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WELCOME

Dear Colleagues,

In our middle-age, the Community Food Bank seeks to accomplish what our first forty-three years did not. That’s a tall order, because so many transformative moments have occurred over our decades of serving people in need. From providing food resources like fresh produce, and educational opportunities like gardening and culinary arts, to developing a better way of life in households, neighborhoods, and communities (through growing and selling local food; community leadership and neighborhood organizing; and advocating for public policies for the common good), we have changed lives in our community.

Middle-age is where we take stock of past successes and failures. We recognize the as-yet unrealized possibilities deep within our DNA, as well as our limits in wishing we could be all things to all people. And then we recommit to what’s most essential—and what we at the CFB can most uniquely contribute in moving the needle on hunger and poverty. In the process, we make space for our mission allies and partners, and for the next generation of mission-impact ambassadors and advocates, to lead the charge.

In this strategic plan, we...

- **Acknowledge that despite decades of feeding hungry people, we haven’t yet fed hunger out of existence.** In fact, we’ve seen the percentage of people in need grow from 14% of the population in southern Arizona four decades ago to 19% of the population today. We need to continue to pursue innovative and collaborative solutions, as well as the right mix of effective direct-service interventions and high-impact social-change public policies.

- **Affirm our commitment to our social-justice origins.** This began with our co-founders experiencing first-hand the indignities of governmental bureaucracy when they needed to use food stamps, and then advocating for a better way to ensure empathy and equity in people’s access to a basic human right. Today, we affirm the necessity of both charity and justice, as we hope to address the challenges of the lack of access to healthy affordable foods, the epidemic of diet-related disease, the individual and societal damage caused by social isolation, and the lack of economic mobility and opportunity. It’s instructive to recall our founder’s recitation of the adage: “What is owed in justice should never be given in charity.”

- **Recognize that our mission-impact is only effective and efficient when we can navigate the temptation of mission-creep.** We need to make a unique contribution through our own evolving services and our social-change advocacy agenda, but sometimes an agency partner(s) of ours can make the greater difference.

Unlike the granularity of a bottom-line business plan, the tricky thing about a top-line strategic plan for a complex community-based nonprofit is to provide compelling compass directions that guide action, without becoming a mechanistic playbook. This plan should be a living touchstone as lessons are learned, opportunities and relationships unfold, risks and dilemmas are coped with, and CFB agilely adapts within our network of diverse constituents and partners to changing needs and circumstances.

Undergirding the broad guidance of this strategic plan are annual operating priorities, plans, and budgets, as well as dashboard targets and metrics for the entire organization. While official plans and budgets will continue to be annually developed, reviewed, and approved in a robust participatory process—and pressure-tested by client and constituent input along the way—inevitably, life happens. And plans can suddenly become old news, requiring CFB to adapt, if we’re to remain responsive and relevant in the fight to end both hunger and poverty.

The development of this three-year strategic plan was led by some members of senior leadership, as well as program and operational leadership, with the CEO, the Board of Directors, and other constituents consulted along the way.
Some forty staff members directly participated in the collaborative design process. This written plan is admittedly an anemic facsimile of all that was learned, wrestled with, problem-solved, and affirmed through many “a-ha” moments along the way. For instance, the concept of “exit strategy” from the perspective of any given program or activity—while sometimes controversial and uncomfortable for the program leaders involved in the strategic planning process—brought clarity around the fundamental challenge of providing breadth or equity of mission-impact across our large and diverse service area. It’s a sobering reality that we can’t provide high-quality, high-touch depth of direct-service everywhere that it’s needed. To meet the challenge of service-area equity, we need to increasingly target our direct service while simultaneously continuing our “train-the-trainer” approach across our network of partners.

Throughout the strategic planning process, the sifting through of data, perspectives, and expertise to arrive at clarity of collective purpose and resolve became an expression of CFB’s ongoing commitment to democratize the collective voice, ownership of, and accountability to our mission. Ultimately, of course, beyond any well-meaning organizational response, the mission must be owned and driven by diverse community members.

