



**Foodlink**

NOURISHING LIVES

# 11m Pact

REPORT/2024



# FROM THE CEO & BOARD CHAIR

It is no secret that the critical work we do at Foodlink requires significant support from you. Our donors. Our volunteers. Our community partners. **We all have a role to play** in ending hunger and poverty in our region.

As Foodlink embarks on the largest infrastructure project in our history to better support our emergency food network and serve our neighbors, we must rely on the generosity of others now more than ever. During these times, it is only natural that supporters might ask the same question: **What's the impact?**

In other words, **how or why is Foodlink the best return on investment you could make with your charitable giving?**

We could list countless reasons — but in this report, we highlight three:

**1. Courage — we are trailblazers in pursuit of our vision.** From the Curbside Market to our social enterprise cafe to the only culinary apprenticeship in New York State—our programs are one-of-a-kind and we're never afraid to try new things.

**2. Passion — we are fueled by our mission,** which is why our biggest investment is in people. We put people first — from the neighbors who use our services, to our skilled and dedicated colleagues supporting this work.

**3. Impact — we are exemplary stewards.** We are in the midst of critical infrastructure projects essential to our work to increase access to healthy food. This will require the most significant investment in our facility since we built our Community Kitchen in 2016. The first year of production in that kitchen yielded 1,154,843 meals. This past year, we nearly doubled that to a record-breaking total of 2,117,003—a true return on investment!

This impact report details the courage, passion and impact of Foodlink that is only possible because of your support and generosity. Thank you for believing in our mission; that you for investing in Foodlink, so that we can invest in this community.

  
President & CEO  
Chair, Board of Directors

This Impact Report reflects Foodlink's most recent fiscal year from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

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# RETURN ON INVESTMENT

More than 8 years ago, we secured funding and finalized construction for what was — at the time — our largest capital project in Foodlink history: our \$5 million, state-of-the-art community kitchen.

In the years since, *we have doubled our output of healthy meals, nourishing a community that depends on us, responding to urgent needs and crises, and helping our youngest residents thrive. Together, we are making a difference — one day, one child and one meal at a time.*





# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

New food insecurity data reveals a massive spike in demand

In May of 2024, the release of Feeding America’s “Map the Meal Gap” report revealed what had been widely known among anti-hunger advocates for quite some time: *Food insecurity was on the rise.*

**The food-insecurity rate in Foodlink’s 10-county service area jumped from 9.3% in 2021 to 12% in 2022** — a one-year increase unlike any since the Great Recession. The impact was felt everywhere — from Wyoming County, which saw the largest percentage increase (7.9% to 11.4%), to the 14605 zip code in the City of Rochester, which has the third-highest rate (29.8%) in the state.

The one-year spike, which **resulted in an additional 33,580 people experiencing food insecurity in our region**, is attributed to two main factors: the sudden rise in food inflation from 2021 to 2022, paired with the expiration of several COVID-era federal assistance programs (e.g. child tax credits, free school meals, increased SNAP).

The demand has continued to rise. In looking at our own monthly reports collected from 200+ food bank members, **visits to pantries and meal programs increased 35% in 2024 compared to 2023.**

At a media event to share the sobering statistics with the community, we invited a few food bank members from our expansive network, which collectively distributed 25.2 million pounds of food this past year. They shared stories of an **unprecedented rise in need**. As the convener of the emergency food system, we continue to collaborate and seek new sources of food and funding for our members so they never have to turn anyone away.

