

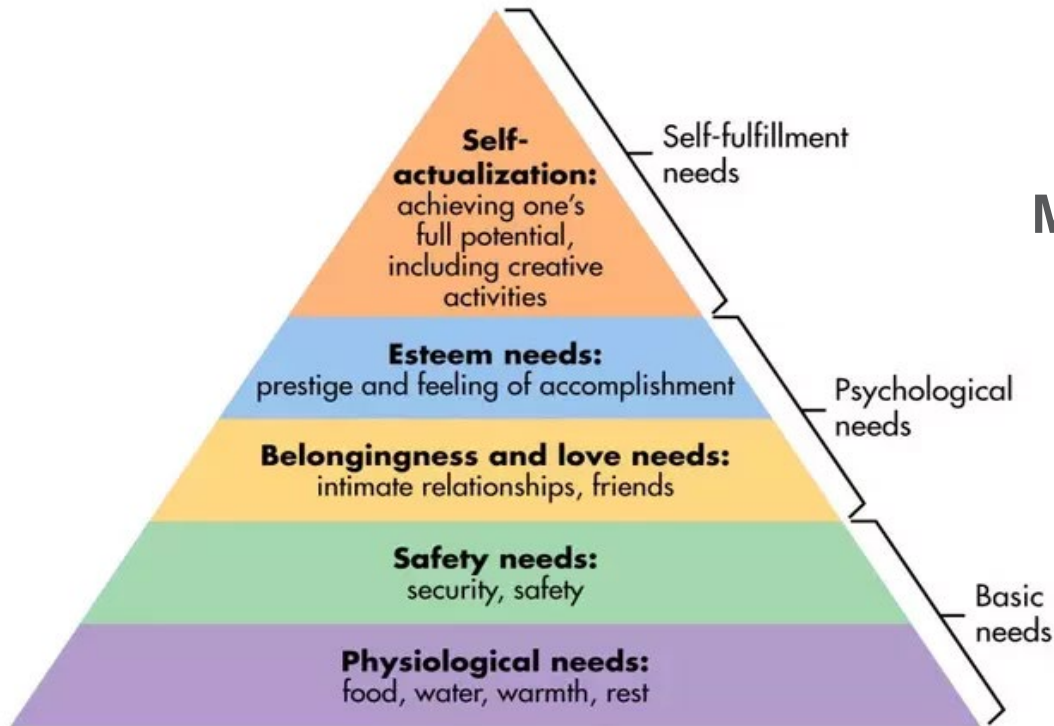
Health and Wellness Service Team Food Security Assessment Findings

November 22, 2022

Agenda

- Introduction – (Kathy Hedin, Deputy County Manager)
- Background – (Carissa Dillon, Food Security Coordinator)
- What we have learned
 - Food Insecurity Data Story (Sarah Auten, Research and Evaluation)
 - Engagement Results (Malik Mitchell, Imagine Deliver)
- Where we are going (Carissa Dillon)
 - Action Teams
 - Aligning work moving forward

Food is a Basic Need



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

*Needs lower in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up.

Food Insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food

COVID-19 Food and Basic Needs Response

Ramsey County dedicated \$10 million in CARES funding

Three priority areas were supported based on community engagement and a Needs Assessment

1. Home-based meal delivery,
2. Food shelves and basic needs,
3. School meals for youth.

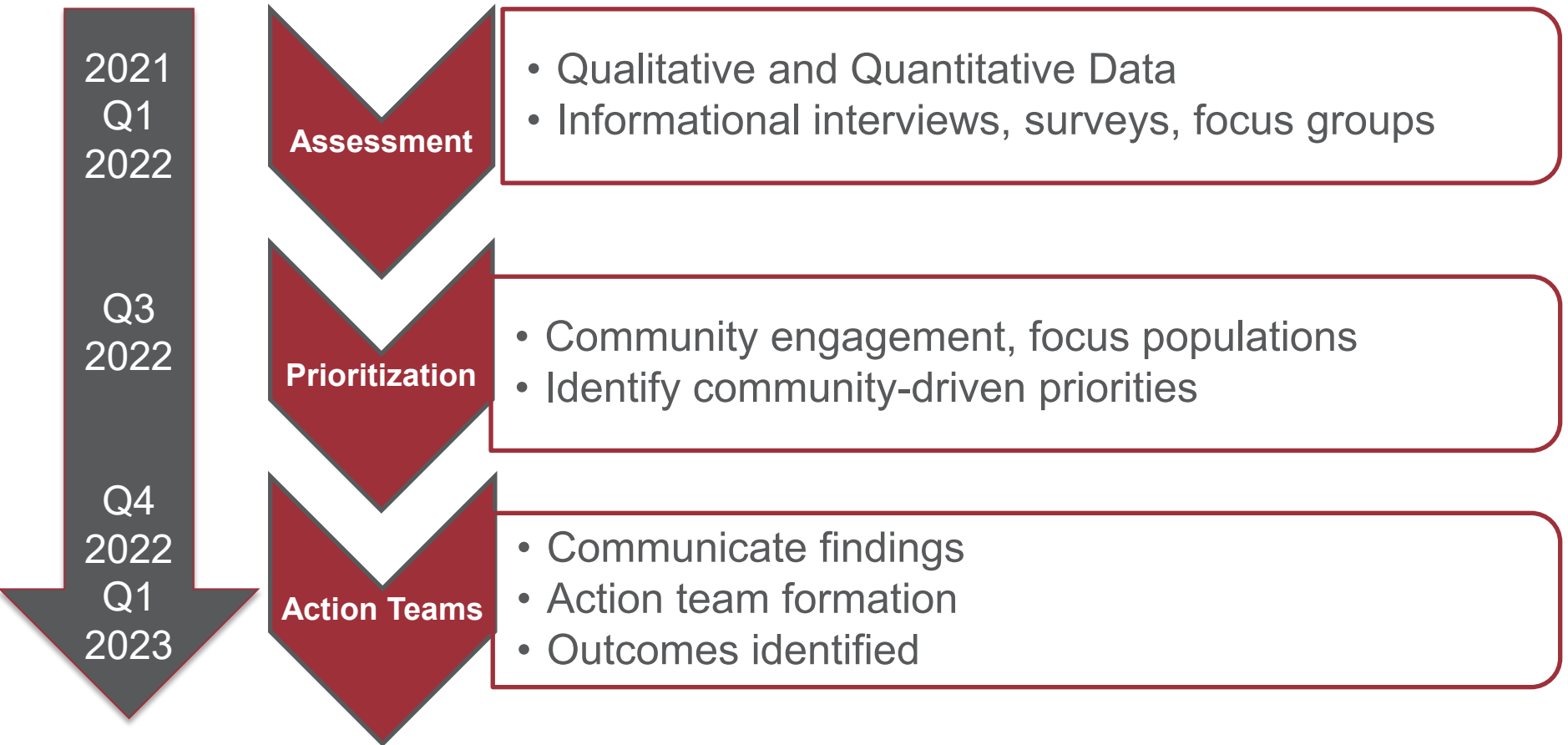
Outcomes:

