



# Board Workshop / Discussion Agenda

15 West Kellogg Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
651-266-9200

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November 22, 2022 - 10:30 a.m.

Council Chambers - Courthouse Room 300

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## WORKSHOP

1. **Food Security Assessment Findings**

[2022-572](#)

Sponsors: Health and Wellness



# Board Workshop / Discussion

## Request for Board Action

15 West Kellogg Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
651-266-9200

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**Item Number:** 2022-572

**Meeting Date:** 11/22/2022

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**Sponsor:** Health and Wellness

**Title**

Food Security Assessment Findings

**Attachment**

1. Presentation

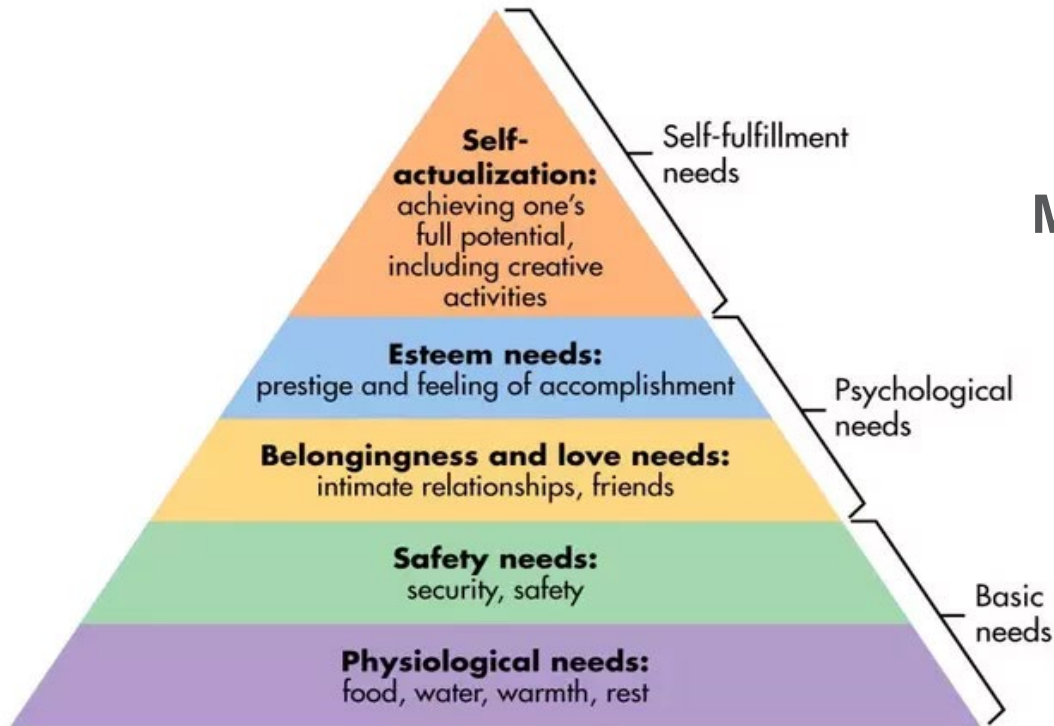
# Health and Wellness Service Team Food Security Assessment Findings

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.

