

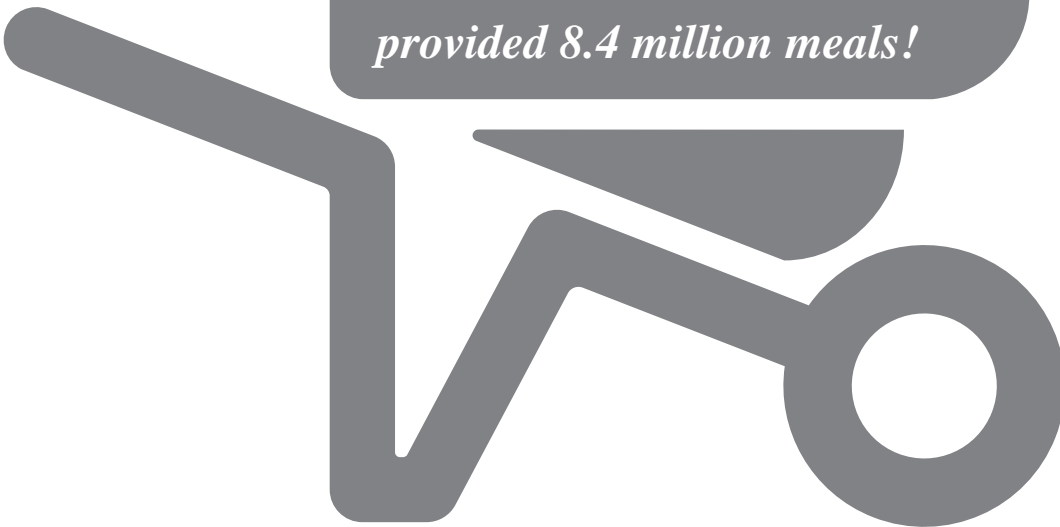
# 2021 Community Impact Report

Nutrition | Community Voice | Equity in Action | Local Food | Systems Change



*YOU*

*provided 8.4 million meals!*



# 2021 Impact

Sophia Lenarz-Coy  
Executive Director

Tom Mercer  
Director of Operations

David Peeples  
Director of Programs

Emily Eddy White  
Director of Advancement  
and Culture

Sadie Yang  
Human Resources and  
Diversity, Equity and  
Inclusion Manager

## Board of Directors

Thank you to these  
individuals who served  
on the board between  
October 1, 2020 and  
September 30, 2021

Aimee Pappenfus,  
Chair 2020-2021

Jennifer Marso,  
Chair 2021-2022

Naima Dhere

Bridget Hayden

Kurt Johansen

Vani Karun

Jenny Mcaab

Keith Narr

Sharmyn Phipps

Leah Porter

Dave Schmiechen

Ramon Sorstokke

Daniel Tilsen



Total meals provided in 2021:

# 8,413,702

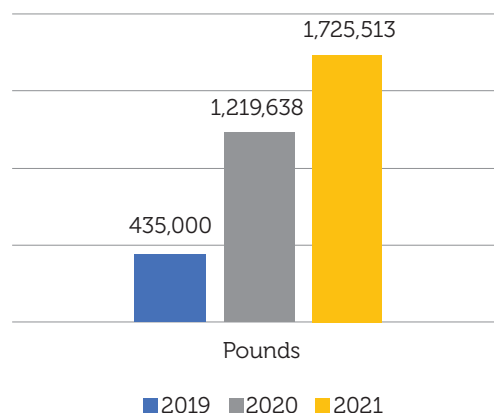
An increase of 1.65 million from 2019



**"It can be hard for our community to access familiar food, so they eat food they're not used to. The support from The Food Group and your donors for specific dietary needs makes a big difference."**

-Ange Hwang,  
Founder and Director,  
Asian Media Access

Increased pounds of **culturally connected foods** distributed to the community



# 280

Food shelf and meal  
programs partner  
organizations



# 1,822,765

Pounds of  
fresh produce  
to families

# You are essential to this work

Dear Hunger Relief Partners,

As I reflect on The Food Group's community impact in 2021, I am struck with the magnitude of need, the ongoing effects of the pandemic, the trauma and fatigue in our community, but also the resilience and generosity of our **participants, partners, volunteers, and donors**.

In the face of ongoing challenges, you continue to give generously to ensure good food gets to those who need it most. You allow our programs to stay nimble and meet the ever-changing food needs of our neighbors.