25.2M lbs  
of food distributed  
throughout our network  
this past year



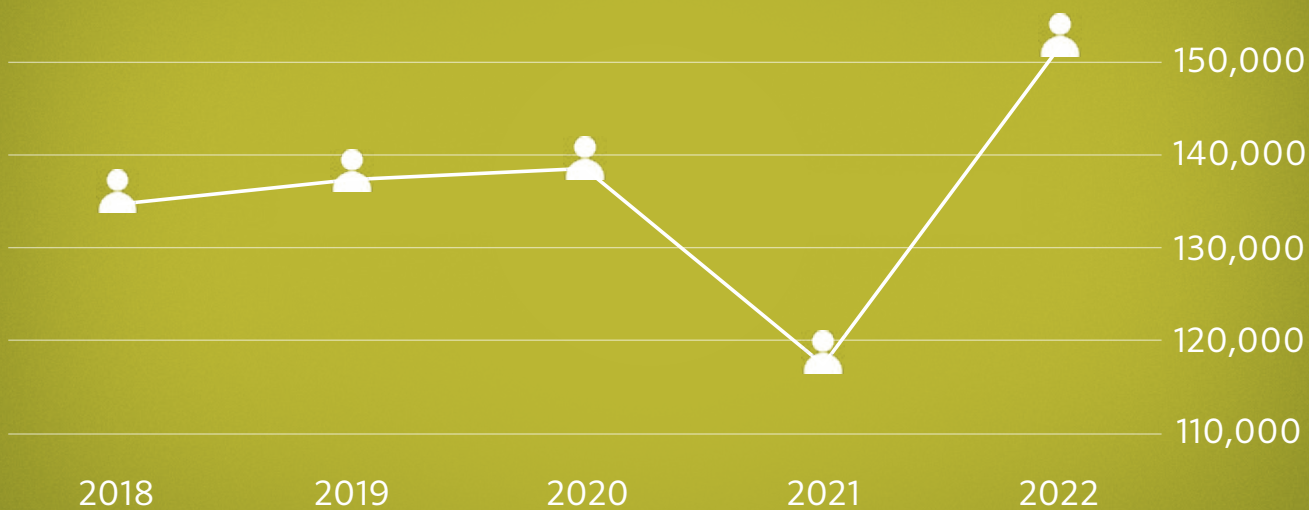
*One mother in Canandaigua recently shared that she has three young children. Those children are fed at school every day, but at home, the cupboards are bare. They were sharing an alternating schedule for dinner each night. The local food pantry helps fill the gap and fill their pantry so these kids can eat dinner.*

— Gwen Van Laeken  
Partnership for Ontario County



Above left, Foodlink President & CEO Julia Tedesco speaks to reporters in May 2024 about Feeding America's latest Map the Meal Gap report, which revealed a sharp spike in food insecurity in Foodlink's service area (see chart below). Above right, volunteers in Geneva assist with a Pop-up Pantry distribution in partnership with the local Boys & Girls Club.

## Increase in food-insecure people in the Finger Lakes region





# Foodlink Curbside Market



# Courage

## A DECADE OF CURBSIDE

In July of 2023, Foodlink staff, volunteers and local officials gathered to celebrate a decade of service for the Curbside Market. The mobile market — one of the first of its kind in the nation and a risky venture for a food bank to take on at the time — has evolved into one of the community’s most successful and relied-upon initiatives in improving access to healthy food. Since its launch, the market has recorded more than \$3 million in sales, and completed nearly 300,000 customer transactions. Critical initiatives, such as the launch of the Double Up Food Bucks program, the expansion to accept WIC benefits (serving women, infants and children), a home-delivery service and more, illustrate the many ways the Curbside Market has left an indelible mark on the Rochester community.

*The 10-year anniversary of the Curbside Market program is a testament to Foodlink’s enduring commitment to ending hunger, building healthy communities and recognizing healthy food as a human right.*

— Mayor Malik D. Evans

**Foodlink’s innovative spirit does not end with the Curbside Market. Our willingness to take risks to support our mission shines through in various ways throughout the year.**

The Foodlink Career Fellowship, our unique culinary training program, works “upstream” to address poverty in the Rochester area. We graduated our 7th class in March, launched a Food Biz 101 training course in partnership with The Commissary, collaborated with alumna KayJona Rogers for two Chef Kay-inspired meals at the Foodlink Community Cafe — and received some national recognition! Chef Olvin Cortes, who graduated

from the program in 2021, won the inaugural **2024 Carl Robert “Bob” Wesen Memorial Grant**, given to a male graduate of a Jacques Pépin Foundation-funded culinary training program. Olvin earned a \$5,000 prize for sharing his story, and his passion for the culinary field serves as an inspiration for all future Fellows. We look forward to welcoming two new classes in the year ahead!





# Passion

## PEOPLE WHO WALK THE TALK

In recent years, Foodlink's staff has grown significantly as gaps in our services are identified, and new programs launch. At the end of our last fiscal year, we employed 130+ people — a 75% increase compared to a decade ago. Foodlinkers are dedicated to our mission and passionate about serving others. Below are a few examples of the "people behind the programs" who help Foodlink address a growing need in our community.

### Chauncy Anderson | Community Café Supervisor

Chauncy Anderson is proud of his chocolate chip cookies. With his signature sweets recently on display at a Foodlink fundraiser, he snapped a photo and sent it to one of the inspirations behind his baking prowess — his mother.

Anderson, a 2021 graduate of the Foodlink Career Fellowship, now serves as supervisor at the Foodlink Community Café, where apprentices hone their culinary skills. Having walked in their shoes not long ago, Anderson offers them his number, rides to work, and wisdom or motivation whenever they need it.

The cafe offers heavily discounted Mission Meals to those who need food assistance, as well as reasonably priced, delicious meals for everyone! It also gives Anderson a chance to develop unique relationships with customers he now knows "on a first-name basis."

