

Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2023

THE POWER



OF COMMUNITY



FOOD BANK

OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS



Dear Friends,

More than ever in the history of the Food Bank, last fiscal year exhibited the power of community and our commitment to work together to create a hunger-free Western Massachusetts. In our 41st year of existence, we picked up and moved our belongings from our small but versatile home in Hatfield to our much larger and more efficient new Food Bank in Chicopee. So many stakeholders from across our region rallied behind us to raise the funds necessary to build a state-of-the-art food distribution center, and to successfully relocate to it last September on schedule and within budget. We look back in amazement at this accomplishment and know we couldn't have done it without you – our member food pantries and meal sites, donors of funds and food, staff, volunteers, legislators, and many other business and community partners.

The purpose of our move and our new Food Bank was and is to have the capacity to provide more healthy food to more people for decades to come. History has shown us that market and societal failures are stubbornly persistent during both the downs and ups of our economic system. Deep recessions like the ones during the pandemic and the Great Recession of 2008-09 (and its lingering effects for many years thereafter), caused large numbers of individuals to become food insecure and many to face hunger. And, even in good times, the benefits of a strong economy are not distributed equitably and do not trickle down to communities and people that have been ignored for decades either because of de-industrialization and/or systemic divestment.

Fortunately, community investment in the Food Bank during the pandemic and specifically in our Feed, Lead, Strengthen capital campaign, was tremendous! 246 households, businesses, foundations, and government invested more than \$30 million in our new home in Chicopee. Now, we have more capacity to receive, store and distribute more healthy food to people when and where they need it.

Our state-of-the-art warehouse has increased safety for our hard-working and trusted staff and volunteers. Its design has dramatically improved efficiencies, resulting in a much higher velocity of healthy food flowing through it to individuals who seek a hand up. Our new Community Room is already hosting in-person and livestream meetings, educational and networking events, and healthy meals cooking demonstrations and samplings in our kitchen.

In our pursuit of a Western Massachusetts where everyone always has access to nutritious food, we have begun to broaden and deepen our partnerships across all four counties with the:

- **business community** to collaborate on eliminating barriers to employment
- **public transportation community** – both riders and planners – to advocate for more accessible, affordable, and reliable public transport, and
- **black and brown communities** to improve healthy food access while also listening to their solutions to end hunger

We are so grateful to all of you for your continued commitment to our cause. We urge you to get even more involved. If you haven't already, we invite you to visit our new home in Chicopee so you may see with your own eyes the tremendous impact of your investment in our mission... seeing is believing. Together, we end hunger!



Charlotte Boney, M.D.

Charlotte Boney, M.D.
President



Andrew Morehouse

Andrew Morehouse
Executive Director

Confronting College Hunger

The Food Bank has a history of developing innovative ways to reach populations that are overlooked by traditional food assistance programs. In 2023, as part of a state-wide coalition, we successfully advocated for \$1M in state funding for the Hunger Free Campus initiative – a major first step towards passing permanent legislation. Food insecurity has a direct impact on students' well-being and their ability to succeed in college and beyond. In 2019, a HOPE Center study¹ found that 37% of the state's public university students were food insecure. Studies in the American Society of Nutrition² and the Community College Journal of Research and Practice³ document that students facing food insecurity experience poorer sleep, higher stress levels, and lower grades than their peers.

Understanding that the best way to reach college students is where they live, study, and work, the Food Bank has partnered with colleges and universities for many years. We have provided outreach and application assistance for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides funds to purchase food under strict income eligibility guidelines. However, Feeding America regulations prohibit food banks nationally from distributing federally

funded food and donated food to any entity other than charitable and faith-based institutions. After years of strategizing, the Food Bank created a new membership model for college pantries that relies only on state-funded food and started accepting applications in 2023. The Food Bank has since welcomed five college food pantries as members of our region's food assistance network.



¹ The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University, "2019 #RealCollege Survey Results, 2020."

² Elzein et al., "The Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Its Association with Health and Academic Outcomes among College Freshmen, 2017."

³ Maroto, Snelling, and Linck, "Food Insecurity among Community College Students: Prevalence and Association with Grade Point Average, 2015."