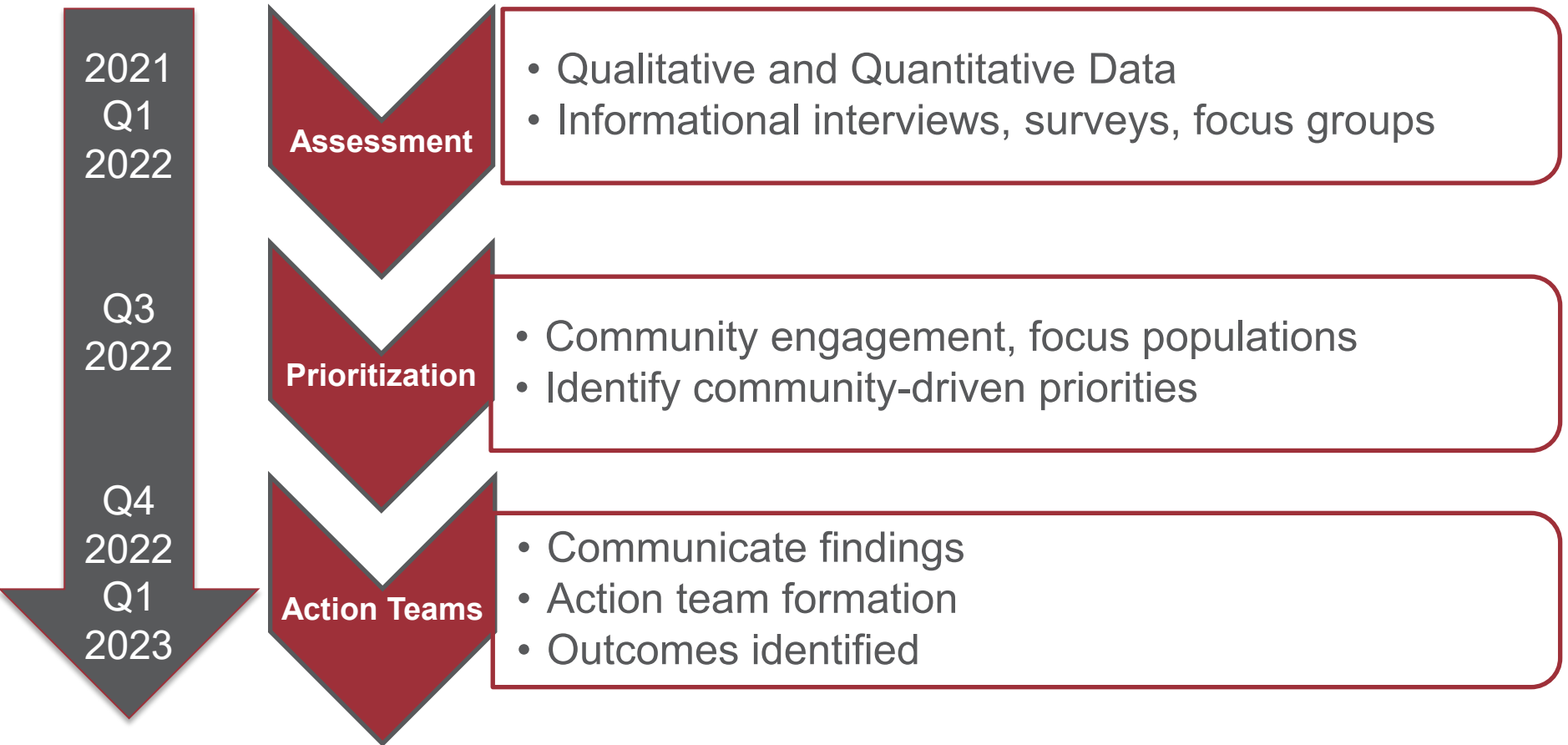
## **Outcomes:**

- 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

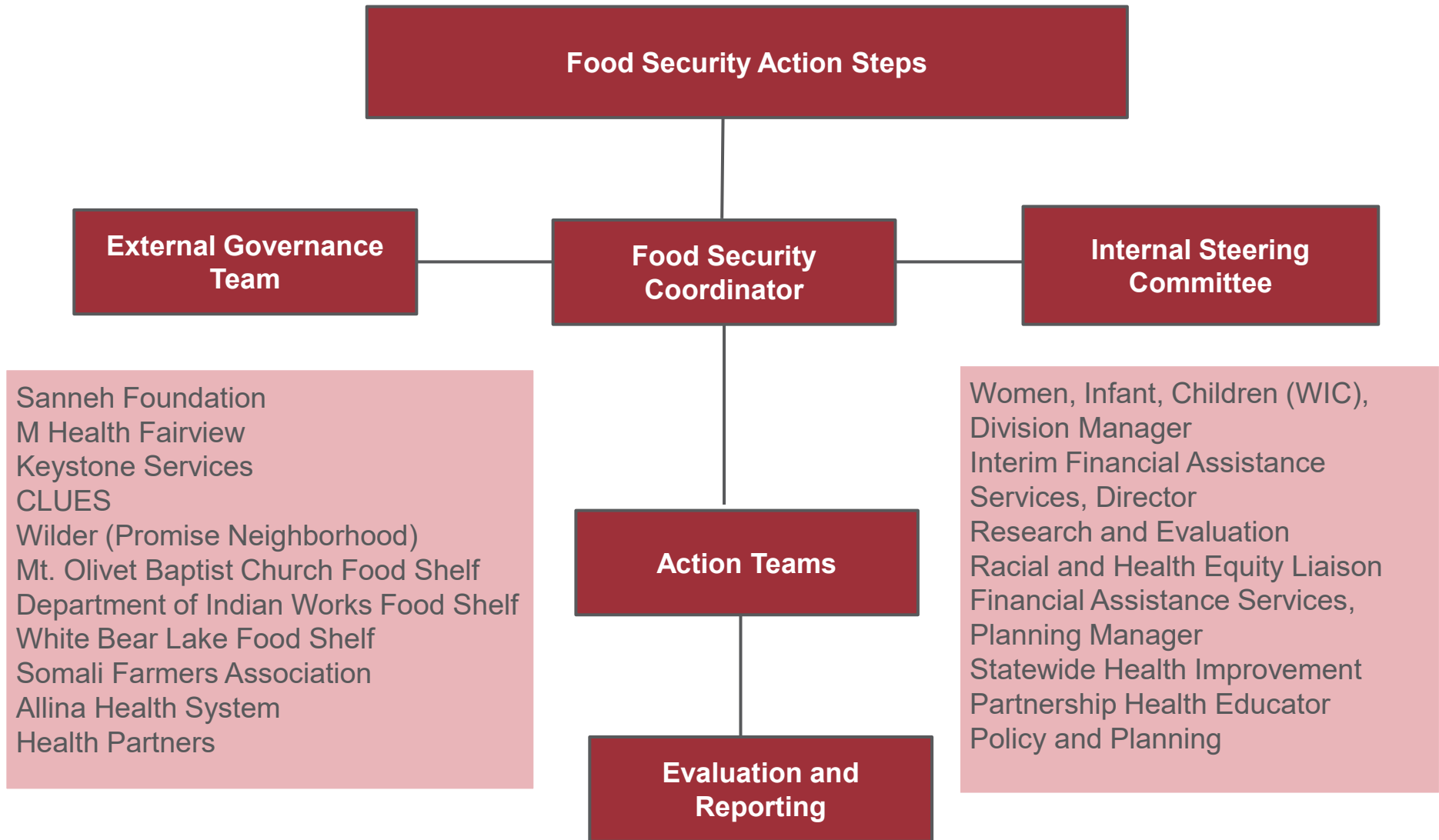
# Recent And Current Efforts to Address Food Insecurity

