

ADVOCACY AGENDA

Guiding principles

Foodlink recognizes that to eliminate hunger, our community must eliminate poverty. We recognize that access to nutritious food is more than just geographic proximity and affordability. We recognize that structural forces, such as economic inequality and racism, are embedded in our current food system, and these forces determine who gets a seat at the table, and who experiences the most food insecurity. We are aligned with the Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative's (RMAPI) principles of building and supporting our community, addressing structural racism, and addressing trauma.

Foodlink will pursue a continuum of activities to address hunger, including: direct food relief, healthy food access, nutrition education, workforce development, and advocacy to support the needs of our community. We will leverage our resources to support and work collaboratively with movements, organizations, and policymakers to end poverty in our region.

The pursuit of equity guides our work, and the most impacted people will be centered in everything we do. We recognize that programs, policies and services are better when the beneficiaries have a stake in creating and maintaining them. Our goal is to cultivate the capacity of people to participate in and lead decision-making processes that meet their needs, and maximize the health of our communities.

Areas of focus

- 1 Ensure no one goes hungry**
Foodlink will take the lead in advocating, educating, and organizing to ensure that programs that feed people today are robust, accessible, and meet the needs of the community. This includes government nutrition programs (e.g. SNAP, WIC, CACFP, HPNAP) and support for charitable food programs.
- 2 Improve access to healthy food in schools, healthcare settings, and low-income communities**
Foodlink will lead efforts and develop policy and partnerships that promote access to nutritious foods for all low-income people. This includes opportunities to increase access to nutritious foods in communities with high levels of need (i.e. food insecurity) beyond our traditional role in the hunger-relief system.
- 3 Eliminate the root causes of hunger**
Foodlink will support efforts to eliminate poverty and increase the quality of life for all low-income community members. We have listened to our clients, and we know that most people who need food assistance are struggling in other areas — such as housing, medical care, and employment. When people's basic needs are met, food security and the physical and economic health of our communities improves.

Our Priorities

1 Ensure no one goes hungry

- Increase the number of summer meals distributed in Rochester and the surrounding communities to help kids thrive.
- Establish accessible emergency food resources at schools and college campuses to meet the nutritional needs of students.
- Incorporate Foodlink programs into county-wide Community Health Improvement plans to strengthen rural food security, including:
 - Food Pantries
 - Curbside Market
 - Nutrition Education
 - Backpack Program
- Advocate for increased funding for the NYS Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) to ensure a strong and stable state-wide hunger-relief network.
- Advocate NYS to adopt Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) to increase SNAP participation among seniors.
- Advocate to strengthen the federal anti-hunger safety net, including SNAP, WIC, TANF, CACFP, SFSP, and other nutrition assistance programs.

2 Improve access to healthy food

- Partner with the City of Rochester and other stakeholders to create a Food Policy Council that will develop policies and programs to meet the nutritional needs of residents.
- Partner with hospital systems and healthcare providers in our service area to implement referrals to emergency food, safety net programs, nutrition education, and food access programs.
- Lead efforts to make urban agriculture an important part of any long-term development strategy in the City of Rochester by designating it a permitted, permanent land use.

- Partner with elected officials and stakeholders to increase statewide incentive programs for local produce, including 100% matching dollars for SNAP at farmers markets and increased investment in local food in school meals.
- Lead efforts to reform the lowest bid system for institutional meal providers to provide higher quality, nutritious meals through Foodlink's Community Kitchen.
- Advocate for appropriate nutritional standards in school meals on a federal level.

3 Eliminate the root causes of hunger

Based on input from our staff, clients, and partners, Foodlink will support any efforts to eliminate poverty and increase quality of life for low-income community members. We will advocate for:

- Any policy or legislation that makes it easier for community members to understand, apply for, receive, and retain government benefits.
- Any policy or legislation that raises wages for workers, increases worker protections, addresses racial and gendered income gaps, and provides high-quality jobs to community members.
- Any policy or legislation that makes connecting individuals to services (government or otherwise) easier to navigate AND provides more comprehensive benefits to individuals.
- Any policy or legislation that mitigates the effects of the benefits cliff for individuals and families who are above the poverty line but cannot make ends meet.
- We will also support efforts to address the following issues: housing, healthcare, transportation, education, mental health, childcare, and criminal justice reform.

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