*"They feel comfortable coming here and not being judged," he said. "Whether they are getting a Mission Meal or not, we don't judge anyone that comes in here and we treat everyone as equals."*





## Frank Keophetlasy | Community Farm Manager

Frank Keophetlasy's commute to work — on days when his office is Rochester's most vibrant urban farm — only lasts a minute or two. His parents, who arrived in Rochester as immigrants from Laos in the 1980s, live just around the corner, as well. **The \$2 million investment underway at the Foodlink Community Farm is personal to them, and to many of their neighbors.**

With colleagues John Miller and Lachuman Pokhrel handling activities at the farm, Frank can tap into his community outreach skills that he honed as a former Monroe County legislator by building relationships and partnerships within the neighborhood. His goal is to spread the word about the future of the farm, and the possibilities it offers for the residents of Northwest Rochester — home to New Americans like his parents decades ago.

"This has been an oasis for refugees that we're investing in," Keophetlasy said. "That's what I've wanted to do in my personal life since I was in high school — ***make change in this community that raised me.*** For a while I thought I could only do that in politics — but this has been an eye-opener for me."



## ELISHA VANNORMAN | Rural Programs Coordinator

Nothing quite beats the feeling Elisha VanNorman gets when she sees a Foodlink Pop-up Pantry in action. It is "incredibly rewarding" to witness dozens of volunteers donate their time to feed hundreds of families and distribute 12,000 pounds of food in the span of a few hours.

As a Canandaigua native and current resident of Macedon, VanNorman is familiar with the unique challenges of rural communities, and has helped Foodlink address gaps in services throughout the region. In the past two years, Foodlink has doubled its food distribution to rural sites, and opened up several new access points for healthy food.

The gratitude she hears from clients makes it all worthwhile. One woman's story from an Ontario County distribution still resonates with her. "She told me: ***'This is how I can keep my lights on. This is how I can keep getting my insulin. I wouldn't be able to have those things if this (Pop-up Pantry) wasn't here.'***"



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT + OUR MISSION

# = Impact

The return on investment from the construction of Foodlink’s commercial kitchen eight years ago is abundantly clear. On top of the fact that we have doubled our annual meal production— **eclipsing 2 million meals for the first time in our history** — our commitment to nutrition and creating healthy futures remains the cornerstone of our work.

One long-term consequence of the COVID pandemic was the disruption it caused to the local food-service landscape. While many caterers closed up shop, the **Foodlink Community Kitchen went into overdrive**. The result has been the addition of a bevy of early-childhood meal sites, and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-funded programs that allow us to reach multi-generational families.

**While quantity is impressive, quality remains our focus.**

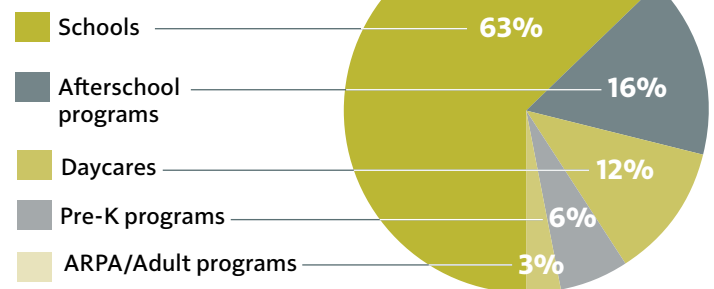
The Kitchen Advisory Committee and other feedback channels help our team ensure “tray waste” is minimal. The produce is fresh, the protein is lean, and most importantly — kids are happy, and bellies are full.

“We very much appreciate all the hard work of all your staff,” said Jennifer Tills, Director of RIT’s child care center. “All of the new meals we have tried so far have had quite good reviews!”

More than 87 percent of meal sites are located within the City of Rochester, which — despite some statistical improvements in recent years — still owns one of the highest child-poverty rates (42%) in the nation.

“Our kitchen’s success wouldn’t be possible without Chef Casey and our dedicated staff,” said Terra Keller, Foodlink’s COO/CFO. “Their drive to nourish children shines through every day —with every meal — and our entire team looks forward to more growth in the years ahead!”

## Where do the meals go?



*We are so thankful, grateful and blessed by this program. We feel we have a purpose, and a part of this amazing program ... and we hope it continues every year.*



— Jody

Summer Meals participant

# RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The Foodlink Community Kitchen's commitment to nutrition and creating healthy futures for our children is unmatched.



Culinary Institute  
of America  
BOOT CAMP

Sous Chef Andrae Leneer, pictured during a Culinary Institute of America competition in early 2024. The Foodlink Community Kitchen prepared and delivered 2.1 million meals for the Rochester community this past year.





## DONOR SPOTLIGHTS

The generosity of so many individuals and organizations in the Rochester area helps support Foodlink's mission of ending hunger and building healthier communities.