- Over 500,000 home delivered meals were provided to those impacted by COVID
- Food shelf and food programs purchased culturally appropriate foods, basic hygiene products and enhanced infrastructure
- Youth-serving organizations were nimbler in their response

Recent And Current Efforts to Address Food Insecurity

- **Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families**
“Ramsey County will strengthen families by expanding access to quality consistent early childhood care, education, and access to nutritious foods, resources and opportunities.”
- **Urban Institute’s Upward Mobility**
“Promote food security and access to nutritious foods.”
- **2040 Comprehensive Plan**
“Work with community partners to eliminate food insecurity by 2040.”
- **Public Health Community Health Assessment**
- **Food Resources webpage**
- **Statewide Health Improvement Partnership**
- **Food and Nutrition Commission**
- **COVID relief efforts/CARES funding**

Food Security Assessment Timeline



Food Security Action Steps

External Governance Team

Food Security Coordinator

Internal Steering Committee

- Sanneh Foundation
- M Health Fairview
- Keystone Services
- CLUES
- Wilder (Promise Neighborhood)
- Mt. Olivet Baptist Church Food Shelf
- Department of Indian Works Food Shelf
- White Bear Lake Food Shelf
- Somali Farmers Association
- Allina Health System
- Health Partners

Action Teams

- Women, Infant, Children (WIC), Division Manager
- Interim Financial Assistance Services, Director
- Research and Evaluation
- Racial and Health Equity Liaison
- Financial Assistance Services, Planning Manager
- Statewide Health Improvement Partnership Health Educator
- Policy and Planning

Evaluation and Reporting

Assessment Process

- **Question:**
 - “What is Ramsey County’s role in supporting greater food security?”
- **Quantitative Data**
 - Analyzed proxy measures specific to Ramsey County
 - Developed Open Data Portal for Food Security Data Story
- **Qualitative Data**
 - Over 75 informational interviews with service providers
 - Community engagement in partnership with Imagine Deliver
 - Heard from over 300 community members at 6 events
 - Open ended questions analyzed into priority areas
- **Prioritization of action areas to move forward**

Food Insecurity Data Story



Hunger is a challenge for many Ramsey County residents. We have higher rates of food insecurity than the Minnesota state average and this gap widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 12% of Ramsey County residents were food insecure, while the state average was 10%. This trend continued in 2021 and the gap widened further during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children, older adults, and racially and ethnically diverse communities are the most impacted by food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed inequities among our most vulnerable community members.

