

Hunger Impact Partners - 2022 Annual Report



Dear Friends,



I was disheartened to learn about the indictments in the federal food fraud scheme. This complex and coordinated effort to defraud food programs for low-income children tainted all of us who work in hunger relief. Federal food programs are critical to poor families, especially true during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those responsible should be held accountable and prosecuted.

At Hunger Impact Partners, we track Minnesota's food insecure children through our comprehensive data analytics tool, the Child Nutrition Index, where we can pinpoint kids by race, school meals eligibility, location, and those on Medicaid. As we worked to try to reconcile the disparity between the number of meals being provided with the number of needy children, these indictments began to explain the discrepancy. Fortunately, meals were available to hungry kids despite the fraudulent efforts of those using fictitious names and inflating the tens of thousands of kids they claimed they were serving. We know the system is not flawless and we are continually looking for ways to efficiently deliver three meals a day to hungry children while working to provide management advice on operations and financial oversight to site locations. Thankfully, we have a justice system that can police the egregious actions of people that take advantage of our safety net programs for personal gain.

USDA's child nutrition programs were essential throughout the pandemic. USDA did ease compliance

regulations for child nutrition programs—rightfully so given the circumstances. It was a well-intentioned and prudent decision. 2022 was a significant transition for families and meal program operators. Nutritious school meals contributed to student health and added food support to families during the economic hardships caused by the pandemic.

With the help of the child nutrition waivers, school nutrition services ensured safe and consistent access to healthy meals for students while continuing to endure acute supply chain, labor, financial and regulatory challenges. Stabilizing these school nutrition departments and community meal programs will focus our strategies going forward. We anticipate the recovery to be slow.

On the national front, the Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 was signed into law on June 25, 2022, which provided additional support and resources to help Child Nutrition Program operators continue to serve healthy meals to children throughout the year. This federal legislation was needed to ease the financial burden of supply chain issues and food costs. There were many entities working together for the best possible outcome.

As always, our commitment to serving children remains at full force. We continue to move forward to ensure kids get the nutritious meals they need and deserve while restoring faith in our food safety net programs.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellie Lucas".

Ellie Lucas
Chief Executive Office

MISSION STATEMENT

At Hunger Impact Partners, our sole mission is to enable children to grow, develop and focus on learning rather than hunger, and reach their full potential and long-term self-sufficiency. We bring a laser focus to leading initiatives that support high impact child nutrition programs available to food insecure children

from early childhood to age 18 living in or below poverty. We prioritize our efforts to reach those most at-risk using data and leveraging community resources to support disadvantaged children in low-income communities suffering from racial inequities. Our guiding principle is children should only be hungry to learn.

OUR GOAL

Hunger Impact Partners' goal is to continue to make the system work better for all we serve. We honor our relationships with school districts and established local community partners who continue to pilot new ideas, work to strengthen existing programming, and find ways to expand access in an ever-changing environment. Below is a review of the programs we supported in 2022.

- Funded 16 childcare centers for financial training and record-keeping resources, meal delivery support, and staffing to increase the number of centers serving meals to 223 total sites serving children birth to 5.
- Supported outreach efforts to promote after-school meal program participation and invested in new meal sponsors to add 10 new after-school sites, where 11,500 additional meals were served to school age children.
- Funded four affordable housing sites, two community libraries, and four faith-based sites to support summer feeding.
- Co-hosted with MDE Statewide Conference on Community Building for Child Nutrition.
- Partnered with WIC Division on successful tri-state USDA grant award for online WIC redemption pilot.
- Supported successful regulatory change with Direct Certification of Medicaid for auto enrollment in educational benefits.
- Supported Co-op agreement to secure Farm to School Award.
- Implemented Child Tax Credit Initiative to enroll 2,500 new families in the program.
- Funded Nutrition Enrollment Coordinator position at Minneapolis Public Schools.

TRACKING HUNGRY KIDS

Our proprietary data analytics tool—the Child Nutrition Index (CNI)—centralizes data addressing hunger issues among the 573,000 Minnesota children identified at the end of 2022 as at-risk for food insecurity. Because CNI's master database combines data from the Minnesota

Total population vs. Food Insecure Population 2022

Children Ages	Population	Medicaid Financed	Enrolled in WIC or Free & Reduced-Price Meals	Children Missing from WIC and State Educational Benefits
Infants	63,462	27,186	20,633	6,553
Ages 1 to 4	285,006	127,643	59,065	68,578
Subtotal Birth to 4	348,468	154,829	79,698	75,131
Ages 5 to 18	1,031,712	418,143	386,470	31,673
Grand Total Birth to 18	1,380,180	572,972	466,168	106,804

Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Department of Human Services (DHS), we can pinpoint low-income kids by race, age, geography, missing meals, program enrollment and corresponding federal reimbursements. In 2022, there were 1,380,180 children birth to eighteen in Minnesota. 572,972 of those were Medicaid financed and of those 466,168 were verified free/reduced-priced eligible. Most important is that 106,804 young children were missing from WIC and educational benefit enrollments. This is a problem we are working to solve—consistently feeding these early learners who are not accessing federal meal programs.

