



Food and Nutrition Policy

Statement of Purpose

Sky Valley Food Bank's mission is to kindly and respectfully provide equitable access to nutritious food in our community. We are committed to breaking down barriers to food access to ensure that no one in our community goes hungry.

This nutrition policy outlines our commitment to making conscious, thoughtful decisions about the foods we seek out and distribute. In particular, it addresses how we, with the help of our volunteers, donors, and partners, will support the needs of our customers in ways that contribute to positive health outcomes and help prevent diet-related chronic illnesses in our community. This policy serves to facilitate consistent decision making around the types of nutritious foods and beverages we prioritize, ensuring that our actions match our organizational commitment to the health of our customers. The policy also serves as a tool for accountability, marking progress towards our goal of expanding our nutritious offerings.

We will utilize the [Healthy Eating Research \(HER\) Nutrition Guidelines](#) to guide our nutritional priorities and the food we distribute.

Overall Nutrition Commitments

We recognize the concern for diet-related disease in the community and acknowledge the role and responsibility we have in addressing these issues. We want our customers to know that their health and preferences for more nutritious foods are a priority to us. In a customer survey Sky Valley Food Bank completed in Spring 2024, 19% of customers requested a larger variety of produce. In response, we commit to sourcing more variety and culturally diverse options while maintaining an emphasis on providing more produce overall. To stay attuned to the needs of the diverse and changing population that we serve, we commit to surveying customers annually.

Based on an analysis of the inventory in our market obtained in September 2024 (excluding food obtained from community food drives and food sourced for our backpack program) using the HER Nutrition Guidelines, we commit to tracking our progress towards our goals of:

Goal 1: Increase “choose often” grains from 14% to 33% by June 2025

Goal 2: Increase “choose often” mixed dishes from 27% to 50% by September 2025

Goal 3: Increase overall inventory of “choose often” foods from 60% to 66% December 2025

Food Procurement

Purchases and Orders:

When there is available funding to purchase food items for distribution at the food bank, we will prioritize items that fall within the “Choose Often” and “Choose Sometimes” categories of the HER guidelines, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. We do not use our funding to purchase energy drinks, soda or desserts and we do not order these from the food bank ordering system. Wherever possible we will advocate for more nutritional information to be made available so that we can select foods that are nutrient dense and support customer health.

Donations and Grocery Rescue:

Rather than turn foods away, we aim to highlight food items that fall within the “Choose Often” category of the HER guidelines and that are highly requested by our customers. We will encourage donors to prioritize low sodium, low added sugar, and low saturated fat food items, as well as fresh produce and discourage donations of sugary foods and beverages (e.g. sports drinks, regular soda, sweetened tea, energy drinks, sheet cakes, or pre-packaged pastries). We will provide donors with a 1 page guide that directs to the foods we need most based on our customer feedback and inventory assessment.

Special Programs

Mobile Food Bank:

Our Index Mobile Food Bank feeds up to 70 people every week at Doolittle Park. We fill our truck with a selection of foods from all food categories to offer mobile customers a variety that mirrors our market offerings. The customers who access our mobile food bank are similar to our general population other than during the summer months, when the population of mountain climbers increases. This population needs shelf-stable and easy to prepare items because they are living in tents, often with limited kitchen equipment/facilities.

Kids Weekend Food Program:

To combat the growing problem of childhood hunger in Snohomish County, in 2011 we began distributing emergency weekend food backpacks. We now distribute to 7 schools. Each backpack contains five pounds of easily-prepared food, enough for two breakfasts, one lunch and one dinner, plus snacks. Within the next 12 months, we will closely examine our backpack inventory, create a snapshot inventory of offered foods and begin using the HER Nutrition Guidelines to guide some health-supportive changes to these offerings.

Home delivery:

Home delivery is available for customers who are unable to shop at the Market during our hours of operation. If customers live within our service area they can sign up and pick their own items from a menu created for them. Every delivery period our volunteers pack fresh, frozen and shelf stable foods based on their shopping lists. Food is delivered to their doorstep free of charge.

Broader Commitments

We will continue to actively work to reduce our food waste by composting and/or donating foods

that no longer meet our quality standards to local livestock farms. We also will connect participants to other food resources to fit their needs as appropriate, such as SNAP and WIC.

Administration and Implementation

This policy, approved by our board of directors and effective on 9/18/2024 at which time it will become part of our organizational policies and procedures. The Executive Director is responsible for an annual review of the policy in order to keep it up to date with community needs and will provide orientation to the policy for all new staff and volunteers.