

13



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March 4, 2022

Introductory Letter from Authorized Representative

Applicant 501c3: United Way of Merced County, 531 W Main Street, Merced, CA, 95340.

Contact: Manuel Alvarado, CEO, Main (209) 383-4242, Direct (209) 384-1205, ceo@unitedwaymerced.org

Fiscally sponsored group to implement the proposed program:

Community Partnership Alliance, 936 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340

Contact: Stergios (Steve) Roussos, Coordinating Director, 209-489-9913, sroussos5@gmail.com

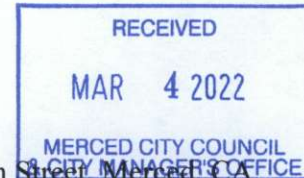
Community Funding 2022-2023 Proposal Name:

Merced City Edible Food Recovery and Waste Prevention

Dear City of Merced Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to propose a request for Community Funding for 2021-2022. For over 67 years, the United Way of Merced County has been serving our community through our mission of connecting people, resources, and organizations to create a thriving community for everyone. One way we live our mission is by serving as a fiscal sponsor for grassroots community groups. We provide the administrative and financial services support to allow them to carry out their important work within their respective communities. One of our longest-sponsored grassroots groups (since 2009) is the Community Partnership Alliance (CPA) which will be the implementation team for this proposal. This letter provides a brief background on the CPA and introduces the proposed project with examples of related, recent work.

This proposal for a Food Recovery and Food Security (FRFS) program will grow the work that CPA has established in partnership with UC Merced's Bobcat Eats Food Waste Awareness and Prevention Program since the COVID-19 pandemic began (April 2020). FRFS collects food from local source (city flea markets and farmers markets, local farms, the Food Bank, local grocers) and distributes the food in weekend food pantries, free People's Fridges, to child care providers serving low-income families, and with home delivers to individuals unable to leave their home.



Since 2002, the Community Partnership Alliance (CPA) of the United Way of Merced County has addressed social and environmental justice priorities of Merced through community-academic collaboration. This began with a formal UC Merced Chancellor's Pledge (i.e., community-benefit agreement) signed in 2003 with the CPA to commit to specific goals for community health and development. Dozens of collaborative projects have occurred since. The currently proposed project builds on this long partnership. In 2018, UC Merced partnered with the Merced County Food Bank to receive the first-ever food waste prevention CalRecycle grant for Merced County. That grant created the Bobcat Eats Food Waste and Prevention Program, through which UC Merced and the Food Bank recovered edible food for distribution to low-income families and the university student population. Bobcat Eats strengthened the community-campus relationships by increasing student participation with the community for food rescue and distribution and raising awareness for food waste prevention.

Four years later when the COVID-19 pandemic began, this community-campus partnership responded to the rising food insecurity among Merced's predominantly poor, under-invested neighborhoods. Between April and September 2020, Bobcat Eats partnered with the CPA and the Community Initiatives for Collective Impact to launch three new edible food recovery and food waste prevention projects: Pop-Up People's Pantry, People's Fridge, and Family Nutrition Hubs. These programs all serve the City of Merced.

These three projects began and grew progressively with input and participation by local people experiencing food insecurity. In April 2020, families alerted us to job and income losses and school closures impacting access to food. We began the Pop-Up People's Pantry. Every Saturday, from 1-2:30 pm fresh, nutritious produce is arranged on long tables (for physical distancing) for people to self-select. Bread, milk, and meat products are available occasionally. Community members love the pantry. But many people explained that pantries have limited hours, making it difficult to get food when needed. We explored the Freedge, a nationwide initiative of free refrigerated food. With volunteers and donations, we built our first neighborhood-based People's Fridge in September 2020, a school-based People's Fridge in March 2021, and a People's Fridge in a low-income community center in September 2021. Merced County First 5 heard of our success from families with young children and asked if we could design and start a pilot project for food security. During COVID, child care providers surveyed by First 5 nominated food security in their top two priorities. Hunger impacts Merced children's growth and development more than ever during COVID. In partnership with local child care providers, First 5, and Merced County Office of Education, we began "Family Nutrition Hubs" in April 2021. Family Nutrition Hubs replicate a modified version of the Pop-Up People's Pantry and People's Fridge through home-based child care providers serving low-income families. Home-based child care providers serve as distribution hubs for recovered edible food for the children and families under their care, and to nearby families. Each Family Nutrition Hub serves between five to sixteen families with a weekly pantry and on-site fridge. We started with eight hubs in May 2021 and grew to 18 hubs in December 2021. As with the Pop-Up People's Pantry and People's Fridge, each hub arranges produce for parents to choose and take home when they pick-up their children. The recovered produce also serves as a new source of nutrition food for the children during child care.