The CNI is relied upon by the hunger-relief sector as the 'go to' data source in Minnesota. We know that one in three kids struggle with food security and 5% are infants, 22% are children ages one to four and 73% are students ages five to eighteen. We identify meal gaps as the basis for mobilizing resources and partners to work in concert to fill these gaps.

Child Nutrition Index Dashboard

Meal Type	Calendar Year			
	2019	2020*	2021*	2022*
Childcare Center Meals	11,099,012	8,321,235	8,363,661	7,666,112
Breakfast and Lunch				
School Meals	79,578,777	106,698,343	193,326,537	166,832,774
Summer Meals:				
June, July & August	3,739,374	22,450,159	36,176,904	7,539,352
At-Risk After				
School Meals	2,568,407	4,014,582	62,097,687	2,386,805
Meal Total	96,985,570	141,484,319	299,964,789	184,425,043
Snack	11,638,470	10,125,851	70,208,686	8,509,161
Meal & Snack Total	108,624,040	151,610,170	370,173,475	192,934,204

* Data subject to adjustment due to ongoing federal investigation of fraudulent actions.

FREE MEALS FOR KIDS MOBILE APP INVALUABLE TO FAMILIES

The **Free Meals for Kids** mobile app continues to be the central statewide communication resource for families to source meals after-school, during the summer months in communities and at licensed childcare centers. It also includes meal program guidelines for sponsors and community food resources. We use "push" notifications to reach users, including alerts for community events for food distributions, informational messages on safety net programs and opportunities for app users to participate in community research projects. We dedicate graphic space for targeted messaging for families to take advantage of educational benefit enrollment which is critical to compensatory funding for local schools.

With our partners, we led a special initiative to inform families they could access federal funds through the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in October. Families with no income or low income could get at least \$3,000 per child with the Child Tax Credit, plus \$1,400 with the third stimulus payment—even if they have never filed taxes before and if they had not filed taxes in 2022. It was estimated that

more than 33,000 children in Minnesota could miss out on this money if their parent/guardian had not filed. We marketed this program to families using the Free Meals for Kids mobile app and implemented an email outreach campaign to over 10,000 statewide school contacts. The Hunger Impact Partners CTC effort was measured through a dedicated link provided by Code for American resulting in over 1,000 accepted applications and generated more than \$2 million in stimulus payments.

There were more than 1,800 sites listed on the **Free Meals for Kids** mobile app in May 2022. We coordinated with county health departments, MDE, and our established network of partners to support promotion and outreach so more families could access meals at locations throughout the state via the app. We maintain



an ongoing partnership with Second Harvest Heartland to promote the app on billboards, truck wraps and websites to build users year over year.

Total users:	29,505
Total visits:	43,009
Total page-views:	54,339

New downloads increased daily through 2022, as did page views and site visits—further evidence that this resource was a vital tool for families, communities, and the social services network.

The Child Nutrition Index below reflects the number of summer meal sponsors in 2022 that were school sites who, due to COVID waivers that removed community eligibility requirements, could fill the summer meal gap by providing meals in many neighborhoods.

Child Nutrition Index

Meals served June, July & August

Geography	Meals Served				Meal Providers			
	2019	2020*	2021*	2022*	2019	2020*	2021*	2022*
7-County Metro	2,128,101	16,585,226	26,685,995	5,009,491	62	108	173	167
Greater Minnesota	1,611,273	5,864,933	9,490,909	2,529,861	155	183	310	229
State of Minnesota	3,739,374	22,450,159	36,176,904	7,539,352	217	291	471	390

* Data reflects implications of COVID waivers and food program fraud.

Of the 390 sponsors, 222 were public school districts and 149 were private or charter school site sponsors with just 19 community-based organizations serving meals. MDE is reviewing these non-school sponsors for compliance related issues that could be potentially problematic or fraudulent.

TRANSITIONING TO NORMAL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

For Hunger Impact Partners, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many practical lessons about how to better

support children. It also has put into stark focus not only the unbelievable power of schools to support students and their families, but also the significant power of communities.

