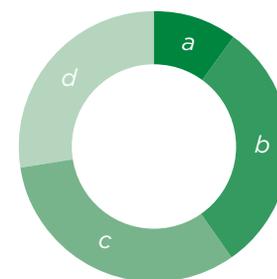
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) is a federal program that provides assistance to eligible low-income people nationwide. By improving the purchasing power of participants, SNAP can help alleviate the need to access food through the charitable network.

According to the most recent information available, an estimated 73% of all Oregonians eligible for SNAP receive benefits. Of Oregonians over the age of 65, only 42% receive benefits.<sup>1</sup>

Share of overall households receiving SNAP is steady at 58% (compared to 62% in 2012 and 52% in 2010).

When asked, “If you do not get SNAP, why not?” the top answers are similar to those in 2012:

- 19%** do not know if they qualify
- 19%** do not qualify, income too high
- 12%** plan to apply
- 11%** benefits were cut off



**How many weeks of grocery shopping that SNAP benefits cover:**

- a. All month: 10%
- b. 3 weeks: 30%
- c. 2 weeks: 32%
- d. Less than 2 weeks: 27%

*“I have a master’s degree in counseling psychology. I work a salaried position as a clinical supervisor in my field. My pay is dreadfully low... I cannot afford to feed my family or pay student loans.”*

<sup>1</sup> 2013-14 Participation Report SNAP: Supporting Healthier Oregonians, Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon <<https://oregonhunger.org/blog/2013-14-snap-participation-report>>

## Appendix

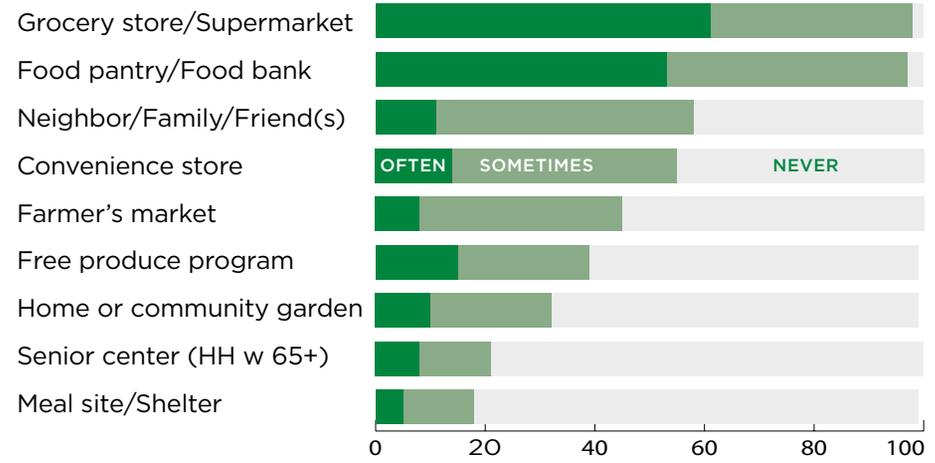
2012	2015	INCOME: Current sources
26%	<b>26%</b>	Employment, regular
19%	<b>23%</b>	Social Security
21%	<b>23%</b>	SSI or Social Security Disability
8%	<b>8%</b>	Employment, temporary
5%	<b>6%</b>	Self-employment
5%	<b>6%</b>	Retirement or Pension
6%	<b>4%</b>	TANF- cash welfare for families
4%	<b>4%</b>	Family or friend's support
3%	<b>3%</b>	Veteran's benefits or Armed Forces
3%	<b>3%</b>	Day Labor
8%	<b>2%</b>	Unemployment benefits
3%	<b>2%</b>	Farm related work
3%	<b>2%</b>	Child support
2%	<b>1%</b>	Student grants or work study
1%	<b>0%</b>	Worker's compensation or SAIF
9%	<b>10%</b>	No income

2012	2015	EMPLOYMENT: At least one household member
22%	<b>21%</b>	Working full time (one job)
15%	<b>14%</b>	Working part time (one job)
2%	<b>1%</b>	Working full time job plus part time job
2%	<b>2%</b>	Working more than one part time job
20%	<b>22%</b>	Disabled and unable to work
11%	<b>14%</b>	Retired
8%	<b>6%</b>	Staying home with child or disabled person
23%	<b>16%</b>	Unemployed and looking for work
5%	<b>4%</b>	Unemployed and not looking for work