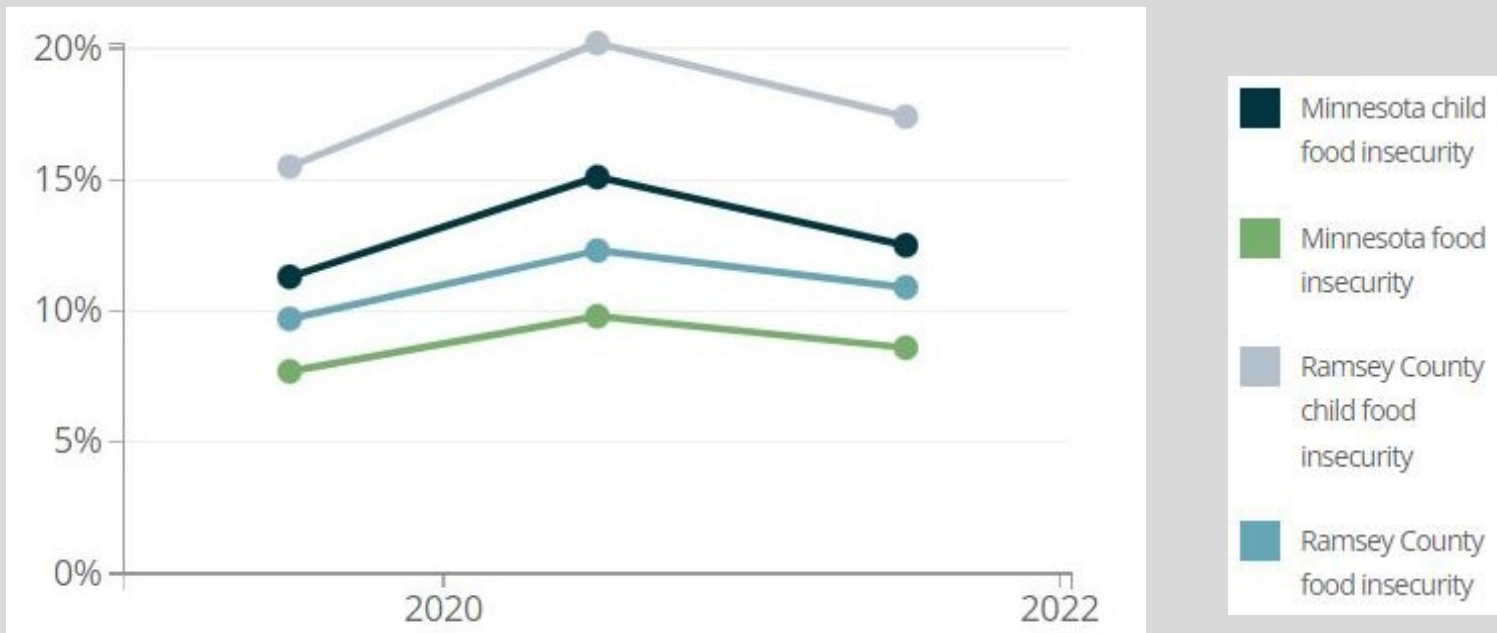
Ramsey County is taking steps with our partners to continue to address food insecurity.

<https://data.ramseycounty.us/stories/s/Food-Security/9cfd-sn87/>

Ramsey County's Food Insecurity Rates

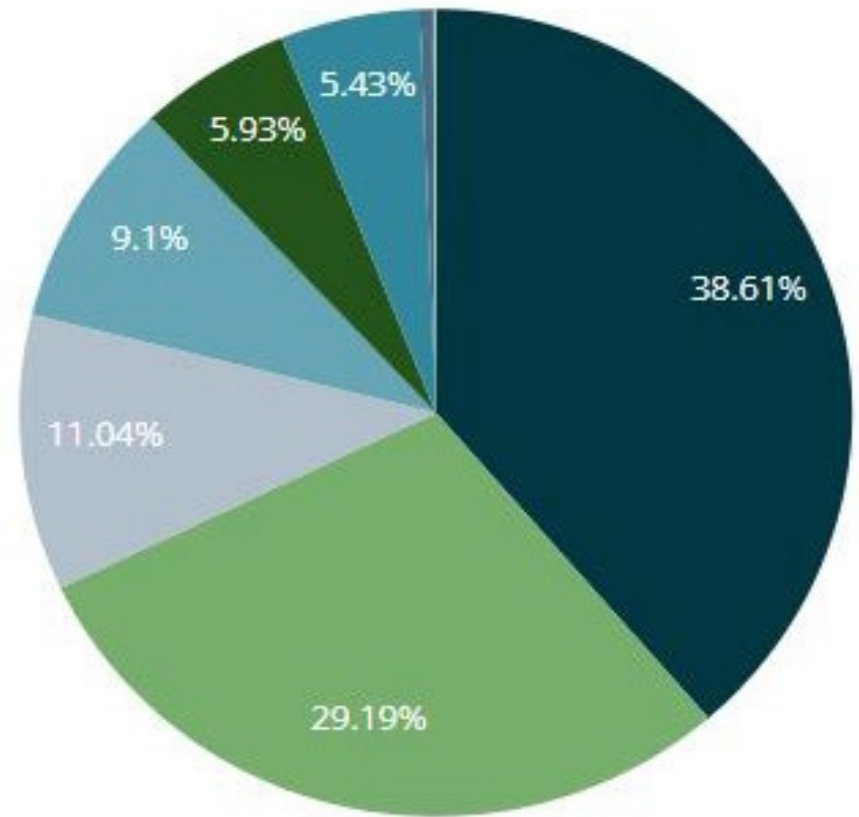
- Ramsey County's food insecurity rate **higher than state average** – 8.6% statewide versus county's 10.9%. Estimated **60,000 residents** are food insecure in 2021.
- **20% of Ramsey County children** estimated to be food insecure in 2020, equals **more than 22,000** food insecure children in Ramsey County.

MN State and Ramsey County Food Insecurity Rates 2019-2022



Child Food Insecurity in Ramsey County

- Children under 18 are largest age group to benefit from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): more than 31,000 children in 2021.
- Children with various ethnic and racial diversity in Ramsey County are more likely to benefit from Women, Infants, Children (WIC) than their white counterparts.

