

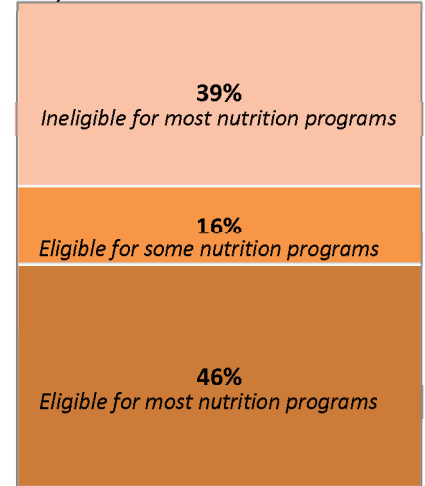
# Hunger in Travis County

## ***How many are hungry?***

Hunger results from an inability to meet nutritional needs with available resources. The USDA measures hunger by asking families whether there was a time in the previous year when they had difficulty meeting their food needs. This measurement is called “food insecurity.”

- 158,270 Travis County residents (16%) are food insecure.
- On average, these food insecure residents report an annual budget shortfall of \$400 needed to afford “just enough” food – \$63,268,470 in total.
- Many are eligible for federal nutrition programs like SNAP (food stamps), WIC or school meals.\*
- However, 54% may earn too much money to receive SNAP, and 39% may be ineligible for most federal nutrition programs.<sup>i</sup>

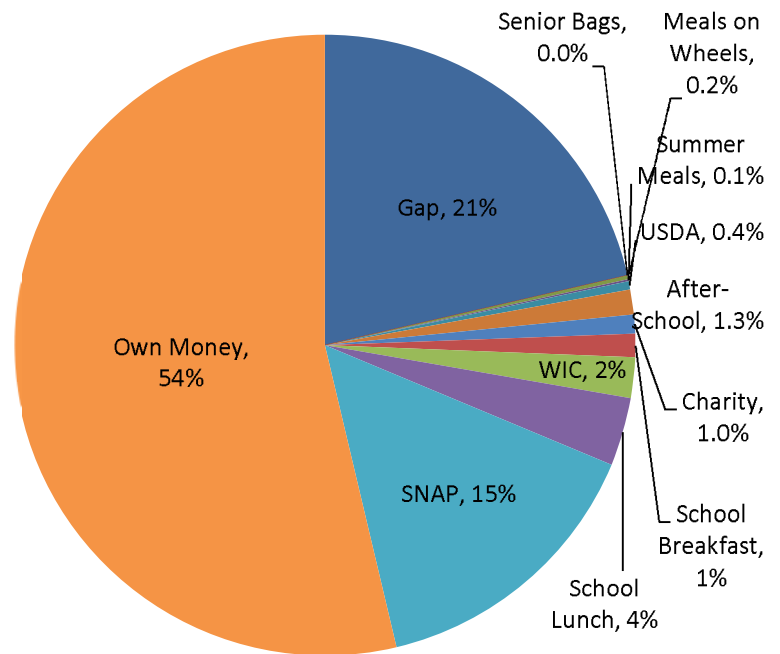
**Chart 1 -  
158,270 Food Insecure Residents**



## ***What resources are available?***

Another way to measure need compares the food resources of a vulnerable population to a dietary standard. According to USDA, a moderately-priced, nutritious diet for all of Travis County’s low-income residents (with incomes below 185% of the poverty line) costs \$908,544,729 annually.

- Currently, low-income county residents purchase the bulk of this food with their own money (54%).
- To make ends meet, many then combine their money with a patchwork of resources, the largest of which are SNAP (15%) and School Lunch (4%).
- Even after combining their own money with assistance, these residents face a 21% gap between their resources and the USDA standard, equal to \$194,424,780 annually.
- For many, this resource gap may lead to poor nutrition or food insecurity.<sup>ii</sup>



**Chart 2 – Low-Income Food Sources & Gap**

## ***What can be done?***

No matter how it is measured, hunger represents a disparity between income and expenses. As such, it can be permanently ended only by opportunities to earn and save enough money to meet the cost of living, and the knowledge to spend this money effectively.

In the meantime, existing nutrition programs can be used more effectively to reduce hunger. For example, Travis County leaves \$157,208,320 in SNAP benefits “on the table” in Washington each year, costing the county \$281,402,892 in potential economic activity.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Ending Hunger in Travis County: Two Perspectives on Annual Cost**

1. Food insecure residents: **158,270**  
Cost of “just enough” food: **\$63,268,470**
2. Low-income residents: **318,104**  
Cost to cover resource gap: **\$194,424,780**



Volunteers, elected officials, nonprofits and the business community should work together to implement the strategies described in the attached report. These strategies will expand the resources available to hungry Travis County residents, and reduce the gaps that currently exist.

*\*Federal nutrition programs include SNAP/food stamps, WIC, school meals, summer meals, after-school snacks and USDA commodities. Residents with incomes below 130% of the poverty line are likely income-eligible for all programs. Those with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty line are likely income-eligible for all programs except SNAP/food stamps. Those with incomes above 185% of the poverty line are likely income-ineligible for all federal nutrition programs. The 2009 poverty thresholds are shown in the following chart; other eligibility criteria may apply.*

<b># in household</b>	<b>2009 Poverty Threshold</b>	<b>130% of Poverty</b>	<b>185% of Poverty</b>
1	\$10,830	\$14,079	\$20,036
2	\$14,570	\$18,941	\$26,955
3	\$18,310	\$23,803	\$33,874
4	\$22,050	\$28,665	\$40,793

**Data Sources:**

<sup>i</sup> Feeding America’s “Map the Meal Gap” Project, available online: <http://feedingamerica.org/our-network/the-studies/map-the-gap.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> Texas Food Bank Network analyses using public data. Methodology available upon request.

<sup>iii</sup> Health and Human Services Commission of County statistics, available online: [http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF\\_FS.asp](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF_FS.asp)



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