

When Food Is Available but Hard to Use

102 food-access surveys in Goleta and Santa Barbara | July 18 - August 22, 2026

This summer, the Goleta Food Access Listening Project collected 102 completed paper surveys at local food-distribution sites. People raised practical questions about where to go, when they could pick up food, and whether the food offered fit the needs of their households.

84

wanted later pickup hours

82% of 102

73

did not know where to go

72% of 102

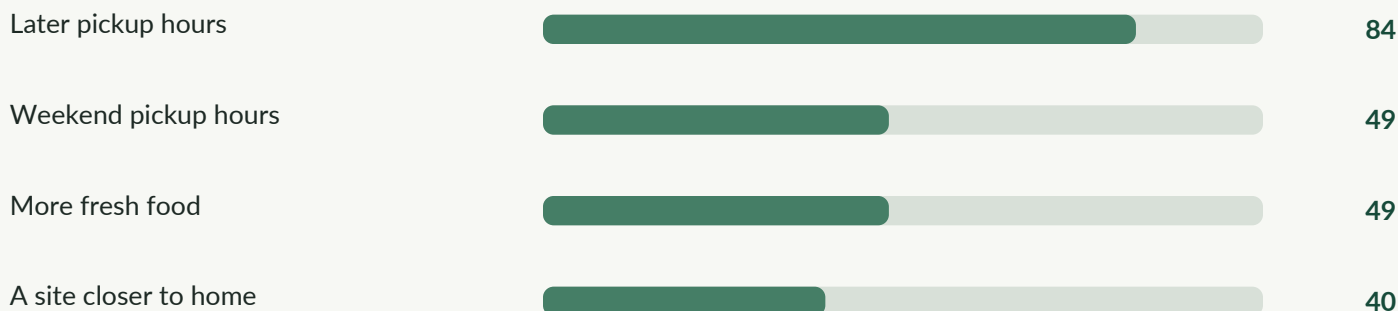
49

asked for more fresh food

48% of 102

CHANGES RESPONDENTS SAID WOULD HELP

Number selecting each option (Question 5; respondents could choose several)



FINDING FOOD IS ALSO AN INFORMATION PROBLEM

73 selected “I do not know where to go”; 61 said eligibility or instructions were unclear (Question 3). Asked how they heard about resources, 72 selected friends or family, compared with 20 selecting internet search (Question 6).

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“i don't have a way to cook the food”

“more protein and not expired”

Of 32 optional written responses, 31 addressed food choice, freshness, dietary suitability, or how food could be stored and prepared.

PREPARED BY JACKSON SIMMONS-FURLATI | OCTOBER 2026

What should change next?

These findings point to three small changes worth testing with an existing food-distribution partner. They are proposals, not claims that a particular provider has failed.

01 TEST ONE LATER PICKUP WINDOW

Run a short pilot with a willing provider. Track how many people use the added hours, whether they are new visitors, food remaining, and staffing required.

02 MAKE HOURS AND ELIGIBILITY EASIER TO FIND

Check current pickup details with local providers and existing food-resource listings. Share verified information at sites and through the friends, family, and organizations people already consult.

03 LET HOUSEHOLDS SAY WHAT THEY CAN USE

Try a limited food-choice option or short exit question about freshness, diet, storage, and cooking equipment. Measure which items people choose and what remains unused.

SCOPE AND METHOD

Collection: 102 completed paper forms recorded across seven dates, July 18 - August 22, 2026, at five food-distribution-site labels. Answers were voluntary and self-reported. Respondents included people describing their own experience and people describing someone they help.

39

Goleta / Isla Vista only

50

Downtown Santa Barbara only

1

Both

12

No area selected

Reading the numbers: Questions 3 and 5 allowed multiple selections. Counts are shown out of all 102 surveys; response totals may exceed 102. The open-ended question received 32 responses. Geographic categories come from the area people selected, not from verified residence addresses.

Important limitation: Question 4 asked for a single biggest barrier, but 75 respondents selected more than one. It is excluded here. Participants were not randomly sampled, so these results describe the people surveyed, not the prevalence of barriers across Goleta or Santa Barbara.

Suggested next step: Meet with one local distribution partner, choose one feasible four-week pilot, and report what changes for the people using it.