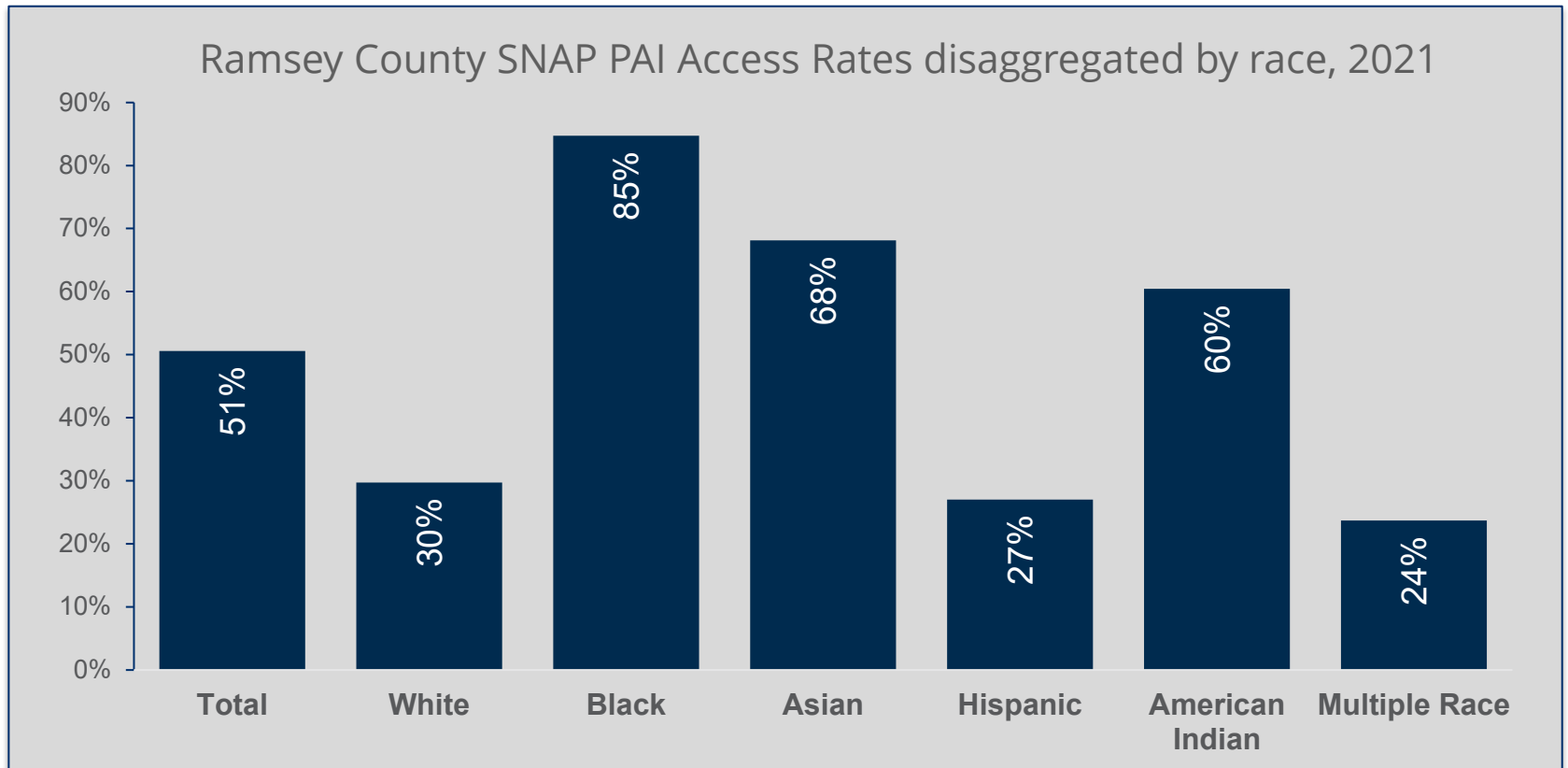


Ramsey County WIC Recipients by Race/Ethnicity March 2022



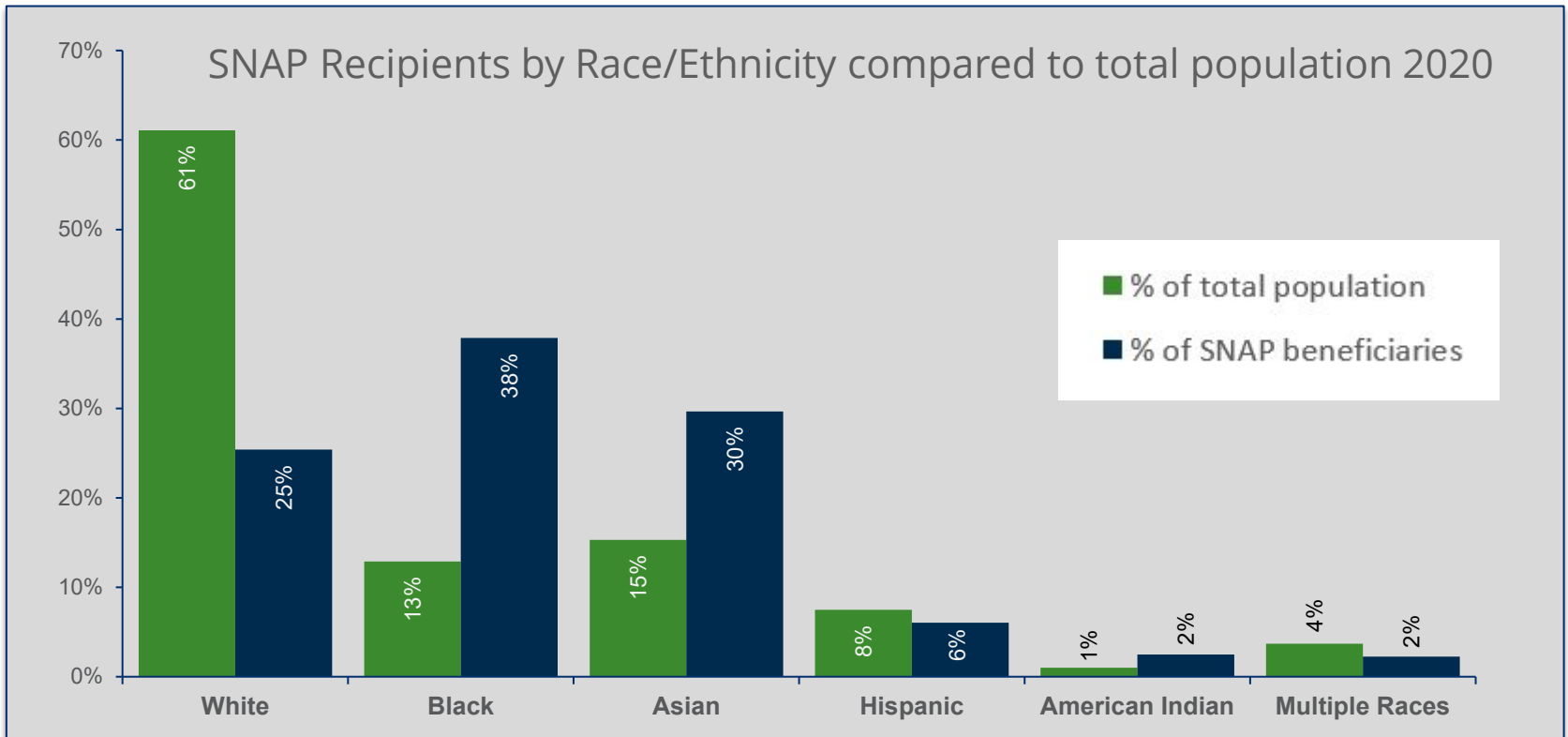
SNAP Participation Access Index (PAI)

- **SNAP PAI measures participation rates** within groups whose income levels make them eligible for SNAP benefits.
- In Ramsey County, income-eligible **Black and Asian residents participate** in SNAP **at a higher rate** than White, Hispanic, and Multiple Race residents.