Because of you, we can

- prioritize healthy, local, and culturally connected foods,
- respond to urgent and persistent needs as they happen,
- deepen our commitment to racial justice, and
- work in collaboration with numerous partners to build a more equitable food system.

This report shares highlights of your impact in 2021 and looks ahead to our vision for 2022 and beyond. We offer a few stories as examples of how you empowered and continue to inspire our **value-centered work** to make a difference last year, today, and into the future.

There is more work to do. So many things remain uncertain. Many of the public programs developed to support low-income families through the worst of the pandemic are sunsetting. **Nutrition needs remain high, exacerbated by rising food costs.** The racial inequities that impact food access in our region must be tackled head on.

The Food Group stands ready to rise to the challenges in partnership with you. We will continue to work hard to understand emerging food and land access needs so that we can create innovative responses to meet the changing landscape. We will strengthen and steward our relationships with farmers, food shelves, and other community partners to listen and learn how to provide the things that are needed most. Through deep collaboration and commitment, we will continue to plant the seeds of change and make a positive difference.

**Thank you for making it all possible.**

With gratitude,

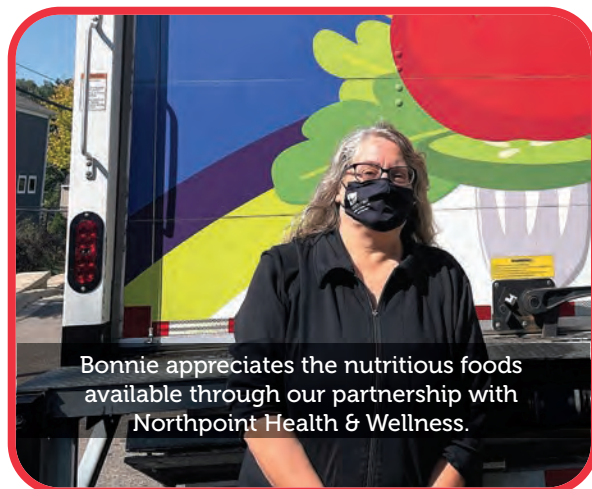


Sophia Lenarz-Coy  
Executive Director





**3,632,243**  
visits to food  
shelves in  
Minnesota  
in 2021.



## Bridging the nutrition gap

The Food Group supports and serves more than 280 food shelf, meal program and retail partners. Our circle of partners is diverse, yet there is a common thread: nutritious, culturally connected food is a priority for the communities they serve.

Creating a connection between our programs and our partners increases community access to nutritious foods. One way we do this is by growing organic, local produce that we're able to donate throughout the growing season. A partnership between Northpoint Health & Wellness Center and Big River Farms farmers guaranteed fresh produce was available all summer long at an outdoor farmers market, free of charge. Healthy foods are often sacrificed because of the cost barrier. **Nutritious food should not be considered a luxury item.**

Stuart Iseminger, of Northpoint shares, "We love it when the Big River Farms farmers

come. They've always bring the highest quality stuff—onions, radishes, kale, tomatoes—we get so excited."

Bonnie shares her experience at Northpoint, "With my limited income, when I go to the store, I'm not buying things that are good for me, like fresh produce. I can come here and pick up things that are actually good for me, so I can stretch my dollar a little bit more when I do go to the store. **This free produce really helps me make better choices.**"

Since 1976, our focus has been providing healthy foods to our partners. As our work evolves and expands, **nutrition remains core to our mission.**







Maria Bonilla shows off the fresh produce ready to distribute to community partners from our warehouse.

# Dynamic response to evolving needs

**“Equity is not telling people what they need – it’s people telling us what they need.”** The last two years have shown us that our world is constantly stretching and evolving, day by day – what may have been true for our community yesterday might be completely different today.

We strive to listen effectively by creating intentional, intimate, safe spaces (both in person and virtual), asking questions that might make us uncomfortable, and showing up in spaces where community voice is already present.

Over 2021, we engaged with our community through a series of Intentional Social Interaction events with agency partners, hosted the first Re-Rooting the Emerging

Farmers Conference, and **listened to the community** through multiple virtual events, focus groups, listening sessions, and shared meals. We use community voice to shape our programming.

We listened and adapted and are proud to share some of our key community-led accomplishments in 2021, made possible by your support and investment. (See sidebar for examples.)