### WAYNE SMITH & MAUREEN LALLY

Wayne and Maureen are generous donors and volunteers to Foodlink. Wayne is a regular volunteer in our warehouse and on the Curbside Market and Maureen is a champion of Foodlink with her employer, Paychex.

*Food insecurity is a much larger problem than many people realize, as many of us do not directly encounter it in our daily lives. Foodlink provides a tremendous service to our community to help families and children get access to healthy nutrition. We are committed to doing what we can to support Foodlink — with both our hands and our wallets.*

— Wayne Smith & Maureen Lally



# GREATER ROCHESTER HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF) has had a front-row seat over the past decade to witness Foodlink's transformation from a traditional food bank to a public health organization.

GRHF has provided more than \$1 million in grant funds since 2014, when it was among the lead contributors to Foodlink's expansion and relocation of its commercial kitchen. It has supported nutrition education, our community farm and most recently, our Curbside Market Ambassador program.

The foundation's mission and purpose are closely aligned with Foodlink's core values and beliefs. Centering equity in everything it does, GRHF aims to eliminate some of the same barriers that impact many of the people and families Foodlink serves. Structural racism. Generational poverty. Neighborhood disinvestment. Rural access. Foodlink strives to address each of these root causes of food insecurity in our daily work.



## WEGMANS CHECK OUT HUNGER SUCCESS!



*Wegmans leaders tour Foodlink's facility before the start of the 2023 Check Out Hunger campaign.*

These days, it seems everyone is "rounding up" at the register for a good cause — but that wasn't always the case. Back in 1993, Foodlink and Wegmans — along with a collection of other grocery stores — began the first regional "Check Out Hunger" campaign to give customers an easy opportunity to help alleviate hunger in our region.

Last year, we celebrated 30 years of this remarkable campaign, and challenged ourselves to engage the community in new ways. Wegmans employees answered the call with an intensive promotional campaign within their 21 local stores ... and customers responded! Thank you to everyone who donated and helped us raise more than \$687,000 to support our mission!



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\* Monthly donors

# FINANCIALS

|                             | 2024                 | 2023            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Public support & revenue    | \$57,621,720*        | \$48,964,088    |
| Expenses                    | \$58,756,825         | \$48,940,006    |
| <b>Change in net assets</b> | <b>(\$1,135,105)</b> | <b>\$24,082</b> |

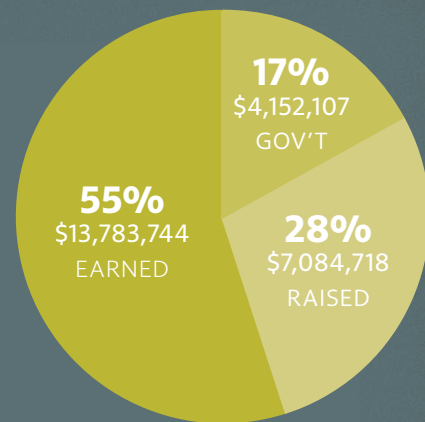
|             | 2024         | 2023         |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Assets      | \$11,716,250 | \$12,825,925 |
| Liabilities | \$1,962,837  | \$1,937,407  |

| Net assets                 | 2024               | 2023                |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Without donor restrictions | \$8,939,954        | \$9,920,320         |
| With donor restrictions    | \$813,459          | \$968,198           |
| <b>Total net assets</b>    | <b>\$9,753,413</b> | <b>\$10,888,518</b> |

**Total value of donated product was \$32,601,151; Foodlink's revenue, not including the value of donated product, was \$25,020,569.**

Independent Auditor's Report, audited financial statements and IRS Form 990 available online or at the Foodlink, Inc. office located at 2011 Mt. Read Blvd, Rochester, NY 14615.

\*This Impact Report reflects Foodlink's most recent fiscal year from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.



### RAISED

Includes public support and non-government grants

### EARNED

Includes fee-for-service revenue

### GOVERNMENT

Includes federal and state funding

## RECORD-BREAKING EVENTS



*Donors and supporters enjoyed record-setting nights at Foodlink's two signature events last year — in some familiar and brand new locations. The Festival of Food was once again held at the Public Market in September; while The Get Together was held outside of Foodlink's facility for the first time at Arbor Midtown in March.*

# 19

# MISSION

To leverage the power of food to end hunger  
and build healthier communities.

# VISION

We believe that the fight against hunger and the fight  
against poverty are one and the same. We envision a future in which  
food is recognized as a human right and every person is able to  
feed themselves and their families in dignity. Together, we work  
to create a more nourished, prosperous region.



*This report is dedicated to the memory of Rosa "Mother" Wims,  
a fierce community health advocate, trailblazer and long-time friend of Foodlink.  
(1922-2023)*



**Foodlink**  
NOURISHING LIVES

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