2012	2015	DEBT: at least one of the following
40%	<b>39%</b>	Hospital or doctor/dentist
28%	<b>28%</b>	Credit cards
28%	<b>25%</b>	Overdue (unpaid) utility bills
23%	<b>23%</b>	Debt to family/friends
15%	<b>16%</b>	Student loans
8%	<b>14%</b>	None -no debts
12%	<b>10%</b>	Overdue (unpaid) rent
3%	<b>10%</b>	Other (combined)

2012	2015	What would make food assistance less necessary?
30%	<b>31%</b>	Higher wages
40%	<b>29%</b>	Employment
29%	<b>29%</b>	Affordable housing
15%	<b>15%</b>	College classes or degree
28%	<b>14%</b>	Health care
16%	<b>13%</b>	Transportation
16%	<b>13%</b>	Increased work hours
16%	<b>12%</b>	Job training or apprenticeship
15%	<b>12%</b>	Community garden or home garden
11%	<b>11%</b>	GED
10%	<b>9%</b>	Classes on budgeting
9%	<b>9%</b>	Classes on how to can and preserve food
8%	<b>7%</b>	Classes on how to shop and prepare food
7%	<b>6%</b>	Counseling
7%	<b>6%</b>	Safe, affordable child care

**How often do you or members of your household get food from the following sources?**



# Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all of the patient people who took time to fill out surveys and share their experiences. The quotes in this report are from additional comments and stories collected in the survey.

## Thanks for the preparation of this report to:

Debi Elliot and Cameron Mulder of Portland State University Survey Research Lab for data analysis

Staff at OFB Network of Regional Food Banks for helping implement the survey

## Regional Food Banks (Counties Served):

ACCESS Food Share (Jackson)  
CAPECO Food Share (Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla & Wheeler)  
CCA Regional Food Bank (Clatsop)  
Clark County Food Bank (Clark WA)  
Columbia Pacific Food Bank (Columbia)  
Community Connection (Baker, Grant, Union & Wallowa)  
FOOD For Lane County (Lane)  
Food Share of Lincoln County (Lincoln)  
Josephine County Food Bank (Josephine)  
Klamath/Lake Counties Food Bank (Klamath & Lake)  
Linn-Benton Food Share (Linn & Benton)  
Marion-Polk Food Share (Marion & Polk)  
Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (Hood River, Sherman & Wasco)  
NeighborImpact (Crook, Deschutes & Jefferson)  
Oregon Food Bank  
Metro Services (Clackamas, Multnomah)  
Washington County Services (Washington)  
Tillamook County Services (Tillamook)  
Southeast Oregon Services (Harney & Malheur)  
South Coast Food Share (Coos & Curry)  
UCAN Food Bank (Douglas)  
YCAP Regional Food Bank (Yamhill)

## Thanks to all the staff and volunteers at these partner agencies for administering the survey and doing all the good work they do to help neighbors in need:

A.W.A.R.E.  
Alsea Christian Fellowship Pantry  
Arlington Help Center  
Battle Ground Adventist Community Services  
Bethel Congregational Church  
Bible Baptist Church  
Bonanza Living Springs Fellowship  
Cannon Beach Food Pantry  
Capital Park Wesleyan Church - Lee's Place  
Catholic Community Services - Eugene  
Catholic Community Services - Springfield  
Charleston Food Bank  
Clark County Adventist Community Services  
Colton Helping Hands  
Community Care Food Pantry  
Condon Food Pantry  
Coos Food Cupboard  
Cornelius United Methodist Church  
Crossfire Hands of Hope  
Dexter Food Pantry  
Dillard-Winston Food Bank  
Elgin Food Bank  
Esther's Pantry  
First Baptist Church Pantry of Prineville  
First Presbyterian Church of Medford  
FISH of Albany  
FISH of Grants Pass  
FISH of Orchards  
FISH of Roseburg  
FISH of Vancouver  
FISH Parkdale  
Florence Food Share  
Foothills Community Church  
Forest Grove Foursquare Church  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church  
God's Food Box  
God's Lighthouse Church Pantry  
God's Storehouse  
Grace Food Pantry