Volunteers Make a Huge Difference

Coupled with the heart and soul of our Food Operation team is the beat of our community volunteers. Last fiscal year, more than 700 passionate individuals devoted 7,000 hours to our mission, leaving a lasting impact across the region.

From sorting food in our warehouse to rolling up their sleeves on our Cultivating for Community regenerative farming and education initiative on the Food Bank Farm, volunteers poured their energy into making a difference, sifting through 500,000 pounds of donated food and helping us harvest almost 7,000 pounds of fresh organic produce – all destined for local member food pantries to help nourish individuals and families living with food insecurity.

Our volunteer efforts extended beyond our farm and warehouse. At marquee events like Will Bike 4 Food and March for the Food Bank, their work and enthusiasm helped us raise \$739,000 – the equivalent of 2.2 million meals.

Even as we transitioned from Hatfield to Chicopee, our volunteers remained steadfast. Their unwavering support underscores the resilient spirit of our community. From schools to businesses, dozens of organizations turned volunteer days into experiences of shared purpose and team building.

We offer our deepest gratitude to every individual who lent their time and spirit to the Food Bank. Their tireless efforts fuel our mission every day. We eagerly welcome new faces to join our cause, inviting all to discover the transformative power of community compassion in action.



Nutrition and Healthy Eating

In 2023, the Commonwealth awarded the Food Bank a five-year “SNAP-Education” contract to provide nutrition education services. Our Nutrition team launched the federal “Create Better Health” curriculum, emphasizing healthy eating and physical activity based on MyPlate and the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines. We reached over 1,500 individuals with recipes, food samplings, and other nutrition education handouts at Mobile Food Bank and Brown Bag sites, and member food pantries.

Additionally, we conducted 60 to 90-minute nutrition workshops and cooking demonstrations, primarily at senior centers in Hampden and Hampshire counties. With a second Nutrition Coordinator onboard last August, we expanded outreach to recovery centers, schools, and senior housing sites across Western Massachusetts.

Collaborating with the Food Assistance Navigation team that supports individuals struggling to put healthy food on their tables, we also hosted virtual workshops for participants experiencing food insecurity and living with chronic health conditions. These workshops, offered in both English and Spanish, covered MyPlate guidelines, nutrition labels, grocery shopping, and meal planning, culminating in live cooking demonstrations.

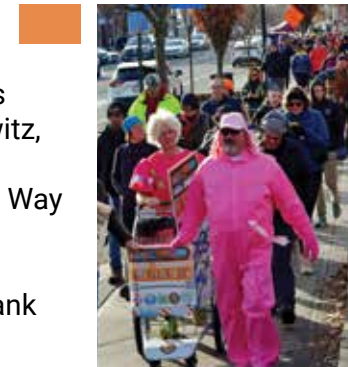
The nutrition team also partnered with our staff at the Food Bank Farm to create informative handouts featuring farm produce, offering cooking tips and recipes for the two member food pantries in Amherst that receive organic vegetables harvested weekly during the growing season. Looking ahead to 2024, we aim to extend outreach to new organizations and deepen collaborations with others, including the Chicopee Public Schools.

Last year, our Agency Relations team organized one ice cream social in each county for our member pantries and meal sites. Approximately three dozen members of staff, volunteers, and board members attended. We forged meaningful connections, gained insights into their programs, and witnessed wonderful socializing, networking, and sharing among attendees. Pictured: The Food Bank’s Kate Pousont Scarborough, Agency Recruitment Coordinator; Michelle Geoffroy, Agency Relations Manager; and Naomi Desilets, Agency Resource Coordinator.