- **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







# 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



## Food Insecurity

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.

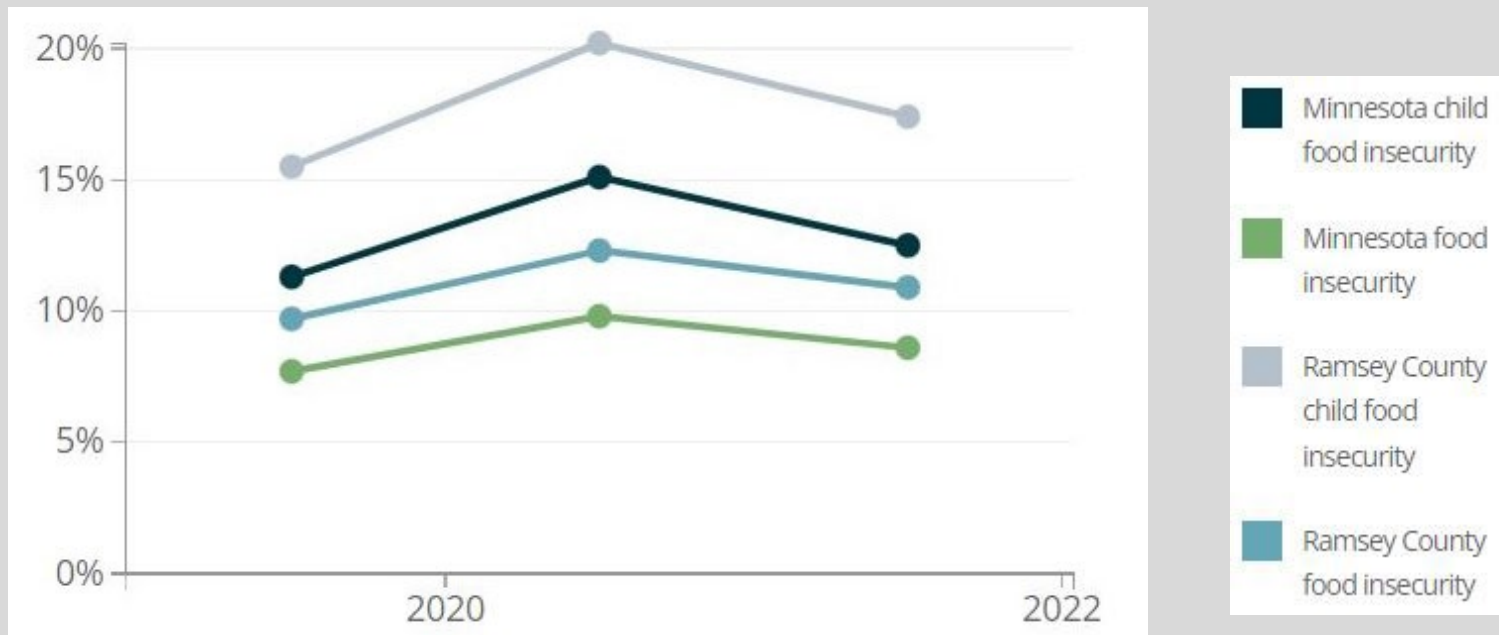
Ramsey County is taking steps with our partners to continue to address food insecurity.