In the following pages you’ll find that some nitty-gritty strategic choices have already been made:

1. We could have split the charitable hunger-relief side of our work (feeding people) from the root-cause side of our work (ending poverty) by recommending to our Board of Directors that CFB split, for instance, into two separate and distinct nonprofits: a 501(c)(3) hunger-relief charity, and a 501(c)(4) political action or human-rights and social justice nonprofit. Instead, we’ve chosen to continue upon the path of further integrating and investing in all aspects of our mission-impact work. This inevitably means that in each year’s operational plan and budget we will take steps to ensure operational, human, and financial sustainability across our diversity of programs, increasing investment in some activities while decreasing investment elsewhere. For instance, in the FY19 Operating Plan priorities, we begin to modestly shift some staffing capacity from garden or food-production programming to neighborhood organizing, even as we continue to transition more of the former work to our partners. Similarly, we continue our attempt to incrementally convert our school “snack-pack” supporters and partners to the higher-impact, lower-cost school pantry program.

2. We could have focused mission and financial success within the four walls of our own organization. Instead, we declare that we need to lean into our “network-first” role to reach the full potential of our vision. This means investing in the success and capacity of our partners, and recognizing that while our first commitment is to the residents of southern Arizona, hunger knows no borders, and so we in Arizona—as well as our sister food banks across the nation in the Feeding America network—can benefit from the flow of produce through the port of entry in Nogales.

3. With the ever-present dilemma of “mission-creep”—which vacillates between being a legitimate risk and merely a discomfort with innovation or change—we could have made our lives easier by only focusing on operational scale. For a traditional food bank, that would mean acquiring, storing, and distributing food through agency partners, without ourselves engaging in direct client interaction. But with our commitment to individualized service—tempered by the strategic charge to target that service where we can make the biggest difference for our clients and communities—we will continue to selectively evolve our value-proposition in the areas of food and health, education, and community development.

Having made some strategic choices within the plan’s first three goals, in the last three goals we affirm key success factors needed for the effectiveness and resiliency of our business model. This includes our need to understand what mission-success and sustainable capacity mean to our social-impact business’ double bottom-line, in which we’re trying to end hunger and poverty and turn a profit as southern Arizona’s Anti-Hunger Heroes.

So, here’s to our next four decades of transformative relationships and results!

Sincerely,

Michael McDonald
President & CEO
SECTION 1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OUR VISION, MISSION, AND PURPOSE

To solve hunger, we must work today to alleviate the symptoms of poverty and work over time to address the inequities that allow it to persist.

We do this through a focus on partnership, inclusion, and equity. To achieve our mission, we will integrate stakeholders, be innovative and dynamic, inspire support throughout our service area and beyond, and only then, create real and lasting impact.

We structure our work into three interacting approaches: 1) Health and Food; 2) Education; and 3) Community Development. Our clients are not simply hungry people or families—we understand them as part of a system of social networks and relationships.

We believe that solving hunger requires looking beyond the individual alone and working to build the communities of which they are a part.

2018 - 2021 STRATEGIC GOALS

We have identified six overarching strategic goals driving our work through 2021. We will:

1. Unify our mission
2. Strengthen our network
3. Improve client services
4. Evaluate and improve
5. Inspire the public
6. Be responsible stewards

For an interactive format of this plan and to find supporting materials, please visit The Hub at hub.communityfoodbank.org.
SECTION 2
VISION AND PURPOSE
OUR PURPOSE AND ROLE

HUNGER AND POVERTY

Approximately 1 in 5 people in southern Arizona don’t know when they’ll get their next meal. Hunger is correlated with poverty, but one-third of Arizona’s food insecure households live above the income-based federal “poverty line.” While poverty is certainly characterized by the absence of wealth, it is as much reflected in other pervasive challenges for individuals and families. These challenges include isolation and stigmatization from society, overrepresentation of preventable diseases, poor educational systems and limitations on upward mobility, lack of equal access to the political sphere, and many other structural barriers experienced by disadvantaged individuals and communities.