Fundraising On the Move

The Food Bank’s inaugural Voices in Food Equity event last May showcased five leaders dedicated to food and social justice in Western Massachusetts. Joining the discussion were Ileana Marie Carrion, Program Coordinator for Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Food Bank Board member; Representative Pat Duffy, State Representative for the City of Holyoke; Liz O’Gilvie, Director of the Springfield Food Policy Council and Interim Director of Gardening the Community; Ashley Sears Randle, a fifth-generation dairy farmer and Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR); and Lee Drewitz, Program Operations Manager at the United Way of Pioneer Valley. The conversation was moderated by Food Bank Board member Ariana Williams, who is also a Baystate Health Strategic Grant Writer. Supported by local businesses, the event in Holyoke drew 75 community members passionate about creating a more equitable food system for people in Western Massachusetts. Future events in 2024 are being planned for June in Hampden County and August in Berkshire County, with a focus on youth hunger.



Stop & Shop, returned to Hatfield last September. 350 cyclists of all ages and skill levels pedaled on beautiful Connecticut Valley roads and even braved a brief rain shower along the way. These incredible supporters not only took on 10, 25, 50, and 100 miles – they also collectively helped raise \$221,163 to provide the equivalent of almost 700,000 nutritious meals to people confronting food insecurity. This event returns Sunday, September 22nd, with discounted registration opening on May 1st.

Last November’s 14th Annual March for the Food Bank from Springfield to Greenfield raised \$517,194 – the equivalent of more than 1.5 million meals – with continued exceptional promotion from WRSI-93.9 The



River radio station. Led by New England Public Media’s Monte Belmonte, Massachusetts Congressman Jim McGovern, and Food Bank Executive Director Andrew Morehouse, students, legislators, community leaders, donors, food bank staff, and advocates marched for two days, stopping along the way at member food pantries to express our gratitude for their partnership and to hear their stories. Cheered on by school students, residents, and local businesses, the March culminated with a celebration at Hawks and Reed in Greenfield, with food from Stone Soup Café and Cocina Lupita.

The 13th Annual Will Bike 4 Food, presented by

The Food Bank has settled into its new, larger, and greener distribution center in Chicopee. This transition marks a significant milestone in expanding warehouse capacity to meet the growing need for healthy food in our region. It also has leveraged operational efficiency, enhanced employee and volunteer safety, and embraced environmental sustainability.

Addressing the challenges that plagued our previous facility in Hatfield, the Food Bank now operates in a space where warehouse bottlenecks have been eliminated. One notable improvement is the elimination of volunteers having to walk through the warehouse to access the volunteer-supported food sorting room. Now, volunteers access the sorting room directly and warehouse employees can operate their equipment efficiently.

Member food pantries and meal site food pick-ups have been revolutionized with dedicated ingress and egress, and a designated waiting area and bathroom facilities for member staff and volunteers. Previously, members personnel had to contend with limited access to the building and had to wait outside in inclement weather.

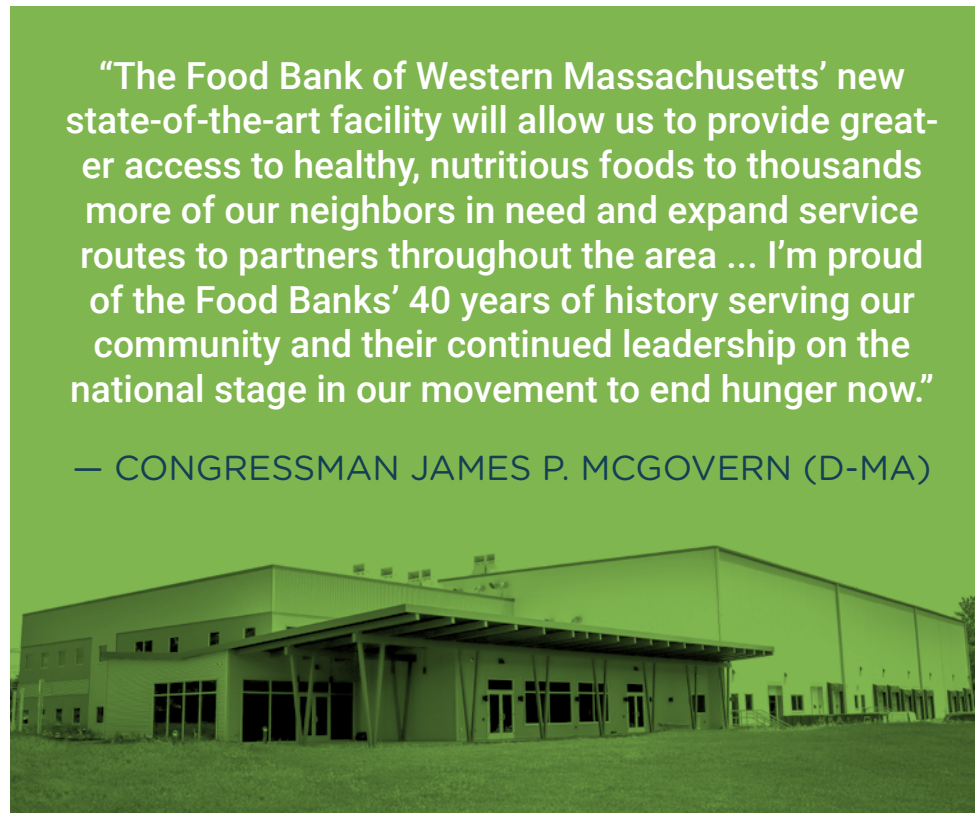
Receiving food from our suppliers has been revamped, with nine loading docks for trucks and deliveries and two



