



Unmet Need for Cold Storage Equipment Report 2025

Introduction

Pursuant to Chapter 101 of the laws of 2022, on or before the first day of December each year, the Commissioner of Health shall annually assess cold storage capacity and provide a summary of fundings to the Governor and the Legislature to inform funding levels for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP).

HPNAP provides emergency food relief and nutrition services to food insecure populations in New York State (NYS). In state fiscal year 2024, approximately 400 million emergency meals were provided through a network of about 2,700 Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) which include food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. HPNAP funding supports 47 grant contracts with the 10 Regional Food Banks and 37 direct service providers that support the State's EFP network. During the COVID-19 pandemic, NYS 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 in 2020, during COVID-19, and the second survey was completed in 2021 after the introduction of this legislation requiring an annual survey and report. Beginning in 2023, the Division of Nutrition's HPNAP and Evaluation, Research, and Surveillance Unit (ERSU) collaborated to conduct a survey to fulfill this legislative requirement. The results of the Cold Storage Equipment survey conducted in July of 2025 are reported below.

Survey Methods

An electronic survey was deployed in July 2025 to over 2,700 active EFPs in NYS, and the 10 Regional Food Banks. Multiple reminders were sent to EFPs to complete the survey within one month of receipt. In total, 2,311 EFPs received the survey and 1,216 responded resulting in a 52.6% response rate, which is consistent with previous years.



Results

Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens and Shelters Survey Responses

While not all EFPs responded 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. Additionally, while the response rate was lower than in previous years, the distribution of sites and locations that responded to the survey are comparable to last year.

Table 1: Distribution of site types.

Type	FFY24 Percentage	FFY25 Percentage
Food Bank	1%	1%
Food Pantry	83%	83%
Emergency Shelter	3%	4%
Soup Kitchen	7%	12%
Food Pantry, Emergency Shelter	1%	<1%
Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen	6%	<1%
Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen, Emergency Shelter	-	<1%
Soup Kitchen, Emergency Shelter	-	<1%

We saw increases in the percentage of responding agencies who needed refrigerators and those who needed freezers. About 67% of responding organizations reported having 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. This is a decrease from last year, where 75% of responding organizations reported having at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than six years old. However, there was an increase in the number of EFPs (763 in 2024 to 819 in 2025) indicating their refrigerators and/or freezers were more than six years old. See Table 2 for a breakdown of pantries indicating each need and those pantries that have a refrigerator or freezer older than six years.



Table 2: How many responding food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens need refrigerators and/or freezers in 2024?

	Count 2025	Percent 2025	Percent 2024
Need a Refrigerator	565/ 1216	46% of all food pantries	56% of all food pantries
<i>Need 2 or more refrigerators</i>	242/564	<i>43% of food pantries indicating need</i>	<i>43% of food pantries indicating need</i>
Need a Freezer	573/1216	47% of all food pantries	52% of all food pantries
<i>Need 2 or more freezers</i>	202/573	<i>35% of all food pantries indicating need</i>	<i>45% of food pantries indicating need</i>
At least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 6 years old	819/1216	67% of all food pantries	75% of all food pantries

Table 3 showcases the anticipated cost of new refrigerators as reported by food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens.

Table 3: 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	38	7%
\$1,000 to \$3,000	241	43%
\$3,001 to \$6,000	170	30%
\$6,001 to \$10,000	55	10%
\$10,001 to \$15,000	29	5%
\$15,001 to \$21,000	11	2%
\$21,001 to \$28,000	11	2%
More than \$28,001	10	2%

The cost to meet the full need of the 565 responding agencies for refrigerators is approximately \$2.9-\$5.2 million. Extrapolating this data to all 2700 EFPs, the total cost would be approximately \$6.1-\$10.7 million. This exceeds the 2023 report, which indicated the total estimated cost for all



2700 EFPs would be the total cost would be approximately \$3.8-\$6.5 million and falls within the range from the 2024 report, which indicated that total cost would be between \$8.04 million and \$13.3 million.