**We are committed to continually relying on community voice as we work together to build a future food system that is equitable for all.**



## Your generosity

- Provided 150,000 free meals between April and September to our Emerging Partners.
- Provided capacity building workshops and stipends to a cohort of nine Emerging Partners to learn and practice cultural competency, community engagement, and leadership skills.
- Featured speakers and hosts from the Black and Indigenous community to appeal to a more diverse audience at the Emerging Farmers Conference

52%

of local  
product  
was  
sourced  
from  
BIPOC  
producers

"Government funding, foundation and corporate support, and generous giving from individuals are what make it possible to purchase local foods and support BIPOC producers and offer the culturally connected foods we provide to food shelves."

-Snow Aukema,  
Sourcing Manager

## Creating an equity- driven local economy



Setting out to harvest wild rice at Red Lake.  
Photo provided by Red Lake Nation Foods.

Every time The Food Group sources and supplies a food product, it's an opportunity for us to demonstrate our value of equity. Our inventory and distribution of culturally connected foods and our partnerships with local and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) producers continue to grow each year. We source from growers and producers who have historically been intentionally cut out from the food system. We are reaching out to them.

**Who we partner with and purchase from makes a difference.**

Taking feedback from our partners and the community, we enhanced our sourcing to include foods grown right here in Minnesota. Fare for All, our cooperative grocery program, now sells a package containing all locally made meats. It's become one of the most popular items ever sold through the program in its thirty 35 years of operation.

fare for all  
a program of the food group

### MN MEAT PACK\*

**\$26**

- **WALLEYE**  
(RED LAKE NATION FISHERY- REDBY, MN)
- **WILD RICE ASIAGO BRATS**  
&
- **APPLEWOOD SMOKED BACON**  
(BIG STEER MEATS- ST. PAUL MN)
- **GROUND BEEF**  
(BLOOMING PRAIRIE NATURAL BEEF-  
BLOOMING PRAIRIE MN)
- **GROUND TURKEY**  
(FERNDAL MARKET- CANNON FALLS MN)

**By purchasing from local and BIPOC producers, The Food Group is working to restore justice to an unbalanced food system.** Our local communities and economies thrive, and we break down barriers to provide nutritious foods to those who need them the most.



Big Steer Meats, a St. Paul butcher, is a local food source for Fare For All.





Mallory and Lucas at Big River Farms.

## "Good hearts" share the harvest

Awlyahsi-yó· (awl-yah-SEE-yo) is a partnership between two young farmers, Mallory and Lucas. "We started farming together to honor the seeds we each have grown and been given. Our collection includes more than 100 different varieties of vegetables, herbs, and flowers!" Awlyahsi-yó· is part of The Food Group's Big River Farms.

Mallory says, "Our mission is to feed people." Farm-to-table food can be expensive, which leaves behind so many people. "People without the financial means to pay for expensive organic produce still deserve fresh, nutritious food, including many varieties of Indigenous corn, beans, and squash," she says.

Lucas notes, "With the increased demand at local food shelves over the past couple years, the need is more present than ever." Awlyahsi-yó· offers Farm to Food Bank shares to purchase produce from the farm at a fair price that is then provided at no cost

to folks who need it most. **"Our goal is to distribute half of our farm's harvest to local food banks for people who have been excluded from the farm-to-table movement for economic reasons."**

Awlyahsi-yó· is a word in Lucas's native language of Oneida that means "good heart." "Lucas says, we feel that we need to have a **good heart, a good mind, and a good spirit** when we're farming. We need a good heart to be able to take care of all the precious seeds that we have in our bundles. We need to have a good mind to be able to take care of the land that we are on. And we need to have a good spirit to continue the work that we're doing."

"Especially during the current time of uncertainty, **it is wonderful to reconnect with the earth and all it can produce.** I am grateful to volunteer with an organization which provides quality agricultural opportunities to those who are underrepresented in the production and distribution of nutritious, fresh, delicious foods."

– Ann Hill,  
Big River Farms  
CSA Volunteer



Volunteers pause for a photo after collecting fresh food donated through the Minneapolis Farmers Market to distribute to food shelves.



# Creating an inclusive food system

Tiffany LaShae is a farmer, educator, activist, visionary, and beekeeper. In her address she said, **"We live under a system of food apartheid, where people of color are disproportionately impacted by lack of access to nourishing, culturally uplifting foods."**

How do we create a more just food system? That question touches every aspect of our work—from emergency food distribution to access to quality retail food, to growing and gleaning food. Here is one example of how working toward "systems change for justice" was woven into our work by the keynote speaker at the 2021 Emerging Farmers Conference, hosted by Big River Farms.