Inequities in SNAP Participation

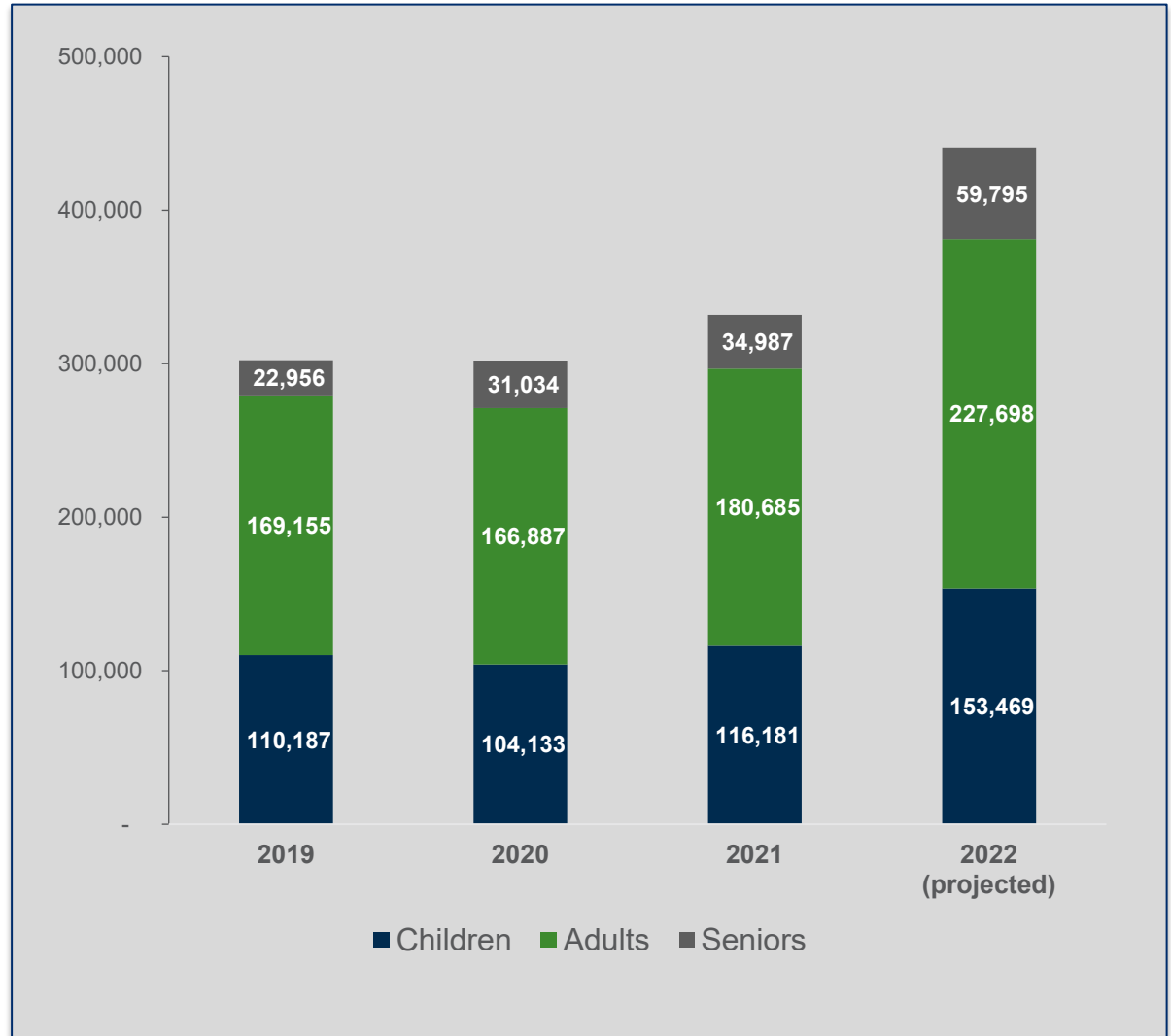
- Adults **55 and older** are **20% of SNAP recipients** (16,500 residents in 2021).
- **Black and Asian** residents have higher participation rates in SNAP than White, American Indian, or Multiple Race residents.
- These two groups equal more than **56,000 residents** who need food assistance.