Grand View Baptist Church  
Halfway Lions - Panhandle Food Bank  
Harney County Food Bank  
Hillsboro Family Resource Center  
Holy Trinity Food Closet  
HOPE First Presbyterian  
Hope on the Hill Food Pantry  
Huntington Food Bank  
Irrigon Boardman Emergency Assistance Center  
Jefferson Community Food Pantry  
John Day Helping Hands Pantry  
Keizer Community Food Bank  
Klamath Falls Friends Church  
Klamath Lutheran Church Pantry  
Lowell Food Pantry  
Mainspring PDX  
Manna House Pantry  
Mano-A-Mano  
Manos Abiertas - Seventh Day Adventist  
Mapleton Food Share  
McKenzie River Food Pantry  
Mehama Community Church/Joseph's Storehouse of Hope  
Mission Benedict  
Murray Hills Christian Church  
Neighbor to Neighbor Ministries  
Neighborhood House Community Services  
Nestucca Pass It on Pantry  
Newberg FISH  
Next Chapter - First Christian  
North Bend Presbyterian Food Cupboard  
North County Community Food Bank  
North County Food Bank  
Nyssa Community Food Pantry  
Oakridge Food Pantry  
One Life  
Open Door Counseling EFB  
Philomath Food Bank  
Pilot Rock Food Pantry  
Portland Adventist Community Services  
Portland Vineyard Church King's Kindness Ministries  
Pray Big! Food Pantry  
Project Blessing Food Bank  
ROC Food Pantry

Rock Creek Church  
Rogue Family Center  
Rogue River Community Center  
Salvation Army - Baker City  
Salvation Army - Eugene  
Salvation Army - Salem  
Salvation Army - Vancouver  
Salvation Army Moore St Center  
Salvation Army of Josephine County  
Sandy Community Action  
School Pantry at Alder Elementary  
School Pantry at Cesar Chavez Elementary  
School Pantry at Earl Boyles Elementary  
School Pantry at East Gresham Grade School  
School Pantry at Echo Shaw Elementary  
School Pantry at Kelly Elementary  
School Pantry at Lynch View Elementary  
School Pantry at Madison High School  
School Pantry at Shaver Elementary  
Scotts Mills Community Center Food Cupboard  
Seventh Day Adventist - Canyonville  
Seventh Day Adventist - Cave Junction  
Seventh Day Adventist - Coquille  
Seventh Day Adventist - Dallas Community Services  
Seventh Day Adventist - Glide (Helping Hands)  
Seventh Day Adventist - Gold Beach  
Seventh Day Adventist - Madras  
Seventh Day Adventist - Redmond  
Seventh Day Adventist - Rogue River  
Share & Care  
Sharing Hands Pantry  
Sharon Community Services Seventh Day Adventist  
SHEM (Sweet Home Emergency Ministries)  
South Corvallis Food Bank  
South Douglas Food Bank  
St Andre Bessette Catholic Church  
St Francis CAC  
St John's Food Pantry  
St Luke Lutheran Church  
St Mark's Lutheran Church  
St Vincent dePaul - Astoria  
St Vincent dePaul - Bend  
St Vincent dePaul - Blessed Frederic  
St Vincent dePaul - Brush Prairie  
St Vincent dePaul - Christ the King  
St Vincent dePaul - Gearhart  
St Vincent dePaul - McMinnville

St Vincent dePaul - St Andrew  
St Vincent dePaul - St Matthew  
St Vincent dePaul - The Dalles  
St Vincent dePaul - Vancouver  
Stayton Community Food Bank  
Sunset Presbyterian Church - Helping Hands  
Sutherlin Oakland Food Pantry  
The Bread Basket  
The Giving Plate - Bend  
The Lord's Cupboard  
Tigard United Methodist Church - Bethlehem House of  
Bread  
Toledo Pantry  
Triangle Food Box  
Tualatin Schoolhouse Pantry  
Turner Christian Food Bank  
Turning Point Church Community Pantry  
U.Me.Us Food Pantry  
University Park Adventist Community Services  
Vernonia Cares  
Wallowa People's Pantry  
Wapato Valley Church  
West Medford Pantry  
William Temple House West  
Wilsonville Community Sharing