Tiffany shared her experiences of learning and working to grow food responsibly while honoring Indigenous and Black agriculture. She relates to a global network of farmers working in food justice and food sovereignty and has done hands-on work with communities in the U.S. and Africa.

Her vision is to "create a system that reflects the voices of all farmers." She encouraged the 128 virtual conference attendees to rebuild or create a food system that represents their voices, while farming on Dakota land.



Tiffany LaShae was the keynote presenter at the 2021 Emerging Farmers Conference.

Her action steps include: using the land responsibly, mentoring and teaching the next generation of black and brown farmers, and working through cooperatives, networks, and collectives to bring about change. She emphasized the importance of sourcing seeds carefully. "Seeds are an act of resistance and resilience. They are our heritage and culture."

In 2022 Tiffany will be managing a demonstration plot at Big River Farms to use as an educational platform to teach farmers how to use tools and techniques to farm regeneratively and steward the land. She will be working with an apprentice, and mentoring farmers at Big River Farms.

**"Food is at the center of who we all are. I don't want to just end hunger, I want people to eat nutrient dense food that nourishes their bodies and minds and also heals the land."**

-KaZoua Berry,  
Big River Farms Program Manager  
(pictured at left)

**"One of the most radical and revolutionary things you can do is grow your own food and eat from the land."**

Tiffany LaShae,  
Farmer





# Program Spotlight: Solutions on Wheels

Two of our programs bring food to people where they live. The **Twin Cities Mobile Market (TCMM)** is a grocery store on a bus bringing fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, grains, and high-quality groceries directly to apartments and neighborhoods that don't have easy access to full-service grocery stores.

By shopping on the TCMM, customers bypass transportation and mobility barriers to healthy food access. The bus is stocked with more than 200 items, accepts Market Bucks and SNAP as payment, and provides a feeling of community between TCMM staff and shoppers. The market improves the quality of life for those who use it for their food needs.

Thanks to funding from local foundations, this vital community partnership continues to expand to new sites, reaching families with children, seniors and adults with disabilities.

The popular **Fare For All** program sources fresh produce and frozen meat in bulk from wholesalers and producers. Volunteers at our warehouse pack the produce and meat into food packages. Our trucks deliver the food to community partners that host sales that are open to everyone.

Fare For All offers value, variety, quality and nutrition in our food packages. From \$10 Produce Packs to \$11 Mini Meat Packs and \$20 Combo Packs—the choices are nutritional and affordable. Fare For All serves people the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota all year round.

**"I believe food is medicine, and everyone deserves access to the healthy foods they want and need to be well."**

-Leah Porter  
Board Member & Founder  
of Twin Cities Mobile  
Market



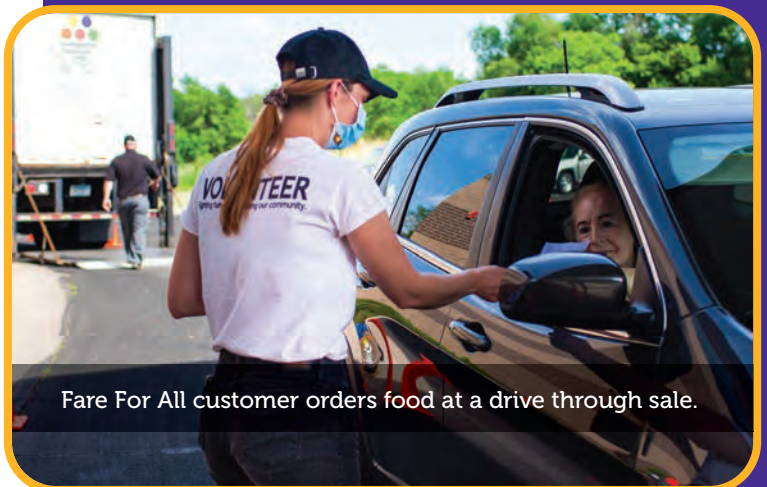
**In the news**



A shopper at Twin Cities Mobile Market



The Mobile Market team promotes healthy eating.



Fare For All customer orders food at a drive through sale.

# DONORS ARE THE DIFFERENCE



Helping the world *thrive*

**Thank you** for all the ways you bring the vision of a hunger-free community into existence. Your kindness and generosity remove barriers to good food and create a stronger, healthier community.