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

# Ramsey County's Food Insecurity Rates

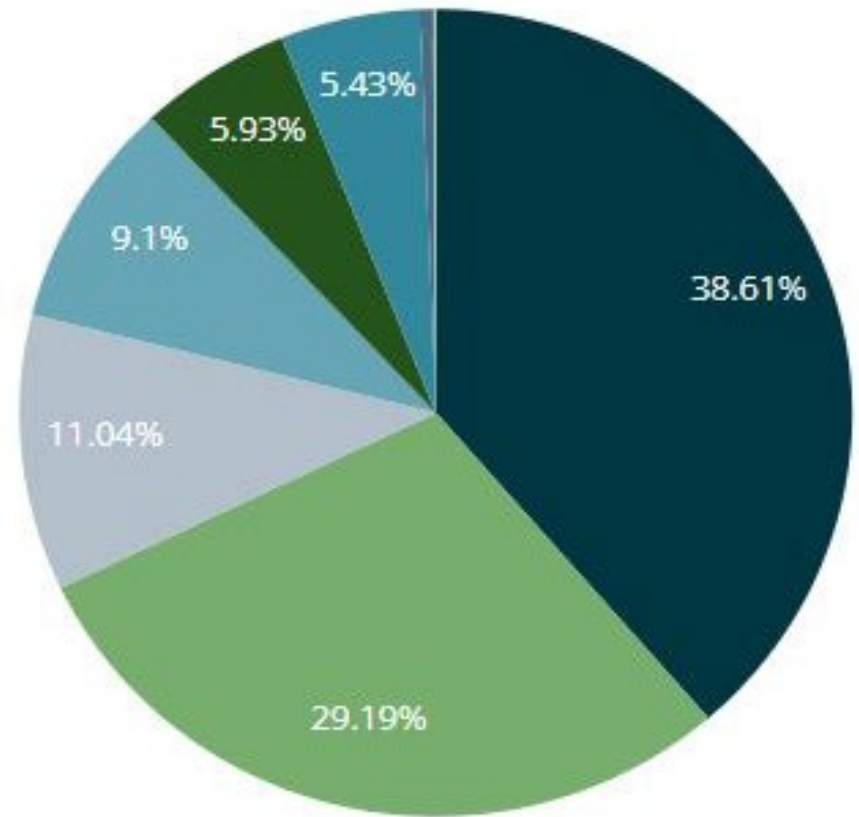
- Ramsey County's food insecurity rate **higher than state average** – 8.6% statewide versus county's 10.9%. Estimated **60,000 residents** are food insecure in 2021.
- **20% of Ramsey County children** estimated to be food insecure in 2020, equals **more than 22,000** food insecure children in Ramsey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