The Pop-Up People's Pantry, People's Fridge, and Family Nutrition Hubs operate through our collaborative team of CPA, UC Merced Bobcat Eats, and Community Initiatives. The projects

are supported through a combination of donations, grants, and in-kind support. Staff and volunteers rescue edible food flagged for disposal by restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, flea markets, farmers' markets, food banks, and other sources of produce. Rescued food is stored and organized for distribution at our central location, the 18th Street People's Garden at 936 W. 18th St, Merced. Food is allocated to the pantry, fridge and hubs throughout the week. Staff and volunteers operate all aspects of these projects, including routine site cleaning and maintenance, outreach and advertising, fund development, and program evaluation.

Each of these three projects was designed with input and participation of people in our community experiencing food insecurity. Active community-engagement is a key reason why each project is directly in neighborhoods and the streets (not at an agency or institution) to reach families most in need of food easily, when they want, with choice and with dignity while also avoiding any stigma of receiving free food. For example, we avoid "food boxes" – rearranging boxed food donations into self-serve options. This prevents wasting unwanted foods that may be forced on people in food box donations.

Within the past year and a half, we have seen people trust these projects as a valuable complement to food distribution by churches, food pantries, schools, and social services. The community-based and community-led nature of these projects provides a sense of ownership and dignity for people experiencing food insecurity. These factors led to faster and more stable growth of these projects. As these projects have grown, we have seen opportunities for job creation. The variety of tasks for finding, organizing, and distributing food can be organized into meaningful, paid jobs in a food recovery business. Merced City Community Funding will help us grow these projects into a cohesive edible food recovery social enterprise to help Merced food retailers and producers meet SB 1383 requirements while feeding families in need and preventing greenhouse gas emissions.

Community Funding for one year will be used to nearly double our projects' capacity and help us further operationalize these projects into a social enterprise to serve Merced City's SB1383 needs for edible food recovery. Thank you for this opportunity to work with the City of Merced to improve the quality of life for our residents. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Manuel J. Alvarado, CEO

Proposal for the City of Merced Community Funding 2022-2023

Applicant: United Way of Merced County
for fiscally sponsored Community Partnership Alliance
Project Name: Merced City Food Recovery and Food Security Project

Individual Staff Experiences

Stergios Roussos, PhD, MPH, is co-founder and director of the CPA. He provides direct supervision of the activities of the grant and is the direct report to the United Way for the CPA. This includes reporting to the United Way's Jonathan Towell, the fiscal director, and Manual Alvarado, the Chief Executive Officer. His activities will be weekly meetings with grant funded staff as well as monthly reporting to the project lead organization. Dr. Roussos will be leading the program evaluation. Dr. Roussos has over 25 years of experience in developing, implementing and evaluating community-based projects, and has led CPA's food security work since 2017.

In-kind support will be provided by UC Merced's Sustainable Foods Program Coordinator, Erin Meyer. Ms. Meyer will lead staff training and supervision for all food recovery and education, lead food sponsor relationships, direct a food waste prevention campaign including education and outreach within the community, and co-lead program evaluation with Dr. Roussos. Ms. Meyer uses various social media tools to grow our online community and encourage others to prevent food waste in the community and at home. She is also expert in traditional print and in-person marketing and outreach.

