

SUPPORT of North County Food Bank Distribution - Infrastructure

My name is Cynthia Speckman, I am a resident of Manzanita. I know the impact of the North County Food Bank through a variety of perspectives: as someone who has historical and present day lived experience with food insecurity, someone who has worked in the International and Domestic Nonprofit world for over 35 years and someone who volunteers/organizes in the area of food security, including with the North County Food Bank as a board member and currently the Vice-President.

That impact is seen and felt via relationships formed both with other clients, new clients, community partners, community members, volunteers, donors, businesses and the vast array of stakeholders involved in a rural community Nonprofit committed to food security that has operated for 33 years - every week. In my three years on the board I have built relationships with community partners - those that work in food security and those that care about food security, those that work in healthcare and prioritize food security and those grow food to give to the community and more. I have come to know the most important stakeholder - those who trust us to support them when food is needed, when dollars are short and when prices are high. Those who trust us to make the most of our \$\$ so they can make the most of their food supplies and food dollars. I have built a connection with other volunteers - Food Bank conversations are my favorite and I have worked closely with some of the best people on the planet in board meetings.

What I know from a lifetime in the NonProfit world is that volunteer driven organizations seldom last for 3 plus decades, seldom continue to scale up in their services, seldom avoid implosion and seldom see such generosity - year after year- from the community they call home. This organization has done all that, and when any of those were on shaky ground they have met the occasion and used it as an opportunity to engage, learn and transform.

I say all this to say. This volunteer driven organization has the investment of all the stakeholders to make this new facility a reality. They have the resources (from cash on hand and private donations coupled with a few small donor (under 100k) grants. They have persevered, They have the generous support of this community, from the local bread delivery who allows us to glean baked goods to the 15 donations bins around the communities in November when SNAP got withheld - all of which were overflowing with food every few days - to the small dollar donor, the large donors and the 350+ (on average) volunteer hours the community puts in. They have the investment of clients who are writing letters like this one and continue to show up and trust us; while also being committed to helping others, this is a beautiful thing to witness on food bank days.

This new facility is a MUST for North County. The board has been trying to find a way to rent or build for the past 10 years (knowing the demolition of our building was imminent). In October we left that building and now operate in a small and TEMPORARY space. The land using to build was purchased in 2023 and we are just finding our way - to the juncture where we are SHOVEL READY with all the pieces falling place. This project will start as soon as possible with the hope of completion date by the end of 2026.

This request meets a variety of criteria that is important to the 2026 legislative priorities: it helps strengthen the safety net for SNAP recipients and other food insecure persons - as federal funds are unreliable and ever changing - this is important. As you declared an emergency with 5701 these funds put the NCFB as neighbors to two local organizations that are gathering sites in North Tillamook County. The emergency of food security coupled with housing costs is a real issue that I know you are tackling. Our modest request for \$275,000 is 23% of our projected budget. As stated above; cash on hand, donations and a few small grants allow us to be ready to move forward.

Please invest in this infrastructure proposal, which is an investment in family/individual stability, food security, and an expandable site or additional services as they are identified.

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