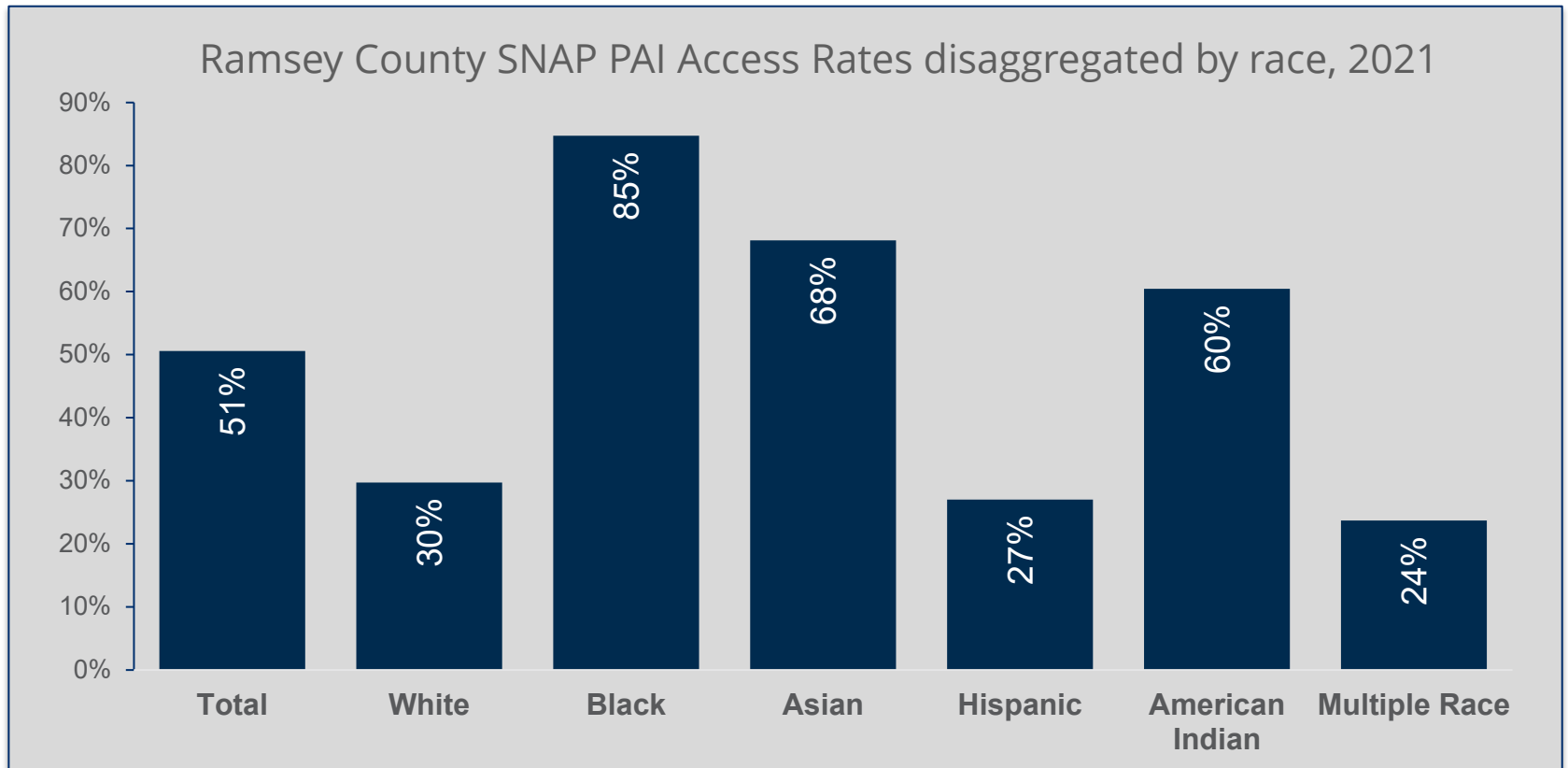


Ramsey County WIC Recipients by Race/Ethnicity March 2022



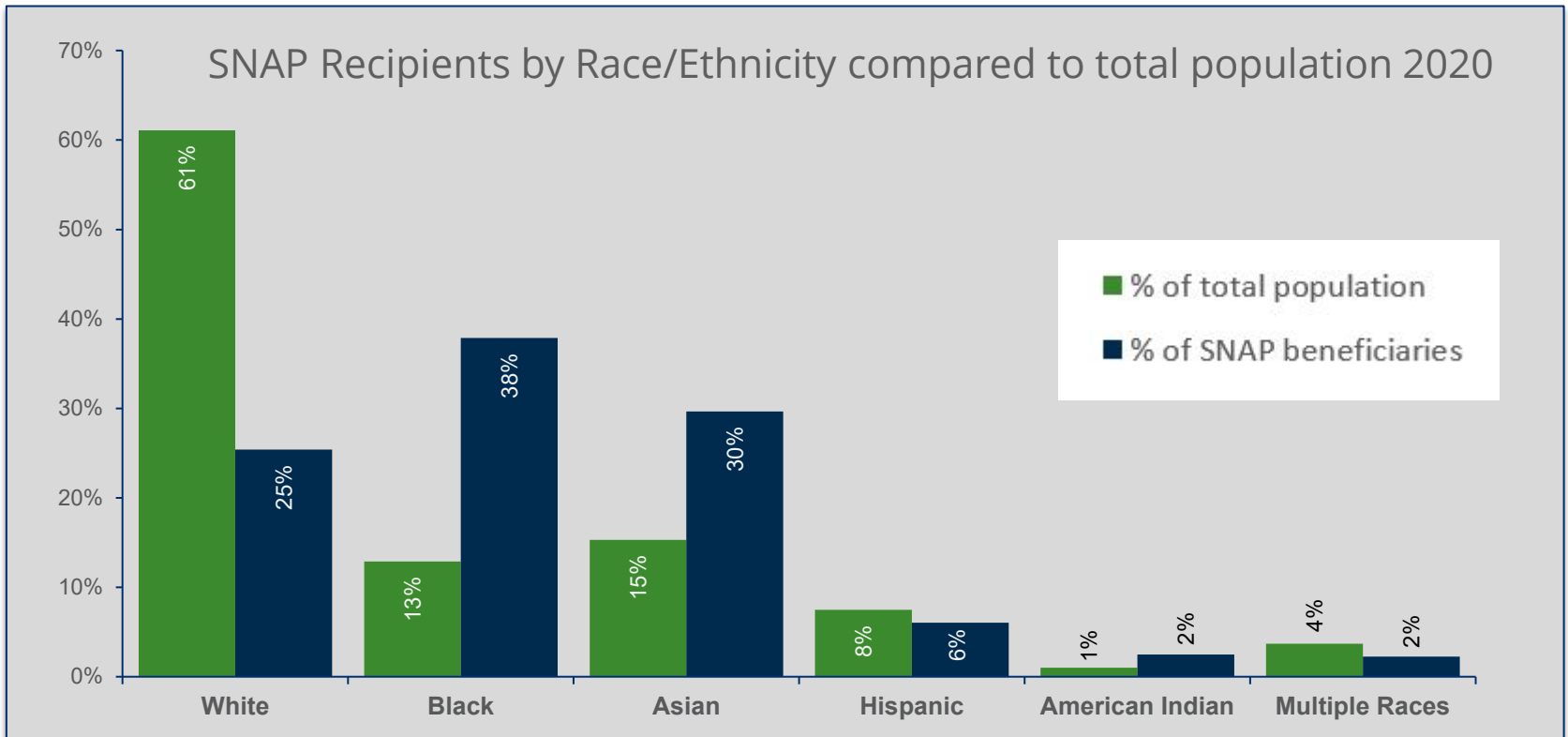
# SNAP Participation Access Index (PAI)

