	Category/Policy # Reference Impact	
	Board Approval Date July 31, 2024	
	Replaces February 24, 2016	
Issued By Kim Morris Chief Impact Officer	Subject Nutrition Policy	

## NUTRITION POLICY

### **Purpose**

The East Texas Food Bank (ETFB) is committed to providing nutritious meals that will allow our communities to achieve healthy eating patterns and to live productive and active lives. The purpose of this policy is to provide updated guidance to the nutrition policy established by ETFB in 2016. Through this updated nutrition policy, ETFB will be better able to ensure that neighbors have access to nutritious foods and are supported in making healthy choices for themselves.


### **Policy Rational and Benefits**

Since 1988, ETFB has been serving the communities in East Texas by addressing issues of hunger and food security. Neighbors utilize local food pantries and meal sites on a consistent basis making ETFB a vital part of the community it serves. This policy will help our organization strive to reach our goals around meeting not only the food needs of our neighbors but also their nutritional needs.

Food insecurity is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. In 2022, approximately 44 million people in the US experienced food insecurity, including 1 in 5 children. While hunger and food security are related, they are also distinct. Hunger refers to a personal, physical sensation of discomfort, while food insecurity refers to a lack of available financial resources for food at the household level. People living in food insecure households face a number of barriers to eating healthy that make them vulnerable to diet-related chronic diseases, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. In recent years, strategies to address food insecurity have focused on interventions that simultaneously support food access and health.

There is a link between a lack of nutritious foods and chronic diseases. Individuals facing food insecurity have a higher need for nutritious foods to better manage their health. However, due to past and present constructs, food accessibility is greatly affected. As a result, neighbors must make tough choices between basic needs and food, therefore creating nutrient gaps that may contribute to an increased prevalence of chronic diseases.

Although the charitable food system was originally conceptualized as a way to provide temporary assistance to low-income families in acute need, for a variety of complex reasons, today's charitable food system plays a critical role in supporting the ongoing food needs of many chronically

	Category/Policy # Reference Impact
	Board Approval Date July 31, 2024
	Replaces February 24, 2016
Issued By Kim Morris Chief Impact Officer	Subject Nutrition Policy

food insecure households. Thus, more people are exposed to the charitable food system, and for longer periods of time, than in past decades.

We understand the role we play as an organization when it comes to providing nutritious foods and will utilize this policy to guide our focus towards procuring and distributing healthy items. These policy guidelines will direct our food banking practices to better serve the ETFB community and to promote the well-being of our neighbor population.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all departments, personnel and agencies unless exclusions are specifically stated.

**Nutrition Ranking System – HER Nutrition Guidelines**

This update to the ETFB Nutrition Policy will adhere to the [Healthy Eating Research](#) (HER) Nutrition Guidelines, which ranks foods into categories based on their nutritional quality. Foods are ranked as “choose often,” “choose sometimes” or “choose rarely,” based on the amount of sodium, saturated fat and added sugar they contain.

Items that are not nutritionally ranked include non-food items, condiments and cooking staples, nutritional supplements and baby foods.


**Foods Included/Excluded**

The policy will apply to food and beverage items including:

- Purchased items for the use of food bank programs and partner agencies
- USDA and other government-funded items
- Donated items including Retail Store, farmers/growers, manufacturers and food drive donations
  - These items will be ranked based on category

The policy will not apply to food and beverage items including:

- Retail store donations collected at agencies

	Category/Policy # Reference Impact	
	Board Approval Date July 31, 2024	
	Replaces February 24, 2016	
Issued By Kim Morris Chief Impact Officer	Subject Nutrition Policy	