Meeting the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow

“The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts’ new state-of-the-art facility will allow us to provide greater access to healthy, nutritious foods to thousands more of our neighbors in need and expand service routes to partners throughout the area ... I’m proud of the Food Banks’ 40 years of history serving our community and their continued leadership on the national stage in our movement to end hunger now.”

— CONGRESSMAN JAMES P. MCGOVERN (D-MA)



doors designated specifically for trash and cardboard recycling. There is also dedicated space shielded from the elements, and a comfortable waiting area for drivers equipped with a bathroom. These enhancements ensure the efficiency of inbound deliveries, and food integrity and defense standards by minimizing external access to the facility.

Upholding our commitment to environmental sustainability, the Food Bank pursued and was awarded a \$3M federal grant to install a solar array on the rooftop and a parking lot canopy to generate electricity. This sustainable energy solution will make the Food Bank a near to net-zero carbon emission facility.

Our expanded capacity, efficiency, safety and sustainability reaffirms our commitment to serving all four counties of Western Massachusetts and safeguarding the environment for future generations.



Pictured are photos from the grand opening event on December 14, 2023, attended by capital campaign donors and community partners, including Congressmen Richard Neal and James McGovern, and Chicopee Mayor John Vieau and State Senator Adam Gomez (middle and right).

Local Farm-to-Table Partnerships

In 2023, the Cultivating for Community team and dedicated volunteers expanded our minimal-till regenerative farming and education initiative on the Food Bank Farm in Hadley. They created 45 new planting beds and increased our growing area to 1.3 acres (about half the area of a Manhattan city block). The harvest totaled more than 7,000 pounds (about the weight of an elephant) that was all donated to two-member food pantries in neighboring Amherst. Welcoming our new farm manager onboard brought fresh perspectives and initiatives, including wood chip footpaths and perimeter borders to mitigate weed growth, and more cover-cropping and silage tarping to renourish and protect soil from erosion during the winter months, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Cultivating for Community thrived with the support of 415 enthusiastic volunteers who contributed 1,377 invaluable hours. Community engagement flourished with diverse events from an Earth Day workshop and a series of Family Farm Days to an instructive Building Raised Garden Beds work-

shop. We cultivated strong ties with local schools such as Four Rivers Charter School, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Deerfield Academy, and The Academy at Charlemont, empowering students through hands-on experiences. Our Farm to School partnership with Springfield and Chicopee Public Schools enabled students to gain a deeper understanding of where some of the food they eat comes from. This is because partner farmers Joe Czajkowski and Gideon Porth, who rent the remaining 25 acres of farmland on this Food Bank Farm, sell some of their harvest grown on it to these schools. Combined, they also provided 25,000 pounds of organic vegetables to the Food Bank in lieu of cash rent. Ben and Liz Perrault of Mountainview Farm CSA, who rent farmland on our first Food Bank Farm also in Hadley, provided 45,000 pounds of organic vegetables between donated and contracted pounds. Finally, a community of 38 local farmers, including our farmer partners, donated 326,000 pounds of vegetables to the Food Bank!