For our schools and communities, the pandemic exposed the fragility of some of our most crucial systems, like school meals, after-school meals, and summer meals. Countless children depend on federal meal programs as their only source of balanced, nutritious meals. While schools were closed, most school meal programs continued to operate, and it was vital that we supported them to continue serving the children who rely on them.

What we learned during COVID 19:

- COVID-19's impact on the kids and communities Hunger Impact Partners serves will be complicated and uncertain. Its economic, social, and emotional fallout is not now fully comprehensible.
- Food accessibility needs and challenges will remain intense for the foreseeable future. The issue of childhood hunger as a root of numerous social problems must stay high on the state's radar.
- Children of color persistently experience food insecurity at higher rates.
- Improvements to federal child nutrition program access and implementation was overdue. Systemic changes need to be ongoing.
- Meal delivery systems and channels must continue to be agile. Engagement and coordination with strong networks of partners willing to share new ways of distributing healthy, culturally relevant food is essential.
- Education communities will continue to have a primary role to play as feeding centers for food insecure children—and their families.
- Data is now more than ever key to directing and coordinating strategies and resources for vulnerable families with rapidly changing need for food access.

ADVOCATING FOR FUTURE CHANGE

To promote the health and success of students and ensure the sustainability of school meal programs, hunger relief organizations are jointly working to advocate for policy changes that improve the child nutrition delivery system for future generations. The agenda includes:

- Increases in meal school breakfast and lunch federal reimbursement rates.
- Expanding breakfast and lunch school meals for all students.
- Ensuring future nutrition standards provide healthy meals.
- Reducing regulatory and administrative burdens for in-school meal programs.

CHILD NUTRITION INDEX DATA COMPARISON

Across our state network of school districts, social services, and established hunger-relief non-profits, many stepped up to serve families in need. This analysis, using a 2019 baseline, provides needed context for the pandemic's implications on actual children served. Transitioning to normal child nutrition operations does indicate we are gaining ground. The Medicaid direct certification on July 1, 2022, went a long way to capturing 30% more children eligible to participate in school meal programs.

Child Nutrition Index STATEWIDE COMPARISON Meal Participation for Low Income Infants on WIC



		Birth to Age 1 Population: 63,462		Meal Participation Percentage	Meals Served & Reimbursement Revenue		Reimbursement EBT Value	WIC Food Dollars		WIC	
Month & Year	Medicaid Financed	Number Kids Served	Breakfast, Lunch & Supper		Cost of Food	Spent in Local Grocery Stores	Clinics	Agencies			
Pre-Covid	May 2019	29,459	22,502	76%	1,870,102 \$866 K	\$38.52	\$1.4 M	266	88		
	Oct. 2019	29,459	22,693	77%	1,887,072 \$738 K	\$32.51	\$1.4 M	266	88		
During Covid	May 2020	29,599	22,561	76%	1,877,975 \$850 K	\$37.68	\$1.4 M	197	85		
	Oct. 2020	29,599	21,803	74%	1,813,891 \$786 K	\$36.05	\$1.3 M	197	85		
	May 2021	28,531	19,941	70%	1,657,421 \$623 K	\$31.25	\$1.2 M	175	85		
	Oct. 2021	28,531	19,621	69%	1,612,886 \$848 K	\$43.75	\$1.2 M	175	85		
Post-Covid	May 2022	27,186	20,638	76%	1,723,990 \$1.0 M	\$50.68	\$1.4 M	191	85		
	Oct. 2022	27,186	20,759	76%	1,741,678 \$1.0 M	\$50.26	\$1.4 M	191	85		

Child Nutrition Index STATEWIDE COMPARISON Meal Participation for Low Income Children on WIC



		Children Ages 1, 2, 3, 4 Population: 285,006		Meal Participation Percentage	Meals Served & Reimbursement Revenue		Reimbursement EBT Value	WIC Food Dollars		WIC	
Month & Year	Medicaid Financed	Number Kids Served	Breakfast, Lunch & Supper		Cost of Food	Spent in Local Grocery Stores	Clinics	Agencies			
Pre-Covid	May 2019	133,146	55,132	41%	2,921,996 \$2.1 M	\$38.52	\$3.5 M	266	88		
	Oct. 2019	133,146	56,635	43%	3,001,655 \$1.8 M	\$32.51	\$3.5 M	266	88		
During Covid	May 2020	133,202	58,498	44%	3,100,394 \$2.2 M	\$37.68	\$3.5 M	197	85		
	Oct. 2020	133,202	59,142	44%	3,134,526 \$2.1 M	\$36.05	\$3.6 M	197	85		
	May 2021	128,334	56,818	44%	3,011,354 \$1.8 M	\$31.25	\$3.0 M	175	85		
	Oct. 2021	128,334	57,217	45%	2,999,588 \$2.5 M	\$43.75	\$3.6 M	175	85		
Post-Covid	May 2022	127,643	58,862	46%	3,119,686 \$2.98 M	\$50.68	\$3.9 M	191	85		
	Oct. 2022	127,643	59,868	47%	3,173,004 \$3.0 M	\$50.26	\$4.1 M	191	85		

