

Final Report – Food Storage Capacity Grant

Grantee: Community Kitchen of North Iowa, Inc.

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Agreement Number: 25-G550-261FSC

Time of Performance: October 14, 2024 to December 13, 2024

Purpose of the project:

The purpose of this project was to increase our food storage capacity by purchasing a reach-in freezer and food storage shelving. Our goals for the project were to accept more food donations, distribute more pounds of food to people experiencing hunger and food insecurity through our free and nutritious meal program, and to minimize the spoilage of perishable food items donated to our organization. We also hoped to gain some operational efficiency by being able to store food longer until we have enough for a full meal service as making multiple entrees or side dishes for a single service is inefficient with the limited amount of time we have to prepare and serve 200 to 300 meals.

Data - Persons served, meals served, and pounds of food distributed:

Average number of persons served monthly:

- Before project: 676 people served monthly average for October 14 – December 13, 2023
- After project: 741 people served monthly average for October 14 – December 13, 2024
- Increase of 9.62%

Average number of meals served monthly:

- Before project: 20,906 meals served October 14 – December 13, 2023
 - Average/month: 10,453
- After project: 22,046 meals served October 14 – December 13, 2024
 - Average/month: 11,023
- Increase of 5.45%

Total pounds of food distributed through meal services and displayed bakery items:

- Before project: 35,026 #s distributed October 14 – December 13, 2023
 - Average/month: 17,513 #
- After project: 37,504 #s distributed October 14 – December 13, 2024
 - Average/month: 18,752 #
- Increase of 7.07%

Types and pounds of additional food accepted for distribution:

The new shelves have greatly increased our storage capacity for nonperishable and shelf-stable goods and pantry items. With the additional storage available, we have been able to accept and store more donated items. We have also had the capacity to order large volumes of nonperishable and shelf-stable food items from Food Bank of Iowa at very discounted prices. From October 14 to December 13, we were able to purchase 3,375 pounds of nonperishable foods, pantry items, and shelf-stable milk for just \$276, which averages \$0.08 per pound. The ability to purchase from Food Bank of Iowa is very beneficial to our organization and our mission to feed our neighbors in need. Prior to this project, though, we were very limited by the space we had available.

With our new freezer, we also had the capacity to order more meat from Food Bank of Iowa. From October 14 to December 13, we were able to purchase 2,758 pounds of meat including chicken, ham, pork, and fish for less than \$485, or around \$0.18 per pound. Our new freezer also allowed us to accept some very large donations for our Thanksgiving meal service. Cargill of Mason City donated 650 pounds of frozen bone-in turkey breasts for our Thanksgiving meal, and local businesses and grocers donated over 100 large pumpkin pies. We were able to store the frozen turkey in our new freezer until ready to use. We then thawed the meat, cooked it on the bone, and volunteers helped us fillet the cooked turkey for our big meal. We served 806 free meals of turkey, sides, and pie for our Thanksgiving lunch service. That was our single largest meal service in the Community Kitchen's 42 years of service to our community.

And finally, with the additional food storage capacity from this grant we were able to add a new donor, Chick-fil-A, to our program in October of 2024. We pick up their donations 6 days each week now, and have rescued 1,713 pounds of frozen food from them from October 14 through December 13, plus another 200 pounds of other perishable food items. Our patrons have greatly enjoyed the meals we have created from their donations including chicken wraps and casseroles.

Satisfaction with items purchased with grant funds:

All of us at The Community Kitchen of North Iowa are thrilled with the new shelves and freezer. The shelving has allowed us to accept more donations and to purchase more in bulk through Food Bank of Iowa. Our storage room has been completely transformed from the new shelving. We not only can store more food items, but we have the capacity to keep items better organized and rotated by best by dates, which is very important in managing donated food. In early December, we had an unplanned health inspection. We passed with no issue, and the county health inspector was very impressed with the improved organization in our food storage room that the new shelving provided.

Our new freezer has had an immediate impact on our operations. We have been able to accept additional pounds of recovered foods including valuable meat and frozen food items. It has also allowed us to store like items until we have enough to make a full meal for up to 300 people, which greatly improves operation efficiencies. As with the shelving, it has also made it easier to rotate foods to use in a timely manner. This was always cumbersome before with just 1 small walk-in freezer. The additional freezer has also positively impacted our process for ordering food when needed, as there is more room

to confirm exactly what we have on hand before purchasing. And as mentioned before, we were able to accept a new food donor. Chick-Fil-A built a new restaurant in our city, and opened for business in early October. Within days of us being notified of the grant award, they reached out to us looking for a partner to accept their food donations. Because we knew we would soon be able to purchase items to increase our storage capacity, we were able to accept. The timing was amazing.

We are incredibly grateful for the grant awarded and the items we were able to purchase. As more people in our community struggle with hunger and food insecurity, and the need for our services continues to grow, the additional storage capacity provided through this grant will ensure that we can continue to provide for the hunger needs of our neighbors in the years to come. Thank you!

Pictures of new shelving and freezer are below.













