Hunger Impact Partners

2024 Annual Report

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2024 Data Totals

Users: 36,848 / **Visits:** 58,656 / **Page Views:** 71,315

Dear Friends,

As a backbone organization with more than 60 partners across the state, solid data analysis, and nearly 10 years of experience, Hunger Impact Partners was well-positioned to respond quickly to families facing persistent hardship. With cost of living staying high, costs for childcare, food and healthcare put a strain on safety net programs that were already insufficient to lift many families above poverty levels. Households with children were especially hit hard. We continued to fund our community non-profits and schools but in 2024 we focused on policy changes to give low-income families more stability and improve the food security supply chain.

Our advocacy efforts follow significant hunger-relief legislation passed in 2023, which established universal free school meals and a state-level Child Tax Credit. In partnership with our hunger relief network and the Partners to End Hunger coalition, we celebrated these successes.

- The legislature provided funding to implement Summer EBT or SUN Bucks, which helps families who struggle with food during the summer. It provides eligible families with $120 per child to purchase groceries.
- Lawmakers passed a bill to provide free milk to students who do not take a full school lunch, with state reimbursements for schools.
- The Farm to School program received a $125,000 funding increase and expanded eligibility to include home-based early care settings.
- Putting Minnesota on the path to a Medicaid waiver to address health-related social needs for housing and nutrition.

Universal Meals for ALL

Universal Meals for All		PreCovid & No Universal Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019	Universal Fiscal year 2024-2025
Federal Reimbursement Revenue			
Breakfast	SNP (Free & Reduced)	$48,820,290	$70,053,401
Breakfast	SNP (Regular)	$3,980,202	$9,114,228
Lunch	SNP (Free & Reduced)	$126,943,106	$181,656,477
Lunch	FED: HHFKA	$5,580,119	$9,215,571
Total		**$185,323,717**	**$270,039,677**
State Expenditure			
Breakfast	SNP (Free & Reduced)	$1,204,399	$790,147
Breakfast	SNP (Regular)	$8,873,184	$51,625,619
Lunch	SNP (Free & Reduced)	$9,036,921	$7,868,027
Lunch	SNP (Regular)	$6,190,602	$233,998,131
Total		**$25,305,106**	**$294,281,924**

- Funding for the emergency food network – food banks and shelves received $8.4 million in funding to source and distribute food.
- Legislation authorized the Minnesota Department of Human Services to pursue a federal waiver for medially tailored meals, potentially leading to a program providing these meals for people with specific health needs.
- The state continued to fund the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program, which purchases locally sourced food—especially from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers—and distributes it to underserved communities.

Hunger Impact Partners played an important role in securing these successes and generating more than $13 million in one-time funding for sourcing school food, food shelves, tribal food sovereignty, and expansion of prepared meal programs. It was a productive year for the hunger-relief sector.

The jury is still out on the cost to Minnesota on Universal Meals for ALL (see chart). It was easy to do given the state reserves at the time, but the annual cost is staggering and well above predictions. For fiscal year 2024-25 the cost to the state was nearly $295 million. Feeding students regardless of their economic status may not prove to be sustainable in the long term.

As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of closing the meal gap for hungry kids, the food fraud during 2020 and 2021 continues to tarnish Minnesota and challenge food delivery systems. We do not see pressure lifting on holding state leaders accountable for allowing the egregious action of those who perpetuated the abuse to happen. No question safeguards and administrative reforms are still needed. All child nutrition programs should operate efficiently and be cost-effective.

We continue to push ahead and find creative ways to support those feeding nutritious meals to kids. Thank you for your ongoing support and concern for those who struggle with this basic need. Addressing food security is not just the right thing to do, it is an investment in healthier families, stronger communities, and a more stable future.