Here are a few comments from donors like you:



Center for Prevention

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus are nonprofit independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

**"I want to work on innovative ways to end hunger by working with partner organizations (both public and private). I want to work with hunger insecure people in solidarity—not to tell them what they want, but to partner with them to eliminate the need."**

**"I was a hungry kid and will continue to help others by giving what I can."**



**"I have never experienced hunger or felt what it is like to not know where my next meal will come from. I want everyone to have access to nutritious food in a cost-effective way. My donation to The Food Group specifically provides for my community and our state. That is important to me."**



Medica is just one example from our expansive network of partners who have joined forces in advocating for equity in our food system. **Thank you** to all our partners, both new and longstanding, for the important part you play in creating change in your community!



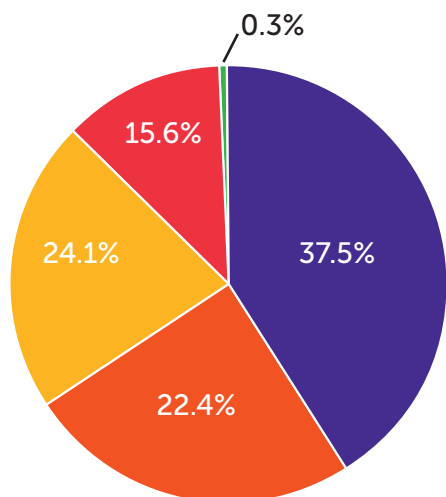
**"Your focus aligns well with our mission of investing in community-led initiatives that advance health equity. The Medica Foundation is pleased to partner with The Food Group to provide nutritious food to diverse communities that lack access to it for a host of reasons,"**



-JoAnn Birkholz,  
Executive Director of the Medica Foundation.

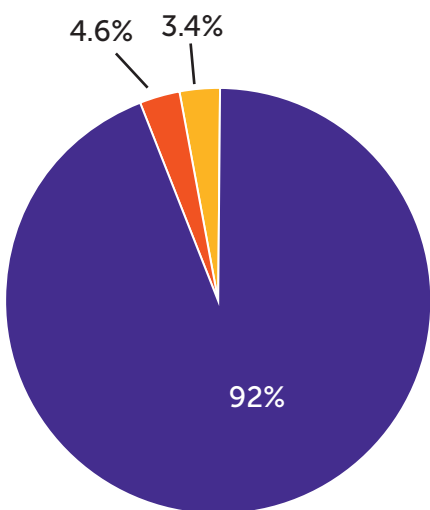
# AUDITED FINANCIALS, FISCAL YEAR 2021

## Income & Expenses



### Revenue

In-Kind Contributions	\$6,755,055
Financial Contributions	\$4,023,791
United Way	\$47,987
Government Grants	\$2,804,121
Program Revenue	\$4,344,080
Other	\$25,642
<b>Total Support &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>\$18,000,676</b>



### Expenses

Programs	\$16,149,378
Administrative	\$596,616
Fundraising	\$816,198
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$17,562,192*</b>

## Balance Sheet

### Assets

Cash	\$852,834
Investments	\$63,811
Accounts Receivable	\$175,392
Grants Receivable	\$330,874
Prepaid Expense	\$204,009
Inventory	\$973,271
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$2,600,191</b>

Property & Equipment - Net	\$3,735,901
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$6,336,092</b>

### Liabilities

Current	\$598,812
Long-term	\$532,993
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$1,131,805</b>

### Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$4,471,287
Temporarily Restricted	\$733,000
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$5,204,287</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$6,336,092</b>

\*FY2021 ended with a surplus. This was driven by multi-year funding of both grants and contracts restricted for programming in FY2022.





# THANK YOU!

Asante

Gracias

ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါသည်

Ta bluh doh mah

Miigwech

Ua tsaug

धन्यवाद

Mahadsanid

Urakoze

شکرا

Pidamayaye

Pinagigi



Pictured on this page are volunteers supporting our food bank and affordable grocery programs.

You are essential in the collective effort to provide food for today and create change for tomorrow. You provide financial resources, in-kind support, volunteer time and talent, and speak up as advocates for change. Thank you!

**"It is such a privilege and blessing to be partnering with The Food Group. Your support of our organization, staff, and community truly impacts lives. We are a better organization due to your hard work and passion for feeding the hungry in our community. Thank you for all you do!"**

Perry Petersen, Executive Director,  
White Bear Area Food Shelf

The Food Group  
8501 54th Avenue North  
New Hope, MN 55428

763-450-3860  
info@thefoodgroupmn.org

thefoodgroupmn.org



**4,551** volunteers contributed  
**10,915** hours of their time, equivalent  
to **5.25** full time staff