Traditional economic definitions of poverty are insufficient to capture the social, psychological, and cultural contributors to and consequences of poverty itself. Poverty is not only the absence of wealth; it is the absence of power. This phenomenon creates persistent barriers and inequities to achieving a level playing field of access to basic needs and opportunities, which further diminishes people’s abilities to effectively advocate for their needs and rights. This injustice diminishes all of us. Poverty is a problem that impacts everyone. The direct costs of it are incredibly high: local, state, and federal governments; non-profits and charities; and even private sector operators spend tremendous amounts on poverty alleviation. But in indirect costs we lose even more. Poverty so often robs society of the brilliance, innovations, insights, and impact of those who are forced to focus on the immediate needs they have today.

This is the complex problem that we commit to alleviating and solving.

OUR MISSION: CHARITY AND JUSTICE

Addressing the problem of poverty requires different solutions than traditional food banking. As a regional institution, we work with individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities to build the capacity and resilience needed to navigate today and build tomorrow. This simultaneous call to charity and justice, to the present and the future, is coded in our organizational mission:

We change lives in the communities we serve by feeding the hungry today, and building a healthy, hunger-free tomorrow.

In every program, initiative, and effort, we orient our work from a position of inclusion and equity. Our single greatest resource is the network of clients, partners, and allies that work with us to end hunger and its underlying causes. We are ready to share and to receive, to teach and to learn, to guide and to follow.
WHO WE ARE

OUR VISION

With the absence of hunger and the presence of justness, our vision of a healthy hunger-free community will be realized when individuals and communities no longer experience persistent food-insecurity and its root-causes in powerlessness and poverty.

Then, and only then, will individuals, neighborhoods, and communities flourish into their full birthright potential.

To realize our vision, we:

**IMPACT**

We create real, measurable change in lives and communities through comprehensive programs that provide support today while building the capacity to create a more just tomorrow.

**INNOVATE**

We are uncompromising in our mission but flexible in our methodologies. We learn from successes and failures—both our own and others’—to constantly explore new ways to solve hunger.

**INTEGRATE**

We set the table and bring together partners of all sizes, purposes, and missions to work both within and across communities and solve the complex problem of hunger together.

**INSPIRE**

We work with all of our stakeholders to support our mission by sharing stories—of the challenges we face, the values that motivate us, the lives we change, and the passionate people and groups that join us in service.
WHY WE SERVE

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

We believe that no one should have to forgo feeding their family to pay for housing, medicine, and other critical needs.

Thousands of families in southern Arizona living in poverty do that every day. Many have to travel great distances to simply reach a fully stocked grocery store, or rely on gas stations and convenience stores, which are more expensive and lack variety. Others are forced to choose food that is cheap, but unhealthy, due to the higher cost of fresh fruits and vegetables. To support them, we work to provide healthy food to everyone who needs it, wherever they are, across our community.

PREVALENCE OF DIET-RELATED DISEASE

We believe that all people should have access to the food and care they need to live healthy lives, regardless of who they are and where they live.

People experiencing poverty are at greater risk for developing diet-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. We create opportunities for people to learn about nutrition and healthy eating, and work to expand access to healthy food.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

We believe that people are healthier physically, mentally, and emotionally when they are connected to others. Social cohesion leads to community well-being.

People experiencing poverty report disproportionately higher degrees of isolation, which puts them at higher risk for negative health outcomes. We believe that all community members have the critical and intellectual capacity necessary to overcome the problems they face. Thus, we envision community members actively participating in public life, fighting systems of oppression, and using their individual and collective voice to build a healthier future for all.

LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

We believe a thriving economy is at the heart of a truly healthy community—one where people have access to good jobs that provide for their basic needs.

Today, the majority of households we serve have at least one family member who works, but often what they earn is not enough to sustain their family. We strive to expand sustainable economic opportunities in southern Arizona, and advocate for policies that foster an economy built to support all people.
HOW WE CHANGE LIVES

HEALTH & FOOD X EDUCATION X COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We provide safe and nutritious food to anyone in need.

We create opportunities for individual learning, engagement, and leadership development.

We work with partners and communities to build high-capacity, resilient, and representative institutions.

A healthy, hunger-free community

We structure our work into three interacting approaches: Health and Food; Education; and Community Development. Each area represents a major focus of our work. Health and Food programs aim to relieve inequalities in food access and link food directly as a major component of integrated health. Our Education initiatives help to not only demonstrate best practices, but work with individuals and communities to find new opportunities for growth. Lastly, our Community Development programs work with groups and organizations to achieve large scale change in neighborhoods, cities, and communities at large.