With gratitude,

Ellie Lucas
Chief Executive Officer

Total Population vs. Food Insecure Population 2024

Children Ages	Population	Medicaid Financed	Enrolled in WIC or Free & Reduced-Price Meals	Children Missing from WIC and State Educational Benefits
Infants	63,284	27,844		
Ages 1 to 4	269,665	127,996		
Subtotal Birth to 4	**332,949**	**155,840**	**115,744**	**40,096**
Ages 5 to 18	1,034,480	458,959	347,360	111,599
Grand Total Birth to 18	**1,367,429**	**614,799**	**463,104**	**151,695**

FAMILY FOOD INSECURITY

To learn how Minnesota households were faring, we look at food insecurity indicators. We calculate there are 615,000 children who are food insecure with 463,000 receiving some food benefits leaving a gap of 152,000 children who are missing food and meal supports.

The emergency food system supports families through direct food distributions and programs like SNAP. While partner organizations like Second Harvest Heartland and local food shelves adjust to meet the growing need, we are working with schools and community-based organizations on long-term solutions to offset nutrition demands on families.

- 1 in 5 Minnesota households cannot afford the food they need
- 26% of households with children are food insecure
- 18% of households rely on the emergency food system
- 40% of households of color are food insecure

For children birth to 18 experiencing food hardship 59% are children of color, 44% are school age children, and 46% are infants and children up to age 4.

Source: The Wilder Foundation, MN Compass, MDH, MDE

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.

INITIATIVE UPDATE

Our ongoing work to build back capacity begins with increasing the number of credible community non-profits sponsors and operators for after school and summer meal programs, expanding the number of licensed childcare centers offering meals, and increasing participation in all school meals.

After School Meals

As planned, we established eight new after school meal serving sites reaching 500 elementary and middle school students during the 2024-25 school year.

These are high-quality after school programs for low-income kids that help close the achievement gap, keeps them safe and develops skills for future success. Our grants address barriers that included administrative requirements, lack of exposure, and education of the program's value to students and their families. Targeting marginalized neighborhoods that are eligible for meal support, we collaborate with community-based organizations that offer academic enrichment or remedial programs to help them establish meal sponsors, so they can serve meals during their programming. We focus on meal service gaps and support meal sponsor education, recruiting and training.

Summer Meals & Beyond

Once again, our proprietary Free Meals for Kids mobile app was the 'go to" resource for helping hungry kids. Many communities stepped forward with sites serving meals, not just at schools, but at libraries, rec centers, hospitals, and faith-based locations. The mobile app connected families with children to these new sites in their neighborhoods.

The mobile app also informs families of financial supports, opportunities to participate in research studies, and time-sensitive information via a "push" notification feature. We have nearly 37,000 active users statewide. Developed to help kids, families, community partners, and safety net service providers locate meals, food, and community resources has expanded yet again. We now include childcare center sites offering meals, after-school academic programs serving meals, summer programs that offer scholarships, free family meals sites, holiday food giveaways, backpack programs, Fare for All grocery sites, Twin Cities mobile market locations, and free summer feeding sites in economically eligible neighborhoods. We continue to recruit new meal sponsors and fund expansion for existing sites, which is part of our core local community funding strategy.

In 2024, 54% of summer sites were in the 7-county metro serving 29,035 children and 46% were in greater Minnesota serving 30,756 children. We continue to focus on increasing the number of serving sites that are sponsored by credible community-based organizations with track records for financial record keeping to build back to pre-pandemic levels.

The chart below shows the breakdown of locations that provided summer meals. In 2019 there were 107 community-based organizations providing summer meals and in 2024 there were only 46 organizations participating. However, the biggest gain in meals served was at licensed childcare centers, and we continue to work to expand summer meal programming for children in these programs.

The two charts below reflect the implications of the pandemic federal food fraud scheme in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022. We are making gains but still not back to pre-pandemic participation. Abuse of the USDA child nutrition programs was rampant, and we are still in recovery. When comparing 2019 to 2024, the meal gap for 2024 summer feeding programs was approximately 750,000 less meals than those served in 2019 with 16 fewer summer meal operators.