Food Shelf Usage Rates

Usage rates for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) food shelves increased in 2022:

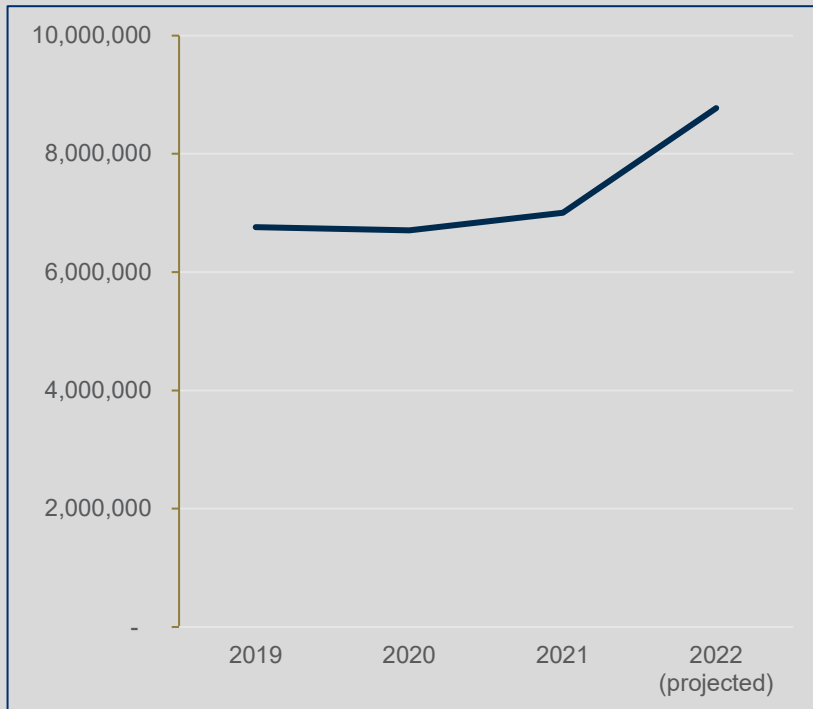
- Projected to be 30% higher than 2021 overall.
- Seniors' usage rates projected to be 70% higher.
- Children's usage rates projected to be 32% higher than 2021.



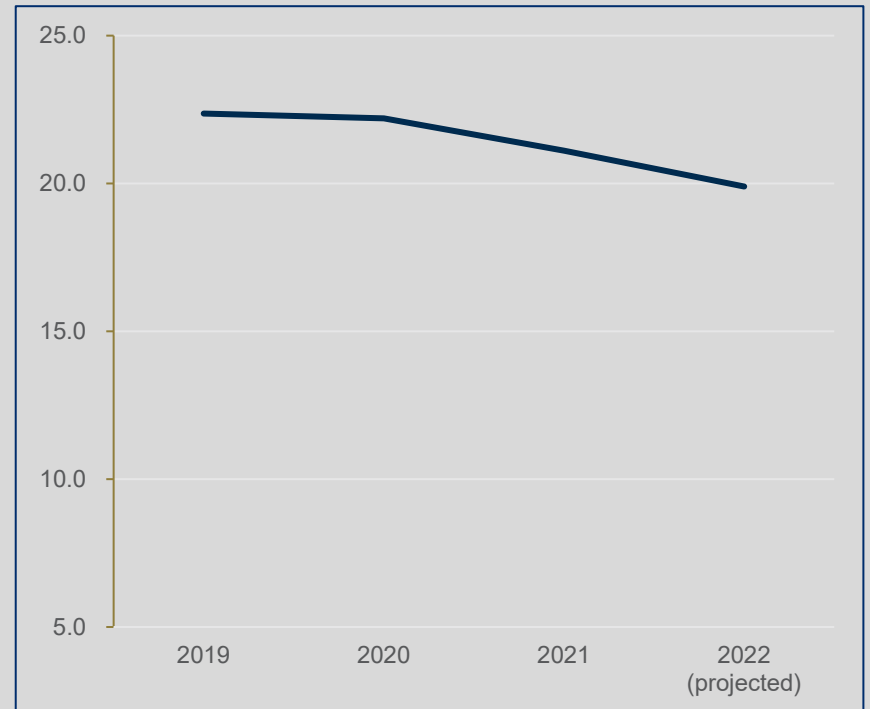
TEFAP Food Shelf Distribution Trends

Total amount of food distributed increasing; pounds per person decreasing

Total pounds of food distributed



Pounds of food distributed per person



Insight Development at Imagine Deliver

Insights Development



- Imagine Deliver is a consulting firm focuses on using creative, hands-on approaches and activating diverse teams to think collaboratively together.
- An insight is composed of a summary of the learning gathered from the engagement period, generative research, and helpful context from key stakeholders.
- Imagine Deliver wanted engagement participants to share their current lived reality, as well as their boldest dreams without the worry of the feasibility of their ideas.
- As part of insight development, Imagine Deliver met with key stakeholders for vital information sharing to create learning priorities.