- **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

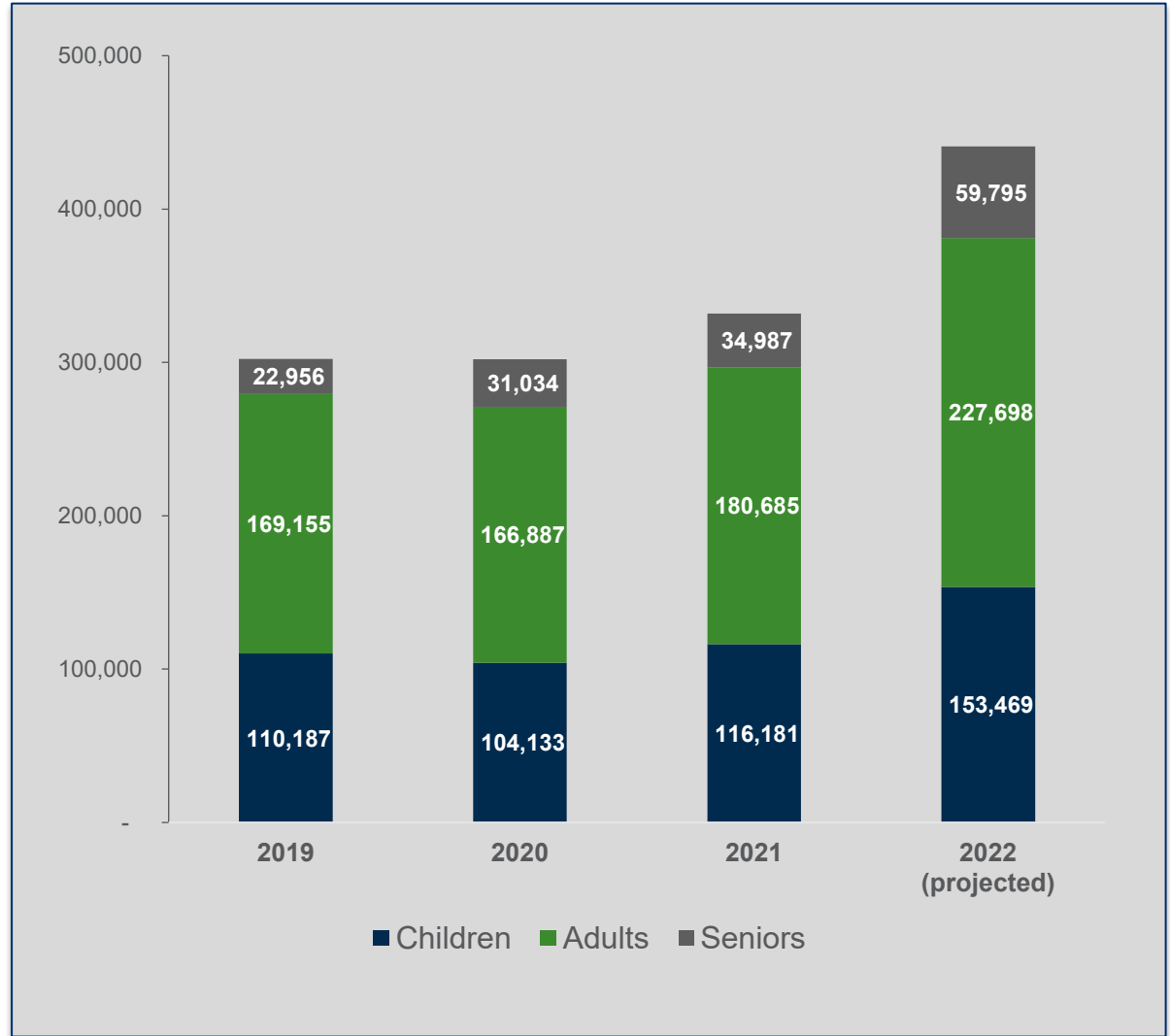
- Adults **55 and older** are **20% of SNAP recipients** (16,500 residents in 2021).
- **Black and Asian** residents have higher participation rates in SNAP than White, American Indian, or Multiple Race residents.
- These two groups equal more than **56,000 residents** who need food assistance.