Policy Priorities to End Hunger

Our Advocacy team played a pivotal role in shaping systemic change and confronting the underlying causes of food insecurity in 2023:

Voter Registration Drive

Launched to empower citizens to exercise their civic duty and have their voices heard on issues that impact their lives

Cliff Effect Pilot Program

Successfully advocated for its passage to address barriers faced by individuals transitioning out of public assistance programs

Hunger-Free Campus Initiative

Co-led a statewide coalition that succeeded in securing \$1M in the current state budget to provide critical resources for colleges and universities to address food insecurity among students

Universal Free School Meals

Joined a statewide advocacy effort that culminated with Governor Healy and the state legislature making them permanent in Massachusetts, ensuring all students have access to nutritious meals at school

Western Massachusetts Transit Advocacy Network

- Hosted a forum in June to share best practices for improving transportation options in Western MA.
- Advocated for and helped win increased funding for RTA across the state (from \$94M in FY23 to \$150M in FY24).
- Funding will improve access for people facing barriers to mobility and economic stability.

New Legislator Orientation

Provided newly elected officials the opportunity to talk with staff and gain insights about the challenges and opportunities facing our region

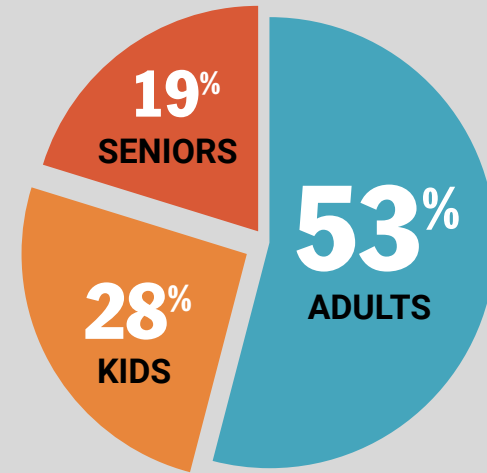
Through public advocacy, education, and action, we can create a more just and equitable food economy for everyone.

Western Massachusetts Impact Data

Since 1982, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has been working to end hunger and create food equity for all.

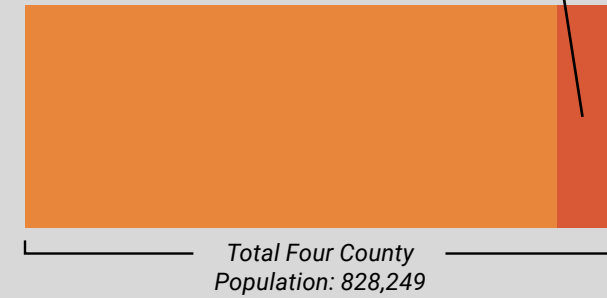
Fiscal Year 2023: October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

99,186
Individuals Served per Month (Average)