Our clients are not simply hungry people or families: we understand them as part of a system of social networks and relationships. We believe that solving hunger requires looking beyond the individual alone and working to build the communities of which they are a part. For this reason, we work through both “top-down” community engagement and advocacy efforts, and “bottom-up” initiatives that create pathways out of poverty.

Through a combination of these works, we believe we can create a healthy, hunger-free tomorrow.

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD
SOCIAL ISOLATION
PREVALENCE OF DIET-RELATED DISEASE
LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The symptoms of poverty affect entire systems—from individuals to families to neighborhoods to communities.
SECTION 3
STRATEGIC GOALS
PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

In recent years, we have expanded our understanding of hunger to move beyond relatively defined challenges like food access, to the more nebulous and pernicious problem of poverty. Although our organization has long been a national leader in approaches that address the root causes of hunger and poverty, such efforts were treated as secondary to the overwhelming need to feed the hungry today.

Over the course of our last strategic plan and in partnership with numerous internal and community stakeholders, we have shifted priorities significantly. This effort began with a new mission statement in 2015, and was solidified with our brand rollout in 2017. Today, while we find hunger relief no less important than it was some years ago, we increasingly see a need to balance the demand to feed the hungry today with the moral and ethical obligation to address the underlying problems that have kept hunger alive in our community.

This obligation has forced a shift in our thinking, our strategy, our structure, and our purpose.

In this strategic planning cycle, we reflect this shift in two fundamental ways:

Clarity of Our Value: Poverty is an inconceivably complex problem. We cannot hope to solve it alone and, indeed, we believe isolated efforts at poverty alleviation can actually perpetuate some of the disjointedness that fosters disempowerment. Given our size, capacity, and relationships, we believe that we can add value in critical areas of network development, logistics, participatory community development, and capacity-building through community organizing.

Integration of Strategies: In the same way that we believe that no one person, organization, or regime can solve poverty, we believe that no one approach can be effective alone. Feeding programs have failed to solve hunger due to their inability to address the underlying causes of hunger. But efforts designed to create solutions years from now risk leaving vulnerable populations worse off today. Therefore, we recognize the need and promise of joining hunger relief and community development efforts into a coherent, coordinated strategy.

Our strategic focus for 2018-2021 demonstrates these two beliefs. Set forth below are five goals that are designed to expand our overall service capacity through network-oriented thinking; to provide a framework for cross-functional, impactful, and innovative direct client service; and to hold ourselves accountable to our mission, and to the changing needs of our community.
DETAILED GOAL DESCRIPTIONS

GOAL 1: UNIFY OUR MISSION

We will invest in and integrate our three mission-impact areas: Health & Food, Education, and Community Development.

With the change to the mission statement in 2015, and the rollout of the new brand in 2017, we have made clear that our mission extends far beyond the traditional boundaries of hunger relief. We believe hunger will only be solved through a comprehensive approach bringing together individuals, families, and communities to address immediate challenges today while building a strong tomorrow. This belief motivated our three major programmatic strategies: Health and Food, Education, and Community Development.

While this change has happened on paper as of early 2018, we still have some ways to go to institutionalize it into our practice. In order to do this work well, we need clarity of the oversight and management of these strategic areas. Creating a “Health and Food” team/responsibility center, for example, will allow that unit to develop a comprehensive strategy for how we can use our various hunger relief tools to be successful based on the specific, local, resources and challenges in a given community.

Further, our areas of “Community Development” and “Education” must grow and expand in their scope. We have long had educational programs, for example, but they have focused on specific substantive areas (gardening, culinary training, etc.) and we have not developed an overall “Education” team or strategy. Similarly, we have long done various forms of community development work, but we have not grouped them under a comprehensive strategy.

Finally, the perceived focus of our work does not reflect our current mission. While the organization is far more balanced, in terms of staffing, across the three programmatic areas, we are not widely known for our work in Education or Community Development. Moving forward, we will work to shift this perception as a part of bringing our community and stakeholders along with us in our efforts.

