

## The Government Shutdown Drags On: What Donors Can Do In the Near-And-Long-Term

Clarissa Coburn | January 19 2019

While foundations and other grantmaking organizations may be constrained by grant processes and bureaucracies, individual donors have the agility to make a difference immediately, according to [Shelley Whelpton](#), senior managing director at Arabella Advisors.

Here's a look at the recommended steps donors can take and organizations to support.

### Food

Federal workers who aren't receiving pay must still feed themselves and families and many government workers are turning to food banks for the first time, according to [Radha Muthiah](#), president & CEO of the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C. It has seen a 20 to 30 percent increase in calls in January. Muthiah reported that the food bank plans to serve 600,000 extra meals in January in addition to its regular 3 million, translating to \$300,000 in additional costs. This figure assumes only federal workers and contractors being fed, and does not factor in the SNAP beneficiaries who often use food banks to close the gaps at the end of the month.

Because of the way [SNAP benefits are dispersed](#) in many states (recipients receive benefits over the course of the month, rather than everyone receiving benefits on the first, lengthening the wait for many users) many recipients will be in distress in March "even if the government opened tomorrow," said [Stacy Dean](#), vice president for Food Assistance Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. This will lead to an additional strain on food banks in March, and potentially for months to come.

*Recommend steps for donors:*

- Donate to your local food bank or school lunch fund.
- Contribute to [Feeding America](#), which will distribute funds based on need.

### Financial Help

Many government workers and contractors live paycheck to paycheck and going unpaid for any length of time will have a ripple effect through local economies. The need to borrow from family members, landlords inability to pay their mortgages, and disruption of normal spending at local businesses are just a few of the potential results of not paying workers. In the cold months, heating bills can be a major concern in many parts of the country, according to [John Berry](#), director of the United States Office of Personnel Management.

*Recommend steps for donors:*

- Donate to a local credit union to support its no- or low-interest loans program, or advocate for the creation or improvement of such a program.
- Donate to the [Federal Employee Education & Assistance Fund](#), which is straining under an unusually high number of requests.

## Legal Help

Free legal assistance is crucial for many low-income people, for whom it can mean the difference between homelessness and stable housing. Contractors won't get back pay and some will need legal aid to fight eviction. The immigration courts are also closed during this shutdown, increasing the already extreme backlog of cases.

*Recommend steps for donors:*

- Support local legal services organizations.
- Donate to [Voices for Civil Justice](#).

## Organizations that Need Support

The impact of the shutdown goes far beyond workers and SNAP beneficiaries. Institutions and organizations that normally receive federal money, including parks and nonprofits supported by the Combined Federal Campaign, are facing unexpected difficulties.

*Recommend steps for donors:*

- Donate to the [Parks Restoration Fund](#).
- Reach out to organizations that normally receive support from the [Combined Federal Campaign](#) to find out what needs they have due to the shutdown.

## The End of the Shutdown Isn't the End of the Story

Unfortunately, it isn't likely that this will be the last government shutdown. Donors would do well to prepare for the future – and other causes of instability – by reinforcing the ability of individuals and the social sector to weather difficult times.

*Recommend steps for donors:*

- Support human service infrastructure and community foundations in your area.
- Work to increase financial security for [individuals](#) and [nonprofits](#).