Community Engagement: By the Numbers

Community Pop Ups



6

Pop-up locations



306

Community members engaged



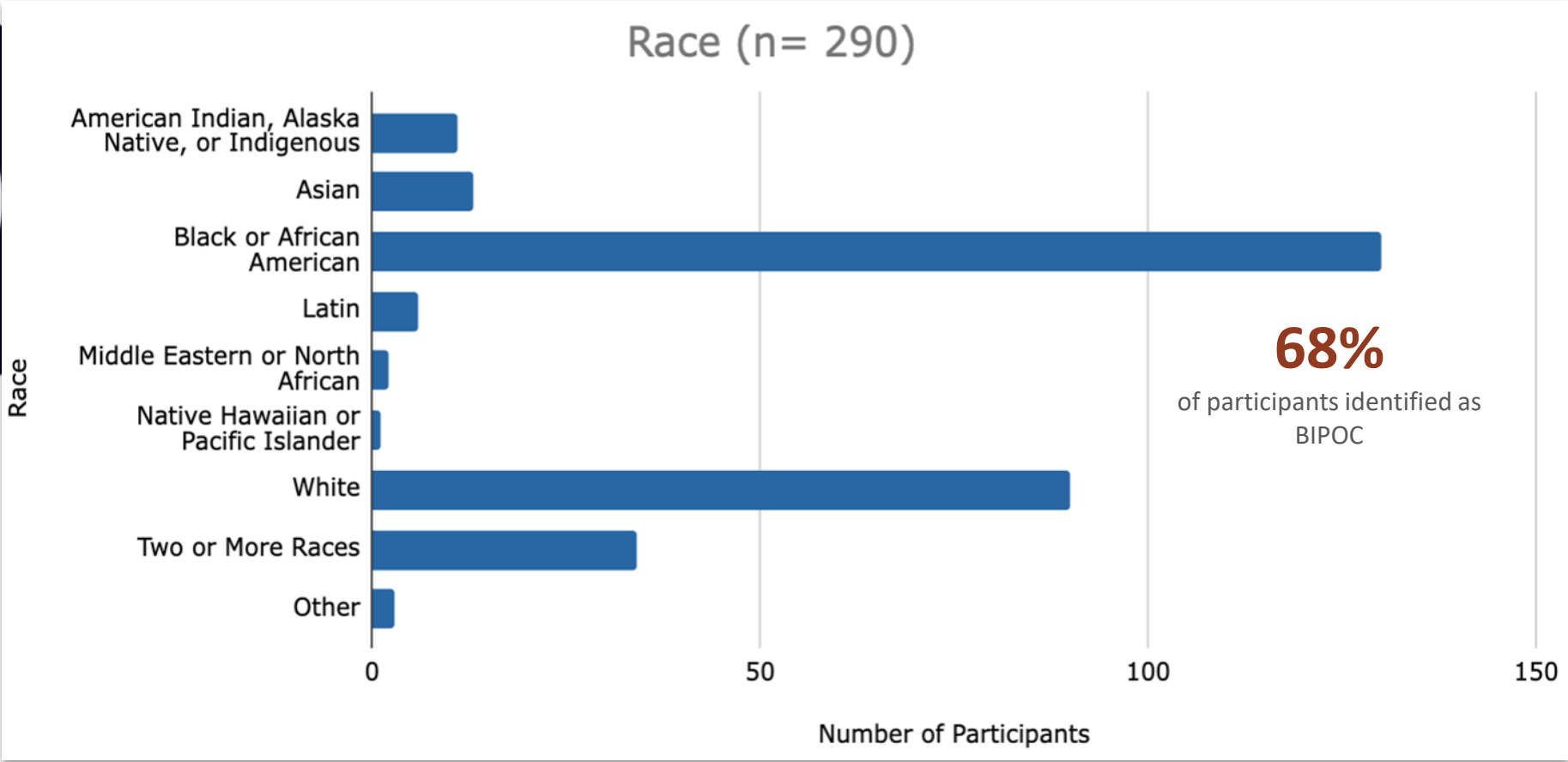
\$4,980

Incentive dollars distributed

- The Food Group
- North St. Paul Area Food Shelf
- Ralph Reeder Food Shelf
- Focus House
- Merrick Food Shelf
- West Seventh Library (Saint Paul Public Library)

Community Engagement: Participants by Race

Community Pop Ups



Summarized Community Insights by Theme

Theme	Insights	Description
Food choice & autonomy	Gardens on every block: Localizing food production as a means of increasing access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More autonomy over the food they eat and the food production process.• Grow their own food either individually or communally• Source ingredients locally, and support their community farmers• Solutions including urban farming opportunities<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More educating and empowering residents on how to grow their own food• Partnerships with local farmers at local grocery stores• Expanding farmers market seasons.
	Community knows what's good for them: Healthy foods build strong families and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to quality, healthy, and fresh food is a top priority for community members.• How food can affect their health and have called for less processed foods, fresh/organic fruits and vegetables, fresh meats, and more nutrient-dense options.• Barriers included accessing quality, healthy, and fresh food, affordability was the most pressing issue.