SUCCESS CONDITIONS, GOAL 1:

1. CFB has clear teams/responsibility centers managing each of the primary strategies of “Health and Food”, “Education”, and “Community Development” and has made meaningful investments in each approach.

2. Each responsibility center produces an annual operating plan for achieving success in their area, which can be shared with CFB staff and the Board.

3. CFB is known not simply as a hunger relief organization, but as a broad-based facilitator and convener bringing together traditional food bank activities with education and community development efforts.
GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN OUR NETWORK

We will strengthen our overall service delivery and advocacy efforts through a networked, partnership-first model.

We have long operated as part of a network of service providers in southern Arizona. However, as recently as 2015, we had only a single staff member dedicated to agency management, and the role was overwhelmingly focused on compliance monitoring. In the past few years, “Agency Relations” functions have expanded and broadened.

As we look forward, we believe that our efforts are best understood and managed through network-oriented thinking, where we better understand the wide array of providers in the communities we serve, and develop stronger relationships with them. In most cases, there is likely an existing provider with whom we can work to meet a community need. And, in working with that provider, we not only address the problem at hand, we build community capacity to solve future problems.

Historical “Agency Management” functions have now been rolled into our “Partnerships and Community Impact” team (PCI), which takes on the added responsibility of system-wide program management. The mission of the PCI team is to work with internal and external partners to provide equitable, impactful, and efficient programs, using the best methods possible, across the counties we serve.

To this end, we are structuring the PCI team to coordinate broad, network-wide, programmatic initiatives. Further, we are better organizing our overall collection of institutional resources to improve our ability to respond to current and future demands. This requires the enumeration of five types of institutions/units:

- **Partner Organization**: Any formal organization with whom we work to achieve our mission.
- **Partner Hub**: A Partner Organization that has stepped up to formally provide in-network leadership in one or more program areas.
- **Resource Center**: Multipurpose client service sites that provide impactful programs across all areas of our mission.
- **Model Site**: CFB-owned innovation and service sites that serve a targeted and identified community need.
- **Community Development Project**: An institutionalized, albeit temporary, community and/or neighborhood-based initiative aimed at organizing and fostering local capacity.

Together, these units represent “tools” available to the organization to respond to needs in any given area. While the PCI team will not manage any specific Model Site or Resource Center, they help manage system-wide programs and coordinate how the various units work together as a network.

SUCCESS CONDITIONS, GOAL 2:

1. All partner organizations are tracked and coordinated through a single team in CFB. Records are kept on the capacity, mission, purpose, capabilities, and other key features of all partners.

2. The partner network is institutionalized and interdependent. Multiple “Hubs” exist for each of the three major programmatic areas and Hubs are providing a meaningful way for partners to find assistance beyond our own capabilities.

3. Meaningful improvements have been made on the equity of access to diverse services across both the continuum of our initiatives and our service area – particularly in rural counties.
GOAL 3: IMPROVE CLIENT SERVICE

We will strengthen our targeted suite of local programs facilitating individual self-reliance and participatory community development.

While we are proud of our exceptional and innovative program work, we recognize that it has been disjointed. To address complex needs like hunger, we need to have the flexibility and adaptability to bring the proper resources to bear for clients. Historically, the impact of our direct client work has been diminished by our inability to comprehensively address the varied needs of any given client.

As an example, clients might go to one program for food assistance, but work with another – often at a different location and time – for educational programs. In other cases – particularly in our rural counties – clients simply do not have the breadth of offerings available in Tucson.

Recognizing the need for unity in our purpose, over the course of this planning cycle, we will work to more strategically use the variety of resources we have available to address client needs in a more holistic manner. This effort has already begun with the rollout of Resource Centers in Marana, Tucson, and the Amado-Green Valley area. Historically, these sites were overwhelmingly dedicated to food distribution. Today, and as we move forward, they are bringing a broader, more organized array of services to clients.

Ultimately, we believe that to see a healthy, hunger-free tomorrow, we need to bring together Health and Food, Education, and Community Development initiatives. Goal 1 is oriented around the broad distribution of “tools” to provide service coverage across communities. This goal represents improvements in the “depth” and “interactivity” of services we can offer in any given location.