Ismael Munoz, the Food Distribution Coordinator, will lead recovering, organizing, and distributing food along with paid and volunteer personnel for the pantry, fridges, and hubs. Mr. Munoz was a founder and co-developer of Family Nutrition Hubs and has been leading these duties since April 2020. He is bilingual/bicultural Spanish-speaker/Latino with over 30 years of service in Merced County.

Food Collections Coordinator. To be determined. The Food Collections Coordinator will be lead the identification of food source partners, arrange agreements and MOUs, and manage the relationships with store administrators and managers to ensure stable food sources throughout the program.

One of the main components of this proposal is the Community Food Ambassadors. These are dedicated individuals of the community that provide the necessary outreach and support of the goals of this grant. They have an intrinsic need to help others with food security and do what they can when they can to help. Community Food Ambassadors have been helping our programs since their inception with all aspects of program implementation. However, they have busy lives themselves and help on a limited time basis.

Proposed Project & Scope of Services

Project start-end dates:

July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023

Community Funding for one year will be used to nearly double our projects' capacity and help us further operationalize these projects into a social enterprise to serve Merced County's SB1383 needs for edible food recovery. The following activities are ongoing and illustrate what will be continued and expanded with support from Community Funding.

1. **FOOD DONATION & COLLECTION.** Food donations and collections are used to collectively support the Pop-Up People's Pantry, People's Fridge, and the Family Nutrition Hubs. Currently, we collect food weekly from at least 15 sources including the Food Bank, Bagel Tyme, Jantz, Food 4 Less, Mercy Medical Center Merced, the Atwater Flea Market, the Merced Flea Market and more. Individuals also drop-off produce to our homebase from their homes and small farms. Edible food collection includes an average of 131.791 pounds per rescue in this last quarter. With Community Funding, we plan to increase by 5 sources that will include Merced City School District (13 schools), the Los Banos Flea Market, and local grocers. These improvements would result in an additional 100,000 pounds over the grant term. In addition to some new food storage with Community Funding, the Merced City School District has agreed to assist us with storing surplus food as needed in their 1,000 sq ft refrigerated warehouse.

2. **EDIBLE FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT POP-UP PEOPLE'S PANTRY:** Currently, we serve an average of 44 people per week, distributing an average of 152.012 lbs of food, 80% produce and 20% breads, canned goods, and milk or meat products. With Community Funding, we plan to expand the existing pantry and offer more surplus food in a greater variety resulting in a 10% increase from 7,904.624 per year to 8,695.086.

3. **EDIBLE FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT PEOPLE'S FRIDGE:** Currently, an average of 33 people per week are served across three locations. Roughly 504 pounds of produce per week are donated to the fridges by community members and other rescued food from flea markets, farmers' markets and other locations aids in stocking the fridges. With the CalRecycle grant, we plan to open three additional People's Fridges. This will increase edible food from our rescues from 26,208 lbs per year to 52,416 lbs per year.

4. **EDIBLE FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT FAMILY NUTRITION HUBS:** Currently, we serve a 18 hubs per week (reaching a minimum of 75 families), distributing at least 1,000 lbs of produce per week, consisting of 90% produce with occasional canned food, milk, and eggs. With Community Funding, we will increase our services to total of 32 hubs, distributing at least 2,000 lbs of produce per week to a minimum of 120 families. This will increase edible food from our rescues from a minimum of 52,000 lbs per year to 104,000 lbs per year.