### **Foods to Prioritize/Deprioritize**


#### **Priority Foods:**

In accordance with the HER Nutrition Guidelines, ETFB will actively seek and procure foods that are ranked “Choose Often” and “Choose Sometimes” whenever appropriate and possible. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Fruits and Vegetables**
  - Fresh produce
  - Low-sodium or no salt added canned vegetables
  - Canned fruits packed in 100% juice
  - Frozen fruits and vegetables that are low in sodium and added sugars
- **Grains**
  - Whole grains and whole grain-rich foods (such as whole wheat bread and pasta, brown rice, oats, quinoa, barley, buckwheat, corn tortillas, etc.)
  - Enriched grains (such as white rice, noodles, flour tortillas, etc.) will also be sourced to meet the cultural preferences of many of our neighbors
- **Dairy and Non-Dairy Alternatives**
  - Dairy foods and beverages (such as milk, yogurt, and cheese) that are low in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars
  - Plant-based milks, yogurts, and cheeses that are low in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars
- **Protein**
  - Fresh and frozen meat, poultry, and fish that is low in sodium and saturated fat
  - Canned beans and meats that are low in sodium and saturated fat
  - Plant-based protein foods (such as beans, lentils, nuts, nut butters, seeds, and soy products) that are low in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars

#### **Foods to Deprioritize:**

To prioritize our resources and maximize the nutritional quality of our inventory, ETFB will seek to limit the procurement of foods that are categorized as “Choose Rarely” under the HER Nutrition Guidelines. Specifically, ETFB will not procure items categorized as “Choose Rarely” without Senior Leadership Team approval, including below items:

		Category/Policy # Reference Impact
		Board Approval Date July 31, 2024
		Replaces February 24, 2016
Issued By Kim Morris Chief Impact Officer	Subject  Nutrition Policy	

- **Sugar sweetened beverages** – including, but not limited to soda, energy drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks, sweetened coffees, sweetened teas, and shakes that are high in added sugars
- **Sweet snacks and desserts** – including, but not limited to bakery items (such as cakes, cookies, donuts, muffins, and other pastries), baking mixes, ice cream, fruit snacks, and candy that are high in added sugars and/or saturated fat
- **Savory snacks** – including, but not limited to chips and crackers that are high in sodium and/or saturated fat
- **Mixed dishes** – including, but not limited to soups, stews, frozen dinners, and boxed meals that are high in sodium and/or saturated fat

This policy does not preclude ETFB from accepting donations of any kind. Rather than turn donations away, we aim to guide donors toward our needs. We will make our Nutrition Policy available to food and beverage donors including manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and producers and, when appropriate, discuss ways that donors can help to support the aims of this policy.


### **Implementation and Monitoring**

#### **Implementation:**

The Nutrition Education Department will work with Food Sourcing, Agency Services, Child Hunger, Senior Hunger, and Branch teams to improve or maintain the nutrition of their food offerings within each of their programs according to neighbor nutritional and cultural needs. Programs subject to this nutrition policy include the following:

- USDA/TEFAP
- CSFP/Senior Grocery
- Resource Centers
- Backpack
- Kid’s Café (CACFP)
- SFSP
- Purchased food/food not assigned to a program
- College Market Program

**Goal: Within the food that is considered ranked, ETFB will achieve an average of 85% inventory of choose often and choose sometimes food items.**

	Category/Policy # Reference Impact	
	Board Approval Date July 31, 2024	
	Replaces February 24, 2016	
Issued By Kim Morris Chief Impact Officer	Subject Nutrition Policy	

*This policy's purpose is to promote health and balance in client choice – it is not within the policy to promote the idea that certain foods are good or bad.*

The Development and Operations Departments will share the nutrition policy document with our food and beverage donors, as well as our agency and community partners, to educate them on our stance regarding the health and nutrition of our neighbors, and to emphasize nutritious items that are requested and distributed to neighbors.

**Monitoring:**

The Nutrition Education Department will audit our inventory on a monthly basis to ensure that all foods are ranked appropriately according to the HER Nutrition Guidelines.

The Nutrition Education Department will perform an annual assessment of the health and nutrition of the food bank as a whole and share findings with department managers, directors, and chiefs to help maintain or improve the health of the food bank's food offerings and programs offered to neighbors.

**Review**

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Nutrition Education Department and Senior Leadership Team to determine any changes that are necessary for the success of the policy, the food bank and our community including updating goals and planning strategic steps to reach these goals. Inventory reports and other metrics will be utilized to monitor and report progress toward identified goals.