Summer Child Nutrition Index *June, July & August*

Summer Meal Sites		
	2019	2024
Community Based Organizations	107	46
Park & Rec and Community Centers	183	177
Boys & Girls Clubs & YMCAs	54	43
Libraries	25	19
Childcare Centers	13	26
HeadStart Sites	18	8

Meals Served June, July & August

Geography	Meals Served					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
7-County Metro	2,128,101	16,585,226	26,685,995	5,009,491	1,453,647	1,451,778
Greater Minnesota	1,611,273	5,864,933	9,490,909	2,529,861	1,390,456	1,537,732
State of Minnesota	3,739,374	22,450,159	36,176,904	7,539,352	2,844,103	2,989,510

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

Meal Providers June, July & August

Geography	Meal Providers					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
7-County Metro	62	108	173	167	59	54
Greater Minnesota	155	183	310	229	161	147
State of Minnesota	217	291	471	390	220	201

Childcare Center Meals

Working with our early childhood network of partners, we recruit centers who have the potential to provide meals through the federal meal program CACFP. We developed a qualified lead generation process that can screen for citations, site capacity, and percentage of low-income children matching these centers with meal sponsors.

- We provided education on CACFP, guides for evaluating sponsors and developed a self-sponsor toolkit.
- We continued to advocate for federal/state program changes in CACFP to ease the administrative burden of operating sponsors.
- We funded tablets and subscriptions for web-based record-keeping and financial management platforms to aid sponsors with reporting and compliance requirements.

- We manage a Network Initiative with the Salvation Army, the YMCA, and the Boys and Girls Clubs to utilize CACFP for meals offered at their sites.
- We have helped 13 childcare centers start meal programs with capacity to feed 500 children birth to 5.

Healthy Food from Birth to 5

With only 50 percent of children ages 1-4 enrolled in WIC in Minnesota, we host frequent listening sessions learning about barriers to participation. Focusing on children ages 2-4 whose families are not enrolled, we partnered with the University of Minnesota School of Nursing to develop a public health practicum to provide free medical check-ups at licensed childcare centers to facilitate WIC enrollment for eligible children. We had 25 families enrolled in the medical check-up pilot.

We created a WIC promotion video for childcare centers to educate families on WIC's nutritional benefits and online shopping option. Working with WIC agencies in Ramsey and Hennepin counties, we built a collaborative to support better service delivery models including telemedicine. The Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Hennepin Healthcare, African American Babies Coalition and Head Start community action agencies were our program partners.

Child Nutrition Index Dashboard

2024 finally surpassed 2019 meals served reaching 11 million additional meals provided to children at schools, in after school programs, during the summer and at childcare centers.

Meal Type	Calendar Year					
	2019	2020*	2021*	2022*	2023	2024
Childcare Center Meals	11,099,012	8,321,235	8,363,661	7,666,112	8,549,833	9,244,008
Breakfast and Lunch School Meals	79,578,777	106,698,343	193,326,537	166,832,774	85,706,096	96,745, 188
Summer Meals: June, July & August	3,739,374	22,450,159	36,176,904	7,539,352	2,844,103	2,989,510
At-Risk After School Meals	2,568,407	4,014,582	62,097,687	2,386,805	1,701,980	1,902,915
Meal Total	**96,985,570**	**141,484,319**	**299,964,789**	**184,425,043**	**98,802,012**	**110,881,621**
Snack	11,638,470	10,125,851	70,208,686	8,509,161	8,309,531	8,738,718
Meal & Snack Total	**108,624,040**	**151,610,170**	**370,173,475**	**192,934,204**	**107,111,543**	**119,620,339**

** Pandemic impact*

CHILD NUTRITION INDEX

All Hunger Impact Partners' efforts are grounded in our rigorous proprietary Child Nutrition Index, an analytics tool that helps us identify and continuously refine our organizational goals and programmatic objectives, as well as track progress. This tool examines free/reduced populations of children, families on SNAP and WIC and those Medicaid eligible to pinpoint sites and neighborhoods most in need of support. It reports populations of English Language Learners, ethnicity, and family-income eligibility. It serves the child hunger-relief sector by providing the most current data available (within 90 days of reporting), filters databases to provide market insights, locates economic-eligible areas for meal programs, provides school and community site information on meals served, and identifies service delivery gaps.