Child Nutrition Index 7-COUNTY COMPARISON Meal Participation for Low Income Children in School



		Children Ages 5 to 18 Population: 575,763		Meal Participation Percentage			Meals Served & Reimbursement Revenue	FREE Reimbursement meal value	Sites	Sponsors
Learning Model	Month & Year	Medicaid Financed	Number Kids Served	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Breakfast, Lunch & Supper	Maximum	Number	Number
Pre-Covid	On Site May 2019	193,328	152,070	46%	80%	33%	5,258,812 \$13.8 M	\$5.14	982	222
	On Site Oct. 2019	193,328	137,725	62%	72%	5%	5,686,600 \$13.4 M	\$6.52	982	222
During Covid	Remote May 2020	216,717	173,977	78%	83%	5%	7,589,248 \$22.6 M	\$6.52	818	205
	Remote Oct. 2020	216,717	246,247	93%	115%*	7%	9,791,252 \$29.2 M	\$6.78	818	205
	Hybrid May 2021	215,074	176,410	80%	82%	155%*	14,326,393 \$46.3 M	\$6.78	719	188
	On Site Oct. 2021	215,074	267,633	56%	124%*	120%*	16,136,357 \$47.8 M	\$6.85	1,205	208
Post-Covid	On Site May 2022	222,665	194,160	44%	87%	<1%	9,137,387 \$21.9 M	\$6.85	1,000	232
	On Site Oct. 2022	222,665	134,103	50%	60%	<1%	4,969,381 \$13.4 M	\$7.225	985	226

Child Nutrition Index STATEWIDE COMPARISON Meal Participation for Low Income Children in School



		Children Ages 5 to 18 Population 1,031,712		Meal Participation Percentage			Meals Served & Reimbursement Revenue	FREE Reimbursement meal value	Sites	Sponsors
Learning Model	Month & Year	Medicaid Financed	Number Kids Served	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Breakfast, Lunch & Supper	Maximum	Number	Number
Pre-Covid	On Site May 2019	409,599	257,478	37%	65%	2%	9,039,315 \$23.6 M	\$5.14	2,284	694
	On Site Oct. 2019	409,599	254,071	55%	62%	3%	10,329,612 \$23.6 M	\$6.52	2,004	634
During Covid	Remote May 2020	409,743	327,961	76%	80%	4%	13,700,751 \$40.7 M	\$6.52	1,117	522
	Remote Oct. 2020	409,743	443,613	76%	108%*	4%	16,241,541 \$48.4 M	\$6.78	2,046	684
	Hybrid May 2021	406,045	324,650	78%	80%	93%	21,321,624 \$67.5 M	\$6.78	1,842	606
	On Site Oct. 2021	406,045	506,919	58%	125%*	107%*	24,728,490 \$68.9 M	\$6.85	2,301	631
Post-Covid	On Site May 2022	418,143	413,106	50%	99%	1%	19,441,250 \$46.8 M	\$6.85	2,080	640
	On Site Oct. 2022	418,143	239,469	47%	57%	2%	8,873,895 \$24.1 M	\$7.225	2,294	643

By October 2022, the number of school age children who participated in meal programs declined, not meeting the October 2019 pre-COVID participation level for meals claimed.

Hunger Impact Partners

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

We are committed to working with people that reflect our communities by race, religion and gender. We actively engage and hire people with diverse backgrounds who understand cultures and local communities. We have an expansive team of advisors that we collaborate with who assist us in navigating federal meal programs, food sourcing and local neighborhood needs. We intentionally bring people together to listen and learn about what efforts will be most effective in the communities we serve.

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Independent Director of Evaluation and Data Analysis for the Child Nutrition Index

HUNGER IMPACT PARTNERS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

Hunger Impact Partners does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or military status, in any of its activities or operations. We are committed to working with people that reflect our communities and actively engage and hire people with backgrounds who understand diverse cultures.

We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as organizational values to encourage positive outcomes. We apply racial equity by partnering with organizations that reflect the populations we serve who are most impacted by structural racial inequality. We recognize that those most affected are the most effective in advocating for their communities. These organizations are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of our programs, policies and practices.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT PARTNERS

