



Unmet Need for Cold Storage Equipment Report 2023

Introduction

Pursuant to the Chapter 101 of the laws of 2022, on or before the first day of December each year, the Commissioner of Health shall annually assess and report to the Governor and the Legislature on the unmet need for cold storage equipment among Regional Food Banks (RFB) food pantries and other emergency food organizations.

The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) provides emergency food relief and nutrition services to food insecure populations in New York State (NYS). In state fiscal year 2023, approximately 400 million emergency meals were provided through a network of about 2,700 Emergency Food Providers (EFP) which includes food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. HPNAP funding supports 44 grant contracts with the 10 RFB and 34 direct service providers that support the State's EFP network. During the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State experienced a surge in the demand for emergency food resources, which significantly increased the need for additional refrigerator and freezer cold storage equipment among EFPs. The first survey of cold storage needs was informally completed during COVID-19, and the second survey was completed in 2021 after the introduction of this legislation requiring an annual survey and report.

In response to this annual requirement, the Division of Nutrition's HPNAP and Evaluation, Research, and Surveillance Unit (ERSU) collaborated to create the 2023 Cold Storage Survey of Emergency Food Organizations. A summary of the findings is provided below.

Survey Methods

The electronic survey was deployed in August 2023 to over 2,700 active EFPs in NYS, and the 10 RFBs. Multiple reminders were sent to EFPs to complete the survey within one month of receipt. In total, 2,228 EFPs received the survey and 1,232 responded.

Results

Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens and Shelters Survey Responses

While not all EFPs were able to respond to the survey, the responses received were found to be a representative sample. Therefore, the data can be used to predict the overall state need.

Table 1: How many responding food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens need refrigerators and/or freezers in 2024?

	Count	Percent
Need a Refrigerator	661/1222	54% of all food pantries
<i>Need 2 or more refrigerators</i>	<i>275/661</i>	<i>42% of food pantries indicating need</i>
Need a freezer	608/1222	50% of all food pantries
<i>Need 2 or more freezers</i>	<i>251/608</i>	<i>50% of food pantries indicating need</i>

Table 2: Anticipated refrigerator cost for food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens (due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100).

Anticipated cost	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$999	77	12
\$1,000 to \$3,000	262	40
\$3,001 to \$6,000	172	26
\$6,001 to \$10,000	72	11
\$10,001 to \$15,000	32	5
\$15,001 to \$21,000	16	2
\$21,001 to \$28,000	17	3
More than \$28,001	13	2

The cost to meet the full need of the 661 responding agencies for refrigerators is approximately \$2.5-\$4.2 million. Extrapolating this data to all 2,700 EFP, the total cost would be approximately \$3.8-\$6.5 million.

Table 3: Anticipated freezer costs for food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens (due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100).

Anticipated cost	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$999	47	8
\$1,000 to \$3,000	226	37
\$3,001 to \$6,000	148	24
\$6,001 to \$10,000	95	16
\$10,001 to \$15,000	47	8
\$15,001 to \$21,000	17	3
\$21,001 to \$28,000	15	2
More than \$28,001	13	2

The cost to meet the full need of the 608 responding agencies for freezers is approximately \$2.6-\$4.4 million. Extrapolating this data to all 2700 EFP, the total cost would be approximately \$4.0-\$6.7 million.

Nearly 70% of responding organizations reported having at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 6 years old, an indicator of an impending need to purchase new cold storage equipment.

Regional Food Bank Survey Responses

Seven of the nine responding food banks indicated they had at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than six years old, an indicator of an impending need to purchase new cold storage equipment. The cost to meet the refrigeration and freezer needs outlined by the food banks could reach \$200,000.

Table 4: How many food banks need refrigerators and/or freezers? (Nine of the ten food banks surveyed completed the survey)

	Frequency	Percent
Need a refrigerator	5/9	56% of all responding food banks
<i>Need 2 or more refrigerators</i>	5/5	<i>100% of food banks indicating need</i>
Need a freezer	3/9	33% of responding food banks
<i>Need 2 or more freezers</i>	2/3	<i>67% of food banks indicating need</i>

Table 5: Anticipated refrigeration and freezer costs for food banks.

	Refrigeration	Freezer
\$10,001 to \$15,000	1	1
\$15,001 to \$21,000	-	-
\$21,001 to \$28,000	1	-
More than \$28,001	3	2

Conclusion

These findings from the 2023 Cold Storage Survey of Emergency Food Organizations support the need for additional funding to support future needs for refrigerators and freezers across most EFPs. This report estimates that \$7.8 to \$13.2 million would be needed for cold storage to maintain emergency food service operations in calendar year 2024 and beyond.

If you have any questions, please contact 518-402-7333 or HPNAP@health.ny.gov.
Thank you.