The Index pulls and synthesizes data from MDE, MDH, and DHS to pinpoint:

1) number of children eligible for nutrition programs by age
2) target markets
3) geographic locations
4) meal participation rates
5) missing meals by site–school or community location
6) population demographics
7) reimbursement revenue opportunities

We use the Child Nutrition Index to present child hunger statistics to schools, community organizations, state agencies, legislators, and thought leaders. This powerful tool allows us to bring laser-focus to address hunger. It was the data source for the successful statewide universal meals legislative effort increasing funding for food shelves, food banks, prepared food access, locally sourced food, and farm to school programs.

CHILD NUTRITION INDEX DATA COMPARISON

Below are two charts showing the number of low-income school children served meals and the corresponding federal reimbursement revenue received for meal participation statewide and in the 7-county metro. Note the highlighted sections address the food fraud impact from May 2020 to May 2022 totaling $273 million in federal reimbursements. The corresponding number of children served is skewed as well do to the fraudulent efforts of those using fictitious names and inflating the tens of thousands of children, they claimed they were serving. Comparing data from 2019 to 2024 accurately reflects the actual gains in meals served and the corresponding federal reimbursement revenue received. By October 2024, the federal child nutrition programs for breakfast, lunch, and supper surpassed 2019 in the number of low-income children served in Minnesota by 46,000 with $9 million in increased reimbursement revenue. The trend is going in the right direction.

Child Nutrition Index *STATEWIDE*

	Children Ages 5 to 18 Population 1,034,480				Meal Participation Percentage			Federal Reimbursement Revenue	Sites	Sponsors
	Learning Model	Month & Year	Medicaid Financed	Number Kids Served	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Breakfast, Lunch & Supper	Number	Number
Pre-Covid	On Site	Oct. 2019	409,599	254,071	55%	62%	3%	$23.6 M	2,004	634
FRAUD	Remote	May 2020	409,743	327,961	76%	80%	4%	$40.7 M	1,117	522
	Remote	Oct. 2020	409,743	443,613	76%	108%*	4%	$48.4 M	2,046	684
	Hybrid	May 2021	406,045	324,650	78%	80%	93%	$67.5 M	1,842	606
	On Site	Oct. 2021	406,045	506,919	58%	125%*	107%*	$68.9 M	2,301	631
	On Site	May 2022	418,143	413,106	50%	99%	1%	$46.8 M	2,080	640
Post-Covid	On Site	Oct. 2022	418,143	239,469	47%	57%	2%	$24.1 M	2,294	643
	On Site	Oct. 2023	440,386	248,819	31%	57%	4%	$28.7 M	1,796	630
	On Site	Oct. 2024	458,959	300,343	37%	65%	3%	$32.0 M	1,981	626

Child Nutrition Index *7-COUNTY*

	Children Ages 5 to 18 Population: 568,355				Meal Participation Percentage			Federal Reimbursement Revenue	Sites	Sponsors
	Learning Model	Month & Year	Medicaid Financed	Number Kids Served	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Breakfast, Lunch & Supper	Number	Number
Pre-Covid	On Site	Oct. 2019	193,328	137,725	62%	72%	5%	$13.4 M	982	222
FRAUD	Remote	May 2020	216,717	173,977	78%	83%	5%	$22.6 M	818	205
	Remote	Oct. 2020	216,717	246,247	93%	115%	7%	$29.2 M	818	205
	Hybrid	May 2021	215,074	176,410	80%	82%	155%	$46.3 M	719	188
	On Site	Oct. 2021	215,074	267,633	56%	124%	120%	$47.8 M	1,205	208
	On Site	May 2022	222,665	194,160	44%	87%	<1%	$21.9 M	1,000	232
Post-Covid	On Site	Oct. 2022	222,665	134,103	50%	60%	<1%	$13.4 M	985	226
	On Site	Oct. 2023	229,785	157,853	38%	69%	4%	$15.8 M	861	228
	On Site	Oct. 2024	240,680	167,547	39%	70%	5%	$18.0 M	873	237

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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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.

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