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Channel One Regional Food Bank Seeks Caterer to Provide Prepared Meals for Individuals and Families Facing Food Insecurity

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Channel One Regional Food Bank is conducting a search for a local licensed caterer who can help provide prepared meals for food-insecure individuals and families in Olmsted County. Channel One sees this partnership as a way to address the widespread impact of the COVID-19 emergency on the region.

Channel One is excited to partner with the City of Rochester and Rochester Public Library as well as several other local organizations to provide this temporary prepared meals program. The duration of the program will be approximately 12 weeks (until December 30, 2020). It is estimated that this project will provide an additional 72,000 meals in three months to individuals and families who are facing food insecurity.

The food bank was awarded a \$697,673.60 grant to facilitate this project. Channel One is seeking a contractor to prepare and deliver meals to 10 pre-identified sites in Olmsted County, three times per week, at designated pick-up times.

Virginia Merritt, executive director of Channel One, stated that she expects food needs will multiply in the coming months due to continued unemployment, a wave of forthcoming evictions, and other economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We aim to increase access to prepared meals to accommodate the growing rate of food insecurity in Olmsted County. This project will provide supplementary support to our existing meal programs by creating culturally-specific menus and delivery to low-access communities, which will fill gaps in our current scope of service,” she explained, “with many students not receiving breakfast and lunch at school each day, coinciding with the end of federal unemployment benefits and a depressed economy, we are facing a hunger crisis like we have not seen since the Great Depression. According to a study done for Minnesota Food Banks by McKinsey & Co., 1 in 8 Minnesotans are facing hunger. Pre-pandemic it was 1 in 11. That’s an additional 275,000 Minnesotans facing hunger– 112,000 are kids.”

Currently, many of the efforts attempting to impact the rate of food insecurity in Olmsted County focus on school-aged children. While needed, these youth-centric efforts miss many segments of the population with serious hunger issues. The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating these disparities. Additionally, current programs serving youth are only reaching and providing meals to about 40% of students who are eligible for free and reduced meals.

Channel One and its partners hope to increase access to prepared meals (in youth, adults, and seniors) by contracting with a local catering company to garner community input and provide culturally specific meal options.

Interested bidders can find more information and instructions to apply at helpingfeedpeople.org/request-for-proposals-rfp-for-food-service-management-contract

Families and individuals facing food insecurity are encouraged to call 507.287.2350 or visit helpingfeedpeople.org for information about accessing Channel One's resources.

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Channel One Regional Food Bank, a member of Feeding America, strengthens food access and builds healthy communities. Channel One operates food programs to serve local and area needs such as: a food bank, food shelf, mobile pantry, Backpack Program, Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS), and Green Gardens Program. Channel One Regional Food Bank mobilizes organizations, volunteers, and donors to serve the network of more than 200 nonprofit programs that provide food for children, adults, and families in need. Channel One serves 14 counties across southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. For more information, call 507.287.2350 or visit helpingfeedpeople.org.

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