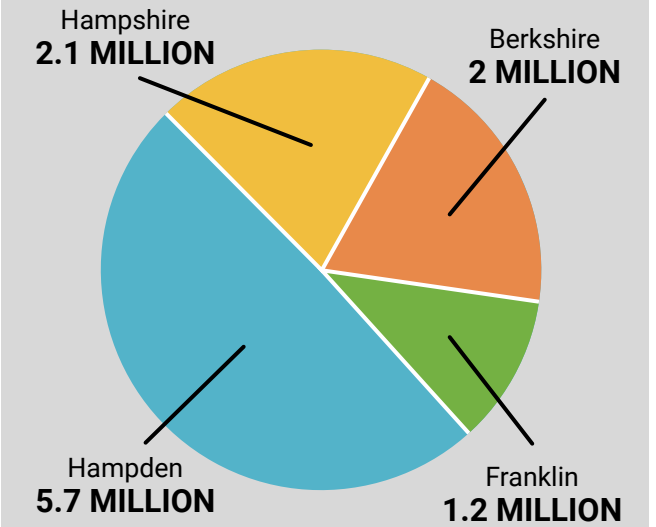


Food Insecurity Rate

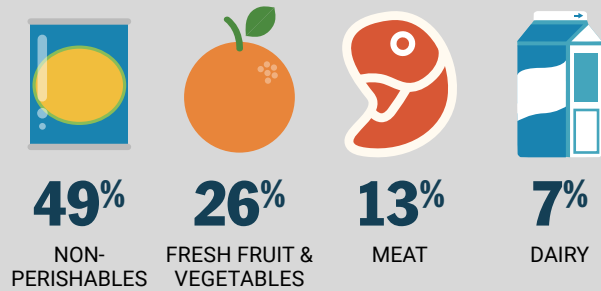
9.6% **79,460**
Food Insecure Individuals



Meals Provided By County



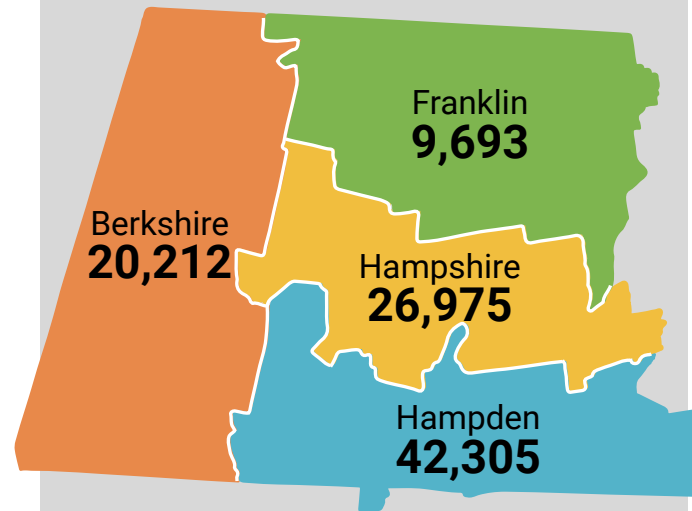
Food Distribution



5% OTHER PERISHABLES

13.3 Million lbs. = 11 Million Meals

Individuals Served By County (Monthly Average)



Nutrition Education

62 Events
1,452 Participants

SNAP Outreach & Enrollment

169 Outreach events
856 Applications filed

Over 20 Local Farms Donate to the Food Bank



Our 250+ Western Mass Partners



Food Pantries
Meal sites
Non-Emergency sites
Shelters
Mobile Food Banks
Brown Bag sites

FY2023 Financials

Fiscal Year: October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023

Income

Food	\$19,174,947	60%
Individuals & Corporate Donations	\$4,698,711	15%
Private Grants	\$4,957,153	15%
Government Grants	\$2,078,348	7%
Member Programs	\$93,829	0%
Other	\$1,088,871	3%
Total	\$32,091,859	100%

Expenses

Programs	\$24,506,416	91%
Development	\$1,053,525	4%
Administration	\$1,512,614	5%
Total	\$27,072,555	100%

Statement of Financial Position

Current Assets	\$18,214,186
Fixed Assets (net)	\$24,621,677
Other Assets	\$18,448,447
Total Assets	\$61,284,310

Accounts Payable	\$618,008
Other Current Liabilities	\$1,405,901
Long-Term Liabilities	\$20,178,913
Total Liabilities	\$22,202,822

Net Assets	\$39,081,488
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Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$61,284,310
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President: **Charlotte Boney, M.D.** | Baystate Health

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2nd Vice President: **Omar Irizarry** | Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Treasurer: **William Harju** | USA Hauling & Recycling

Clerk: **Shannon Yaremchak** | Partners for Community

Ann Barker | Quonquot Farm

Suzanne Beck | Northampton Chamber of Commerce (retired)

Ileana Carrion | Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Mary Feuer | Community Health Programs

Erica Flores, Esq. | Skoler, Abbott, & Presser, PC

Joesiah González | Home City Development, Inc

Xiaolei Hua | PeoplesBank

Andrea Leibson | Franklin County Community Meals Program (retired)

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George Newman | Big Y World Class Market

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Ariana Williams | Baystate Health

Beth Young | Big Y World Class Market

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