Table 4: 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	40	7%
\$1,000 to \$3,000	236	41%
\$3,001 to \$6,000	156	27%
\$6,001 to \$10,000	85	15%
\$10,001 to \$15,000	27	5%
\$15,001 to \$21,000	12	2%
\$21,001 to \$28,000	8	1%
More than \$28,001	9	2%

The cost to meet the full need of the 573 responding agencies for freezers is approximately \$3.09-\$5.3 million. Extrapolating this data to all 2700 EFPs, the total cost would be approximately \$6.2-\$10.9 million. This exceeds the 2023 report, which indicated the total cost would be approximately \$4.0-\$6.7 million and falls within the range of the 2024 report, which indicated the total need would be approximately \$8.6-\$12.9 million.

Regional Food Bank Survey Responses

For the first time, we were able to survey all ten regional food banks on their cold storage needs, making this year’s report a more accurate assessment of needs than previously.

Six of the ten regional food banks had at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than ten years old. Eight of the ten 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 is estimated at between \$296,000 and \$321,000, which falls between the estimates for 2023 (around \$200,000) and 2024 (around \$400,000).



Table 5: How many food banks need refrigerators and/or freezers? (Nine of the ten food banks surveyed completed the survey)

	Freq. 2025	Freq. 2024	Percent 2025	Percent 2024
Need a refrigerator	5/10	6/9	50% of all food banks	66% of all food banks
<i>Need 2 or more refrigerators</i>	5/5	4/6	<i>100% of food banks indicating need</i>	<i>67% of food banks indicating need</i>
Need a freezer	5/10	5/9	50% of all food banks	56% of all food banks
<i>Need 2 or more freezers</i>	5/5	3/5	<i>100% of food banks indicating need</i>	<i>60% of food banks indicating need</i>

Notably, all food banks indicating cold storage needs would need two or more refrigerators and/or freezers to meet their needs.

Table 6: Anticipated refrigeration and freezer costs for food banks.

	Refrigerators		Freezer	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
\$3,001 to \$6,000	-	-	1	-
\$6,001 to \$10,000	1	1	-	1
\$10,001 to \$15,000	1	-	1	-
\$15,001 to \$21,000	-	-	-	-
\$21,001 to \$28,000	-	-	-	-
More than \$28,001	3	5	3	4

Assessing changes in overall needs

New this year, three new questions were added to assess overall needs in the EFPs. These questions focused on the changes in requests for services over the last two years, specifically whether they increased, decreased, or remained about the same. Of note, 67% (784/1216) of responding food pantries saw an increase in requests for services. Additionally, none of the ten regional food banks had a decrease in need. See Table 7 for a breakdown of reported changes in services.



Table 7: Change in request for services

Need Change	Food Pantries		Food Banks	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Decreased	30	2.6%	-	-
Increased	784	67.2%	7	70%
Stayed about the same	352	30.2%	3	30%

Emergency Food Programs that indicated needs increased or stayed about the same were asked to specify the percentage change in service requests. Notably, 68% of food pantries (528/779) and 60% (6/10) of the regional food banks indicated more than a 10% increase in requests for services. See Table 8 for a full breakdown of need increases.

Table 8: Percentage of increases in needs

	Food Pantries		Food Banks	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
>1 – 5%	71	9%	4	40%
6-10%	180	23%	-	-
11-20%	213	27%	3	30%
21-30%	138	18%	-	-
31-40%	77	10%	2	20%
41-50%	48	6%	-	-
>50%	52	7%	1	10%

Conclusion

These findings from the 2025 Cold Storage Survey of Emergency Food Organizations support the need for additional funding to support futures needs for refrigerators and freezers across most EFPs. This report estimates that \$12.6 to \$21.9 million would be needed for cold storage to maintain emergency food service operations in 2026 and beyond.

For questions, please contact 518-402-7333 or HPNAP@health.ny.gov.