# 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.

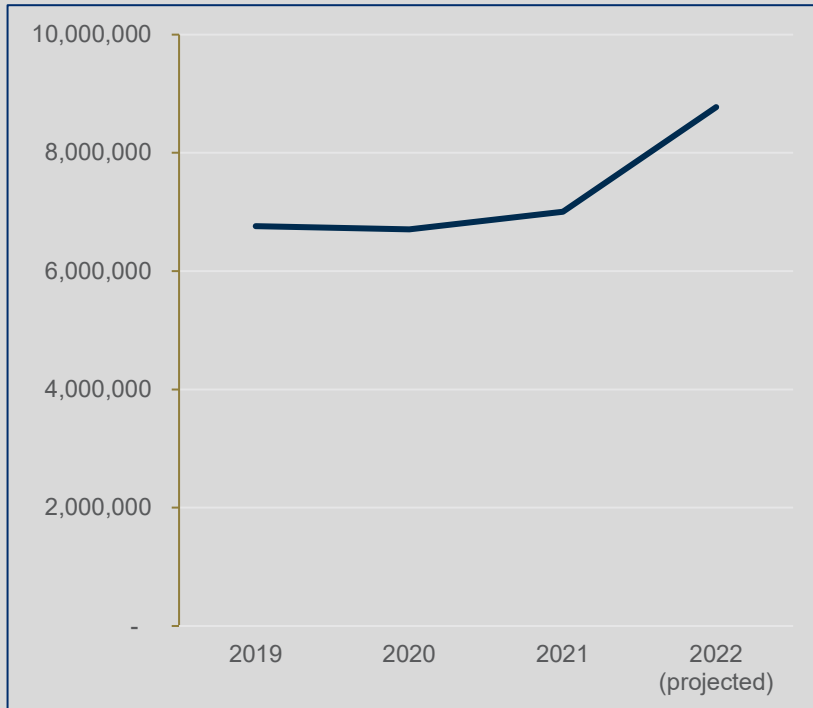




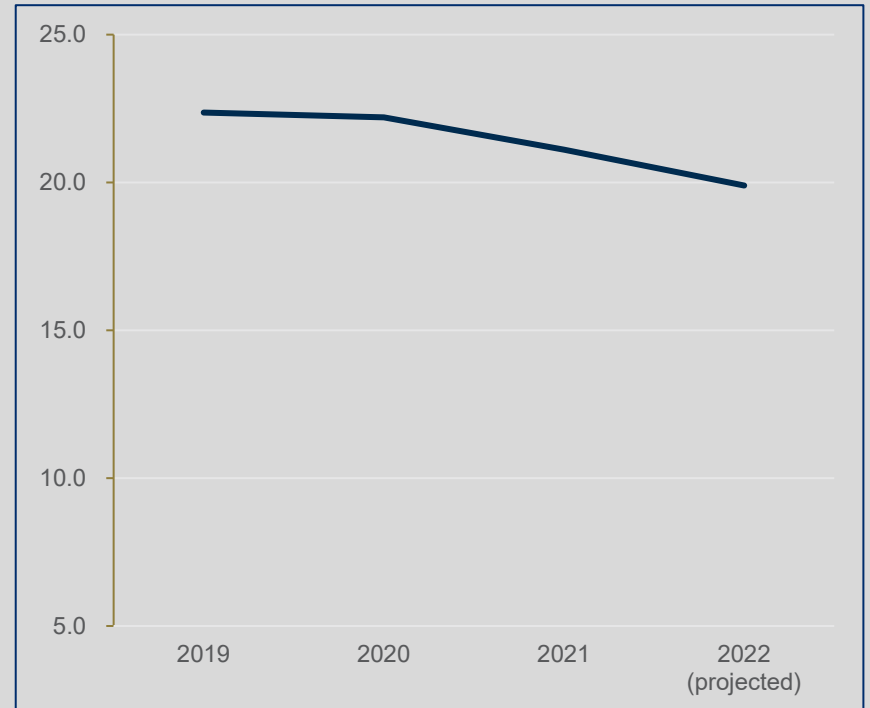
# TEFAP Food Shelf Distribution Trends

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



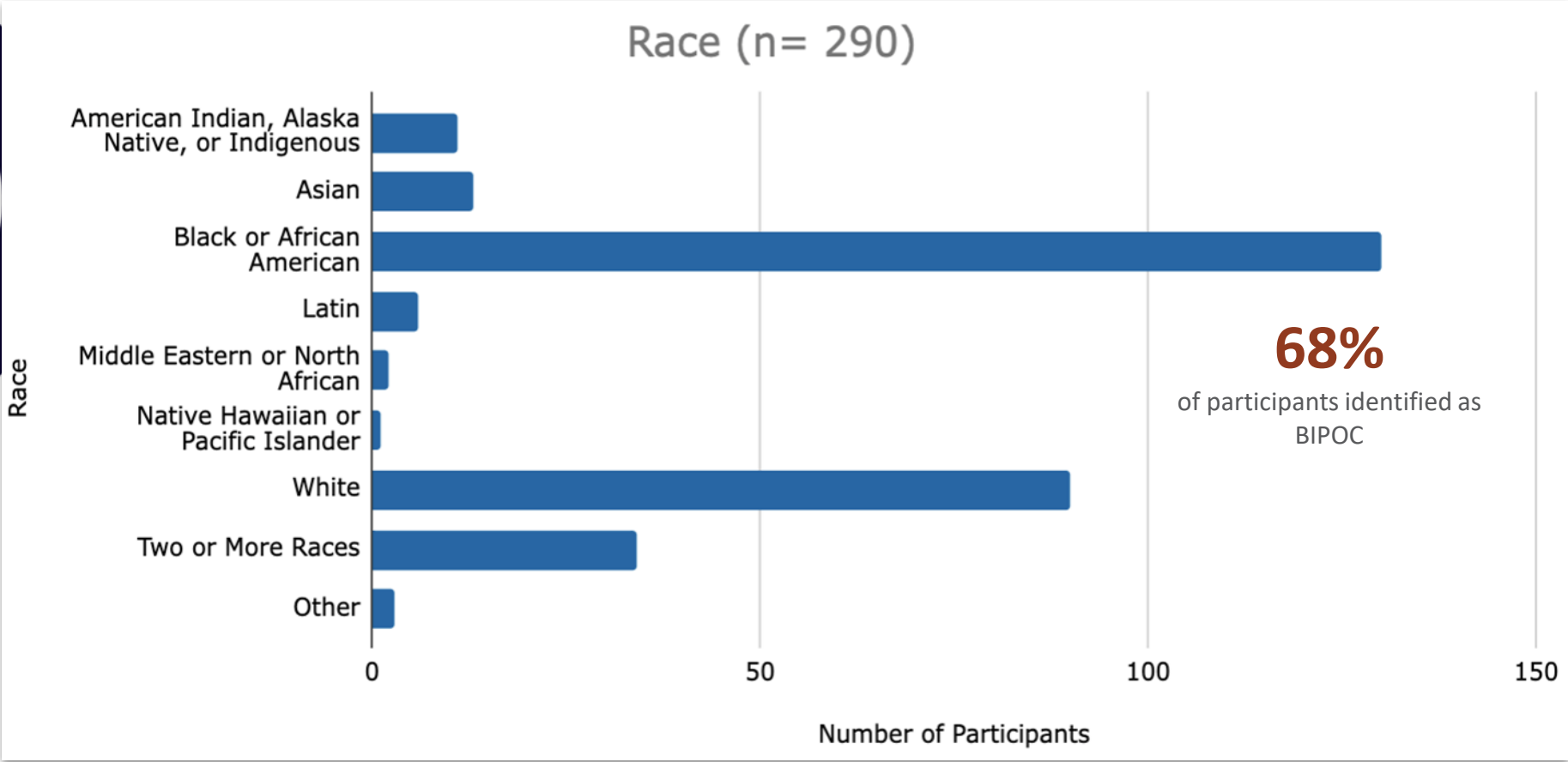
**\$4,980**

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

# Summarized Community Insights by Theme

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

# Summarized Community Insights by Theme

Theme	Insights	Description
<b>Filling gaps in food availability</b>	<b>Keystones in the community: Formal programs and services step in where public assistance fails</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food shelves are essential resources for those who need to fill gaps in their food availability</li><li>• They are so reliable for their monthly food planning that they didn't even consider themselves to be food insecure.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>