Summarized Community Insights by Theme

Theme	Insights	Description
Food affordability & supplemental assistance	Our money doesn't stretch: Compounding factors push food affordability out of reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affordability of food is a major issue• High prices for fresh produce, increasing prices of food overall• Need for more discounted food programs• Some concern over food waste and the impact it can have on their food budget
	Barriers to stability: Unrealistic benefit requirements create a moving target for at-risk families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process of applying need to be more flexible to meet the shifting needs of their users• Perception of requirements and their administration - confusing and unaccommodating for families<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With incomes just above threshold• Those who have unstable conditions such as being unhoused,• Those with children who have aged out of programs such as WIC.• Issues such as the benefits cliff and confusion around qualification requirements as key barriers to access

Summarized Community Insights by Theme

Theme	Insights	Description
Filling gaps in food availability	Keystones in the community: Formal programs and services step in where public assistance fails	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food shelves are essential resources for those who need to fill gaps in their food availability• They are so reliable for their monthly food planning that they didn't even consider themselves to be food insecure.• Although some food shelves also have administrative requirements, they generally have been more accessible for community members than more formal county and state programs like SNAP and WIC.
	A community potluck: Leveraging social connections to bridge the gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community members utilize informal resources such as family, friends, and places of worship to access supplemental or culturally specific foods.• Participants have used their networks to circumvent some of the issues they encounter with formal resources like visit limits and lack of transportation.• Adding county resources behind the ways in which community members already access adequate amounts of food informally and access food that matches their cultural preferences could serve as a way to acknowledge an asset-based approach to food security.

Food Security Actions

Immediate Actions

Enhancing
Food Safety
Net

Increasing
Access to
Public
Benefits

Medium-term Actions

Urban
Agriculture

Expanding
Food
Affordability
& Availability

Foundational Actions

Resources &
Communications

Advocacy

Immediate Actions



Enhancing
Food
Safety Net

- Food to People
- Less paperwork required to get food
- Fresh, Healthy, Culturally-appropriate Food options
- Donation system upgrades

Community
Development
Block Grant-
(CDBG-CV)
Workforce
Solutions
Food Security RFP

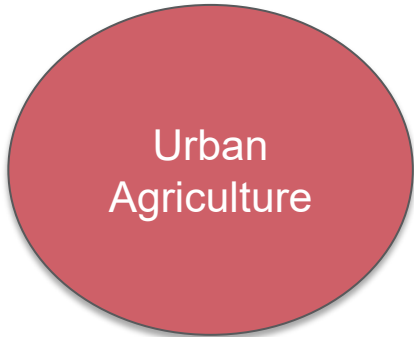


Increasing
Access to
Public
Benefits

- New locations to apply for benefits
- Co-applications for financial assistance programs
- Increase use and redemption rates
- Health care screening and referral

Strategic Priority
Statewide Health
Improvement
Partnership
(SHIP)

Medium Term Actions



- Urban Planning support to increase access to urban green spaces
- More farm-to-retail and farm-to-food shelf opportunities
- Strengthen local economy through food system upgrades

SHIP
Twin Cities
Agricultural Land
Trust
SummerLands



- Inflation makes food more expensive
- Build on existing subsidy programs
 - Market Bucks
 - Fare for All

SHIP
Brightside Effort

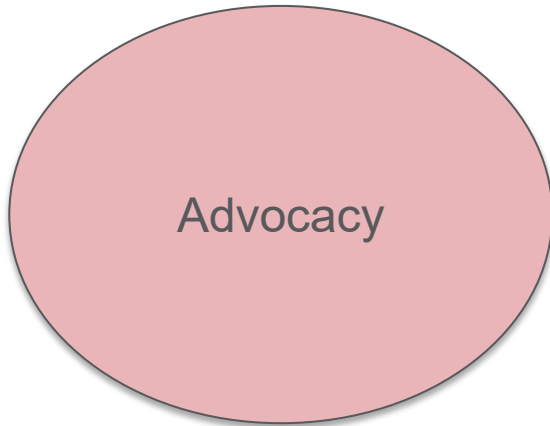
Foundational Actions



Communications

- Alignment within county-issued benefits (SNAP, WIC)
- Promote existing resources (Urban Agriculture, Food Resource map)
- General information (Food system benefits, donations)
- Alignment with other agencies or organizations (Preservation, composting, cooking skills)
- Focus on young adults, elders and those most food insecure (social media, informal networks and other trusted messengers)
- Removing shame and perceived/real barriers in marketing campaigns

Foundational Actions



- Promote food-related support in legislative priorities (state and federal)
 - Increase benefit worker pay, support Farm Bill 2023, increase WIC age guidelines, provide universal free school meals, co-enrollment of benefits
- Link food-related initiatives other county efforts
 - Climate health
 - Urban planning to support urban agriculture
 - Transportation efforts

Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

Urban Institute's Upward Mobility

Evaluation

1. Percentage of Ramsey County residents that are food insecure (by age, race/ethnicity)
2. Proportion of food distributed by food shelf
3. SNAP enrollment rates

Future

Community directed indicators and outcomes based by action teams

Next Steps and Alignment

- Continue to build action teams based on current work in community; focused on outcomes
- Build internal partnerships with other departments to align efforts
- Communication campaign on the impact of food insecurity as well as aligning resources
- Applying for grants and streamlining funding