

# Perishable Food and Medicine Resiliency Project

Grant Type: **Dollar and nondollar support**

Dollar Amount: **\$17,000 from Sisters Health Foundation and \$65,000 from partner**

Foundation Name: **Sisters Health Foundation**

## What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

In 2012 and 2013, West Virginia was hit with two major storms that led to the loss of significant amounts of food and medicine in food pantries and health clinics across the state; the storms also hampered their ability to serve people in need. Two foundations and six nonprofits initially came together to determine how to secure generators for the pantries. At the first meeting, participants had to scrap that plan because of the general fragility of the pantries. After learning just how vulnerable the food system and pantries are, the goal became to strengthen the state's food network.

## What were the results of this grant or initiative?

Along with civil engineers and alternative power consultants, the coalition conducted a survey of food pantries' needs across the state in regard to refrigeration and power, researched the best strategies for providing electricity to food pantries during power outages; and conducted a pilot project with six counties. The pilot project was successful in placing generators with six food pantries, evaluating the process of placing the generators, producing a Guide to Purchasing a Generator, and creating a plan to place backup power in vulnerable West Virginian counties. The coalition now is heading into its second round by placing backup power in food pantries located in counties with high rates of declared disaster and by providing backup power for Mountaineer Food Bank, which serves 48 of the state's 55 counties.

## Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

Beyond the scope of the pilot project were several serendipitous results. West Virginia University Foodlinks, a mapping project of food pantries across the state, partnered with Sisters Health Foundation to provide not only an online map of food pantries but a wealth of food security information that is available to anyone seeking to address hunger in West Virginia. Mountaineer Food Bank and Feeding Hunger Food Bank established a healthy relationship with one another by virtue of sitting together on the committee, talking face-to-face, and communicating information about their organizations.

The committee itself has built capacity within the disaster response system in regard to food security: First, it is building relationships between volunteer and state disaster response personnel, the food banks, local food pantries, and funders. Second, this project is bringing together people to tangibly strengthen the food network through a collaborative effort.

Little grant money has been given over those years—the greatest resources given have been time and talents of a committed, diverse, knowledgeable group of partners. The coalition's efforts have to be multidirectional if it hopes to make progress on such a systemic challenge as food security.



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