



Improving Food Security:

Feeding America Maximizes Food Distribution with Cloud Data Warehousing and Analytics



"We're connecting our food banks through Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services so we can make better decisions about how to help ensure that people get enough to eat while also rescuing safe, nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste."

James Broniarczyk

Director, Solution Architecture & Development
Feeding America

Goals

Enhance mission to solve food insecurity by analyzing current data from member food banks instead of relying on surveys

Improve operating efficiency by moving to cloud apps for donation tracking while connecting to diverse source systems

Scale capacity for processing food and financial donations on demand to respond to fluctuations in food security

Solution

Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services brings in data from over a dozen internal systems and is actively adding data from 200 network member food banks making it available for analytics

Informatica Cloud Data Integration connects cloud apps such as NetSuite and Salesforce to legacy systems and databases

The Informatica solution pulls live data from food banks into a cloud data warehouse using native, high-volume connectivity to Google BigQuery

Results

Facilitates informed, rapid decision-making to help provide more people with access to nutritious food

Improves efficiency in accepting food and financial donations and transporting the right quantities to the right food banks

Provides a secure platform to receive 20x more financial donations, 6x more food transportation requests, and 7x more grocery orders in response to COVID-19

Business Requirements:

- Use technology to help donations make the greatest impact
- Select a cloud-based solution that can support future goals
- Assure member food banks that their data will be secure

About Feeding America

Feeding America is a nonprofit with a mission to feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of 200-member food banks and engage the country in the fight to end hunger. What began in 1979 as a clearinghouse for national food donations is now the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization. Forbes ranks it as the second largest U.S. charity by revenue.

Informatica Success Story: Feeding America

Prior to the pandemic, there were 35 million people in the United States experiencing food insecurity—limited or uncertain access to enough food. Feeding America® is helping more of them than any other hunger relief organization. With a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks, the nonprofit provides emergency food assistance and support to more than 40 million people through food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other community-based agencies. Feeding America relies on farmers, manufacturers, and retail grocers to get nourishing food to communities nationwide. To accomplish this, it manages a tremendous amount of data about food donations, demand, and logistics to help ensure that donated food is not wasted, and that it is quickly and efficiently delivered to the food banks that need it most.

However, managing, sharing, and using that data—in real time—was a challenge. Although the food banks work closely with each other on a shared mission, they are separate charitable organizations with their own information systems. As such, they don't share data electronically. Hence, Feeding America made decisions about food sourcing and supply chains based on historical survey data that could be up to three months old. When employees had questions about the data, they asked the analytics team to run a custom query and provide a spreadsheet with the results.

Lacking a national picture of the food moving through its network on anything better than a quarterly basis, Feeding America was unable to fully optimize its complex supply chain. For example, if a certain part of the network had a shortage, there was often not enough time or visibility to re-route donations from other areas that might have a surplus. The nonprofit worried that if confronted with a crisis situation, such as a major recession or global pandemic, it would not be able to respond fast enough to properly accept and distribute donations.

To enhance and scale its mission, Feeding America wanted to use data and analytics to analyze current metrics from food banks instead of relying on old data from surveys. It also wanted to use cloud technology to improve donation tracking, increase operating efficiency, and reduce technical debt. However, it wanted the ability to modernize at its own pace, and on a nonprofit's budget. Legacy systems needed to be kept online and synchronized regularly with the cloud to keep data consistent.

"Like many nonprofits, we were a bit behind the technology curve simply because we need to make sure that every investment has an impact on our mission," says James Broniarczyk, Director, Solution Architecture & Development at Feeding America. "But we realized that investing in technology is actually one of the most important things we can do to more efficiently serve our neighbors in need."





“Every dollar raised from our COVID-19 Response Fund will be used to support food banks’ efforts to help people facing hunger, and all those donations are flowing into our systems with Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services.”

James Broniarczyk

Director

Solution Architecture & Development

Feeding America

Feeding systems timely data

As Feeding America moved from a self-hosted ERP system to NetSuite and started using Salesforce to manage donations, it began using Informatica Cloud Data Integration to connect its cloud apps to other legacy systems. It quickly saw the potential to expand its use of Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services to modernize data warehousing and analytics, including bringing data in from 200 food banks.

“We wanted a cloud-based solution that could support our future goals, and something that food banks would trust and be comfortable using,” says Broniarczyk. “Our ultimate goal for data warehousing is to have live data interchanges with all of our food banks, and we felt that Informatica was the right partner to help us achieve that.”

Feeding America discussed its objectives with Informatica and planned a three-to-five-year roadmap that included bringing live data from internal systems and food banks into a cloud data warehouse using Informatica’s native, high-volume connectivity to Google BigQuery.

“We sat down with Informatica and went through our entire roadmap, so we don’t need to worry about how we are going to handle future integrations,” says Broniarczyk. “It’s already handled.”

A proven recipe for success

Although the data warehouse initiative is still in the early stages, it has already streamlined reporting, helping Feeding America coordinate better with recurring national donors, which include some of the nation’s top food retailers. Instead of manually compiling donation reports and sending them out in spreadsheets or Microsoft Access databases, Feeding America now pulls the information from its cloud data warehouse into Tableau, where it can be easily analyzed and filtered by the donor. Meanwhile, food banks are starting to come on board, bringing the organization closer to a single, real-time picture of how food moves through its national network.

“We’re connecting our food banks through Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services so we can make better decisions about how to minimize food waste and help ensure that people get enough to eat,” says Broniarczyk.

Processing 20x more financial donations

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the number of Americans vulnerable to food insecurity increased dramatically. Feeding America projected that 10 million more people were likely experiencing food insecurity, bringing the total to 45 million people in 2020. In response, Feeding America established a COVID-19





Inside The Solution:

- Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services
 - Informatica Cloud Data Integration
- Google Cloud
- Salesforce
- Tableau



response fund to help food banks during this time. The iHeartRadio Living Room Concert for America hosted by Elton John helped raise awareness and funds, bringing in 20 times the number of daily financial donations that Feeding America usually receives through its website.

“Every dollar raised from our COVID-19 Response Fund will be used to support food banks’ efforts to help people facing hunger, and all those donations are flowing into our systems with Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services,” says Broniarczyk. “The day of the iHeartRadio Living Room Concert for America, we received 70,000 small donations—20 times the normal amount—and nothing broke. We didn’t hit a cap. The donations just came in, and it was really impressive.”

Rising to a greater challenge

As Feeding America’s mission becomes even more imperative to the health and well-being of Americans, the nonprofit can easily scale its capacity to quickly and efficiently process donations, including food and financial support. Monetary donations have been sustained at five times the average daily amount, and other key metrics have increased by similar amounts.

“Since the COVID-19 crisis began, we’ve had six times more food transportation requests and seven times the number of grocery orders,” says Broniarczyk. “I’m so thankful that we started our cloud data warehousing project with Informatica and BigQuery before the pandemic started, because we’re in a much better position to respond effectively during this time of need.”

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Informatica Worldwide Headquarters

2100 Seaport Blvd, Redwood City, CA 94063, USA

Phone: 650.385.5000 | Fax: 650.385.5500 | Toll-free in the US: 1.800.653.3871

informatica.com | facebook.com/InformaticaLLC | linkedin.com/company/informatica | twitter.com/Informatica

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