SUCCESS CONDITIONS, GOAL 3:

1. All CFB “Resource Centers” fully meet that definition and at least two partner-run Resource Centers are operational.

2. All programmatic activities are organized in a coordinated manner to either provide deep, client-facing services, or broad network support.

3. Place-based community development initiatives are organized and coordinated under a single team, and at least three specific initiatives are either completed or in progress.
**GOAL 4: EVALUATE AND IMPROVE**

We will develop our internal culture of evaluation and continuous improvement.

As a relatively large organization, we struggle with balancing a healthy bureaucracy and program institutionalization with agility and dynamism that our clients require. At times, we are too quick to launch new ideas and have done so without fully understanding how they will be funded or managed over time. Conversely, we have missed opportunities by demanding too many answers to complex questions.

In service to our own values of excellence, accountability, and innovation, we must continue to work on this balance. The development of this strategic plan happened over multiple years and involved numerous meetings with various stakeholders and staff groups. We believe it is important that we carry out an annual process of reflective review.

We will work to improve our culture of evaluation and innovation. We will create more institutionalized processes for program evaluation so that we can better understand what works. Each year, we will work collectively in the buildup to the budget process to create a list of organizational investment and divestment areas, along with multi-year plans covering steps for success in that plan. These investments and focus areas will be presented to the Board in conjunction with the budget proposal.

**SUCCESS CONDITIONS, GOAL 4:**

1. Program evaluation and review is well institutionalized in CFB.
2. An “Annual Operating Plan” is presented to the Board for FY19, FY20, and FY21. Included therein are descriptions and brief justifications for organizational-level programmatic investments that staff have identified as important for achieving the goals in the overall strategic plan and the mission of the organization.
3. To demonstrate a commitment to reflective practice and carrying out stated goals, teams have successfully completed at least three of the “annual focus areas” in the operating plans for years 1 and 2.
4. Through the use of dashboards and reports, teams at all levels of the organization are engaging with information in meaningful ways.
GOAL 5: INSPIRE THE PUBLIC

We will inspire and motivate the public to support our mission and sustainable growth.

For many years, we have seen exceptional growth in donor support but, along with national trends, this waned in FY18. As we step into a future period of uncertainty, we also recognize that, consistent with our goal to increase partnership, we must consider the partners who support our work with their time, talent, and treasure.

Public and community support is made even more important during this time as we make a significant institutional shift. Moving to a network-oriented service model and publicly expanding beyond traditional hunger relief work could cause confusion among donors or even further donor fatigue by requiring them to absorb too much complexity to make sense of our mission.

It is critical that we find ways to motivate and inspire the public to join us in our work. We will continue to develop new and innovative techniques to bring donors and volunteers with us by sharing the stories we know so well.

SUCCESS CONDITIONS, GOAL 5:

1. An annual plan is prepared and presented by the Development Team showing specific goals and targets for the coming year.
2. We will see meaningful growth in the donor and volunteer base that meets or exceeds industry standards.
3. We will maintain sufficient resources to meet our priorities.
GOAL 6:  
BE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDS

We will ensure effective and efficient administrative, operational, and governance capacity.

As in any non-profit, we feel a constant tension between providing exceptional administrative support, which often requires significant funding, with the need to minimize the costs of that work to better fund programs. While we want to keep administrative and operational costs low, we recognize that many of our programmatic goals may require expanding operational capacity. For example, moving healthy produce requires sourcing and logistics capacity, and many goals depend on improvements in systems and analytics capacity.

Doing this well requires us to have more than a professional and well-functioning administrative staff. We must also foster an organizational culture that maintains our core values, encourages innovation, keeps and grows talented staff, and engages everyone in our mission.

SUCCESS CONDITIONS, GOAL 6:

1. Staff satisfaction is high and we are in a healthy position with critical metrics like retention, learning, and engagement.

2. The Board of Directors is consistently and actively engaged in the success of our mission.

3. CFB remains benchmarked in the upper quartile performance of applicable peers in key areas such as productivity, efficiency, professional development, heterogeneity of governance and management skills and perspectives, and organizational buffering capacity or resilience.