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Kim Lawkis Named CEO of Feeding Alabama

Longtime food banker and disaster-response leader takes the helm as Alabama's hunger-relief network faces a pivotal year

Mobile, Ala. (October 14, 2026) – Kim Lawkis, a longtime food banker and disaster-response leader, is the new chief executive officer of Feeding Alabama, the statewide association of Alabama's eight member food banks. The Feeding Alabama Board of Directors named Lawkis, who previously served as chief operating officer, to the role in a planned, board-led succession. She began as CEO on October 1, 2026, succeeding founding CEO Laura Lester.

“I started on the front lines of food banking, so I know what a distribution day looks like and, more importantly, I know the families standing in those lines. I know that for a parent, getting food on the table can be one more thing they’re trying to figure out at the end of a long day,” said **Lawkis**. *“This network has kept food moving through hurricanes, a pandemic, government shutdowns and the everyday struggles families face. We'll keep doing what has always worked: listening to our neighbors, working together and making sure no one goes without the food they need.”*

A front-line food banker

Lawkis began her career at Feeding the Gulf Coast, where she oversaw extensive operational and programmatic work as director of child nutrition. She brings deep experience in disaster response and years of work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on programs and grants.

"Kim knows every part of this network, from the warehouse floor to the state capitol, and that is exactly the leadership Alabama's food banks need right now," said **Nicole Williams, chair of the Feeding Alabama Board of Directors and CEO of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama**. *"She has built strong relationships with our member food banks, state agencies and federal partners, and she has a clear vision for making this network stronger and more resilient. The board is proud to name her CEO."*

As COO, Lawkis was essential to Feeding Alabama's growth, including its federal and state programs and its coordination with state agencies during emergencies. Since 2020, the organization has secured $32 million in state and federal grants for Alabama's food banks, helped bring Summer EBT to more than 500,000 children and partnered with the state on a local food purchasing program that paid 87 Alabama farmers to supply the food banks with 5.5 million pounds of produce to all 67 counties serviced by the Feeding Alabama network.

"Kim is smart, thoughtful and a big-picture thinker, and she has been essential to everything this network has built," said Lester. *"She knows these food banks, these partners and this work from the inside, and I have every confidence in her leadership."*

Leading through a pivotal year

Lawkis takes the helm as Alabama's hunger-relief network enters a period of significant change. As new federal work requirements and eligibility rules take effect, SNAP participation in Alabama fell by more than 80,000 people between July 2025 and May 2026, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. That is likely to put more pressure on food banks, but the charitable network cannot replace SNAP: for every meal food banks provide, SNAP provides nine. Beginning in October 2027, the state must also begin paying an estimated $174 million a year toward SNAP benefits.

Alabama will welcome a new governor in January, and unless Congress delays the cost share, including through a Farm Bill, the decision on how the state covers it will land early in that administration. Feeding Alabama is ready to be a resource to the next governor and state leaders, bringing data, local insight and practical options as they weigh that choice. The network is also a trusted state partner in disaster response, capacity any governor will rely on during the next storm.

At the same time, food banks are absorbing the same rising costs as the families they serve. Diesel prices of around $6 a gallon have driven up the cost of moving food across the state, and one member food bank reports more than $120,000 in unbudgeted fuel and freight costs this year.

Lawkis' early priorities include:

- Strengthening network readiness so food banks can respond to disasters, policy changes and rising need
- Keeping Alabama families at the center by listening to the neighbors food banks serve and letting their experiences shape the network's response
- Growing diversified support so member food banks are more resilient to rising costs and funding shifts
- Building relationships with Alabama's next governor and administration, and deepening them with the legislature and congressional delegation
- Supporting adequate investment in, and effective implementation of, the federal and state nutrition programs Alabama families and food banks rely on

In 2025, the Feeding Alabama network distributed nearly 75 million meals, or 90 million pounds of food, through eight member food banks and more than 1,200 partner agencies across all 67 counties.

Alabamians can support the network by giving to their local food bank or to Feeding Alabama at feedingalabama.org/donate, and by volunteering at a local food bank or pantry.

About Feeding Alabama

Feeding Alabama is the statewide association of Alabama's eight member food banks, which serve all 67 counties through more than 1,200 partner agencies. Feeding Alabama works with food banks, state agencies, elected leaders and community partners to reduce hunger through coalition-building, nutrition programs, disaster response and advocacy. Learn more at feedingalabama.org and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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