



2026

Food Community Grant Program

Food Security is the Foundation of a Thriving Community

Nothing underlies a healthy, stable community quite like food. Yet despite being a food-producing county, 37% of Santa Barbara County adults experience food insecurity, with consequences that ripple across health, education, and economic opportunity. As funding cuts deepen the crisis, the Santa Barbara Foundation is committed to helping nonprofits stay stable and effective in serving our community.

Structural Challenges

Federal food assistance is shrinking

New restrictions have eliminated eligibility for many community members, and expanded work requirements will put thousands more at risk.

Demand is outpacing supply

As food assistance shrinks, residents will turn to nonprofits — who are also operating with fewer resources — for help.

Services aren't reaching everyone

Food insecurity is concentrated in North County, rural inland areas, and dense urban cores, and the communities that need help don't always receive it.

Innovation needs flexibility to grow

Nonprofits are meeting growing needs with bold new approaches. Sustained investment and capacity building are essential to turn promising models into lasting community impact.

Our Approach

The Santa Barbara Foundation's Food Community Grant Committee carefully vets dozens of applications and provides two-year, unrestricted operating grants to nonprofits addressing food insecurity across the county. By reducing administrative burden and enabling longer-term planning, multi-year funding frees our partners to focus on what matters most.



Photo: Foodbank of Santa Barbara County

Photo: Veronica Slavina

Our Impact

Since launching in 2022, the Santa Barbara Foundation's multi-year Food Community Grant Program has awarded \$725,000 to 15 organizations delivering food assistance across Santa Barbara County, collectively reaching tens of thousands of residents each year.

Examples of Impact



Photo: Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center

Rural Food Access

Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center (CVFRC): In one of our county's most isolated communities, CVFRC is the primary food distribution provider, serving up to 125 households weekly — roughly a quarter of the entire valley's population. Some residents drive 20 miles just to pick up food. SBF funding sustains weekly distributions and will support the development of an emergency food reserve that will prove critical when wildfires cut off road access into the valley.

Dignity & Choice

Unity Shoppe: Unity Shoppe served over 56,000 individuals in 2025 — a 20% jump from the year before — even as donated food volumes declined. Their choice-based model lets clients shop like a grocery store, preserving dignity alongside food access. With locations in Santa Barbara and Lompoc, Unity Shoppe is now planning expansion into Santa Maria, where need is significant and services are few.



Photo: Unity Shoppe

Join Us

Organizations consistently request more than double the available funds — and that gap is widening as residents rely more heavily on nonprofits. Your investment directly expands the number of organizations SBF can support, ensuring more families have access to the food they need.



Give Now

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