

# Executive Summary

## *Report to the Mayor: Ensuring Every Child in Santa Fe Has Access to Sufficient and Nutritious Food*

In response to an invitation by Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber, Sherry Hooper, Executive Director, The Food Depot, assembled a voluntary task force of food and policy experts to create “**Report to the Mayor: Ensuring Every Child in Santa Fe Has Access to Sufficient and Nutritious Food.**” This Executive Summary highlights key components of that report, but this document does not replace the task force’s significant comprehensive findings and suggestions that follow.

### **How to solve childhood hunger in Santa Fe - Big Impact Recommendations** (Report Section V)

1. Increase the “living wage” immediately to \$17 and incrementally move towards a legally mandated minimum wage in the \$22-\$25 range.
2. Provide biweekly cash “family income adjustment grants” to make each family’s income livable.
3. Introduce a supplemental grant for families with a parent/guardian unable to earn an income due to disability.
4. Form a compensated public works/community service jobs program for adults unable to secure full-time work.

### **How to solve childhood hunger in Santa Fe – Incremental Opportunities** (Report Section VI)

While the big-impact recommendations are designed and implemented, it is incumbent upon the Santa Fe community to immediately launch incremental change and progress including: 1. Provide child care for working families. 2. Support home visits for new parents. 3. Introduce nutrition curriculum for preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 4. Expand the availability of affordable housing. 5. Improve food access. 6. Reduce food waste. 7. Use city/county buildings for feeding locations. 8. Invest in outreach for food and tax credit/benefit programs. 9. Help parents with employment opportunities. 10. Advocate with state and federal officials to amend policies and budget priorities.

### **How critical is childhood hunger in Santa Fe and why** (Report Sections I-IV)

1. New Mexico Food insecurity is among the highest in the nation. Approximately 5,000 children in Santa Fe County experience food insecurity in one year. This includes when food is available but is not nutritionally balanced. Children require sufficient nutritious food to maintain health, growth, and development. The experience of food insecurity is physically and psychologically harmful.
2. **Food insecurity and hunger are symptoms of poverty, which is a result of income and resource insufficiency.** When families cannot meet their basic living requirements of housing, utilities, health care, and transportation, it also affects their ability to purchase fresh produce and other food.
3. Families are struggling to make ends meet. Two main obstacles prevent families from having sufficient income. The first is low wages, and the second is a barrier or an inability for a parent to work. Santa Fe’s “living wage” of \$15 is insufficient. Using the MIT living wage calculator, an accurate “living wage” for Santa Fe is \$27.66 or \$57,583 household income for a family of three.
4. Government programs and hunger elimination. By design, food programs seek to meet temporary and emergency needs for food. They reduce the symptoms of food insecurity (hunger) without addressing the source, which is poverty. Additional obstacles include time-consuming applications and registration, awareness of benefits, lack of capacity for food banks and pantries to administer outreach, and other barriers related to stigma, language, and mental health may be present.

*“We believe many Santa Fe citizens do not know the extent of hunger among our children and that upon learning, they will devote their attention, political will, and financial investment necessary to end that hunger.”*

**VISION: Healthy, hunger-free communities in Northern New Mexico**

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