	<b>A community potluck: Leveraging social connections to bridge the gaps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community members utilize informal resources such as family, friends, and places of worship to access supplemental or culturally specific foods.</li><li>• Participants have used their networks to circumvent some of the issues they encounter with formal resources like visit limits and lack of transportation.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>

# 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

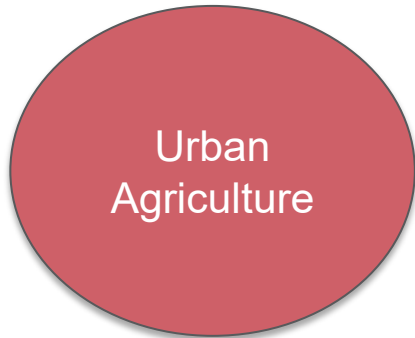


Increasing  
Access to  
Public  
Benefits

- 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

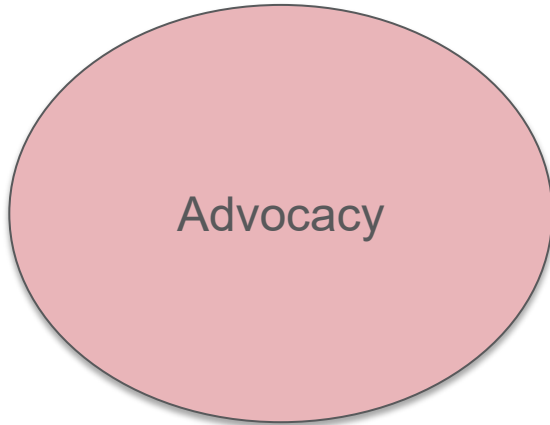
## Foundational Actions



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