5. **FOOD WASTE PREVENTION:** Currently, we provide fact sheets, social media posts, and informal education during events to raise awareness of food waste prevention among consumers (i.e. not discarding food by "use by date"; how to cook root to stem; how to love and use imperfect food). We do not measure the results of these educational activities on behavior change and waste. With Community Funding, we will develop, implement and evaluate the

impact of a Food Waste Prevention (FWP) campaign to raise awareness of best practices for food waste prevention by consumers and food producers. Examples may include surplus food workshops, educational videos, multi-lingual fliers. Our FWP Campaign will build on our existing base of seven social media groups each with a presence on multiple social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube with over 10,800 followers, over 100 consumers per week in our pantry and fridge program, over 100 families per week touched by our Family Nutrition Hubs, and roughly 30 regular food donors ranging from larger supermarkets to small businesses and family farmers. Additionally, with Merced City School District's partnership, at least 13,000 students and their staff will be reached. At least three weekly social media posts will provide fun, creative and interactive information on FWP. At least three different print fact sheets on FWP in English, Spanish and Hmong will be designed for distribution at events and during food collection and distribution. At least three 6-12-minute motivational videos on FWP will be created (at least one in Spanish) to post on our social media and websites and social media of our partners. FWP will be evaluated by self-report in ongoing online surveys and surveys at our weekly in-person events. Change in FWP by food producers and retailers will be assessed by self-report and observations of new and modified policies, practices, and programs during our weekly food collection visits.

Program Budget: July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023

	Total	Requested	Other Committed Funding
-			
<u>PERSONNEL</u>			
Salaries/Wages			
Project Co-Director (20% FTE)	\$24,960.00	\$12,480.00	\$12,480.00
Project Co-Director UC (40% FTE)	\$34,000.00	\$0.00	\$34,000.00
Food Distribution Coordinator (50% FTE)	\$41,600.00	\$41,600.00	\$0.00
Program Coordinator (100% FTE)	\$56,000.00	\$28,000.00	\$28,000.00
Community Food Ambassadors, 6 part-time Community Food Ambassadors (CFAs), at 4 hour per week at \$20 per hour	\$24,960.00	\$24,960.00	\$0.00
Total Salaries/Wages:	\$181,520.00	\$107,040.00	\$74,480.00
<u>Fringe Benefits</u>			
35%	\$63,532.00	\$37,464.00	\$26,068.00
Total Benefits:	\$63,532.00	\$37,464.00	\$26,068.00
Total Personnel Expenses:	\$245,052.00	\$144,504.00	\$100,548.00
<u>PROJECT DIRECT EXPENSES</u>			
Project materials and supplies: \$400 per month for printing, \$50 per month for office supplies	\$4,800.00	\$0.00	\$4,800.00
Local mileage/travel support:(\$300 per month)	\$3,600.00	\$0.00	\$3,600.00
Refrigerated box truck (16 ft)	\$115,000.00	\$115,000.00	\$0.00
TOTAL Operating Expenses:	\$123,400.00	\$115,000.00	\$8,400.00
TOTAL Program Expenses:	\$368,452.00	\$259,504.00	\$108,948.00
Other Expenses: indirect costs of 10% of total	\$25,950.40	\$25,950.40	\$0.00
TOTAL BUDGET	\$394,402.40	\$285,454.40	\$108,948.00

References

Ileisha Sanders, MPH, Public Health Program Coordinator,
Ileisha.Sanders@countyofmerced.com,

Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH), 260 E. 15th St. Merced, CA 95341, (209) 381-1104. We have worked with both Mrs. Russell and Mrs. Sanders separately and together. MCDPH funded the early development of the community gardening work (Merced Local Food Project) and partners in current projects for gardening and food access.

Cori Lambert, Grant Program Specialist, clambert@ccah-alliance.org, 831-430-2518

Central California Alliance for Health, (CCAH, Merced County's Medi-Cal insurer), grants@ccah-alliance.org, (831) 430-5784, 1600 Green Hills Road, Ste. 101, Scotts Valley, CA 95066; 530 West 16th Street, Ste. B, Merced, CA 95340-4710. Mrs. Lambert was our program contact for Project Grow funded by CCAH Grow (see Introductory Letter).

Erin Meyer, MS, Sustainable Food Programs Coordinator, emeyer4@ucmerced.edu,
(209) 205-8102

University of California, Merced, Office of Leadership, Service and Career, Office of Sustainability
5200 Lake Road, Merced, CA 95343. Mrs. Meyer is a lead partner from UC Merced for most of the projects described in this proposal.