



THE SYSTEM TO ACHIEVE  
FOOD EQUITY (SAFE)

## YEAR TWO REPORT

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# 2023-2024

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**SAFE**  
System to Achieve Food Equity



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## Executive Summary

Since 2020, the SAFE Network has been committed to improving food security in Cincinnati to ensure that all children have the food that they need to grow, develop, learn, and thrive. SAFE now includes more than 300 individuals and 100 organizations.

In our first year, organizations within the SAFE Network distributed an equivalent of 89,000 meals into our three target neighborhoods of Avondale, East Price Hill, and Lower Price Hill. In our second year, this number more than doubled, with 192,000 equivalent meals distributed.

The network accomplished this work by focusing on: Co-production with community, Ensuring the network was community-led, Sharing data and data governance, Learning to learn together, Reallocating power, and Pursuing sustainability in an equitable way.

While the network has been incredibly busy and productive over the last year, with our goal of closing the meal gap by December 31, 2028, there is still much to do! SAFE is prepared to keep pushing forward, and we hope you will join us on this mighty endeavor.

# A Letter from the SAFE Network

Nutrition inequity in Cincinnati, as in many US cities, remains a complex problem with no simple solution. For this reason, achieving nutrition equity will require intervention at multiple levels, from community to policy levels. Real and sustained success will require transformation of our current systems and policies.

Committed to this transformation, our SAFE Network has grown – in size, strength, and impact. Together, we have continued to work towards a future in which every child in Cincinnati has the nutrition they need to grow, learn, and thrive. Now as we look forward, we remain deeply committed to creating community-led systems change for nutrition equity.

As Principal Steward of SAFE, I am continuously inspired by the collaboration, creativity, and courage demonstrated by the diverse array of people and organizations who come together in SAFE. Now, as we expand from our initial focus on improving access to emergency or free food resources to creating structural and systems change across the food system in service to nutrition justice, I look forward to all that we will accomplish together.

*Onward together we go,*



*Carley Riley*  
*The System to Achieve Food Equity Network*



# The State of Food Equity

Food insecurity, a wicked problem of limited or uncertain access to adequate, nutritious food, impacts 18% of households in the United States<sup>9</sup> (Figures 1 and 2). In Hamilton County, more than one in five children experience food insecurity, with higher rates for children and families living in historically and structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Figure 1: Percentage of U.S. households reporting indicators of adult food insecurity, by food security status, 2022<sup>9</sup>

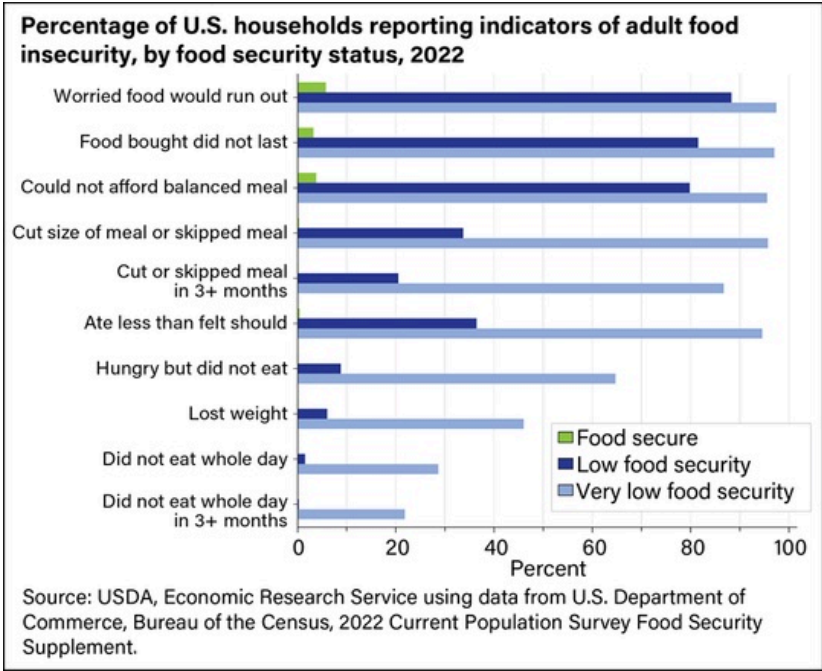
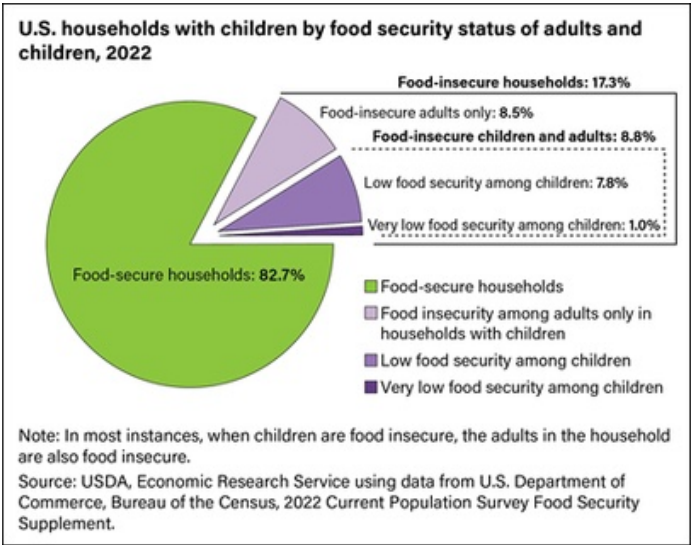


Figure 2: U.S. households with children by food security status of adults and children, 2022<sup>15,16</sup>



There are many barriers preventing food-insecure families from receiving aid. 10% of those eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and 61% of those eligible for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in Ohio were not enrolled in the benefits<sup>21, 22, 23</sup>.

Factors that contribute to the current state of food insecurity include:

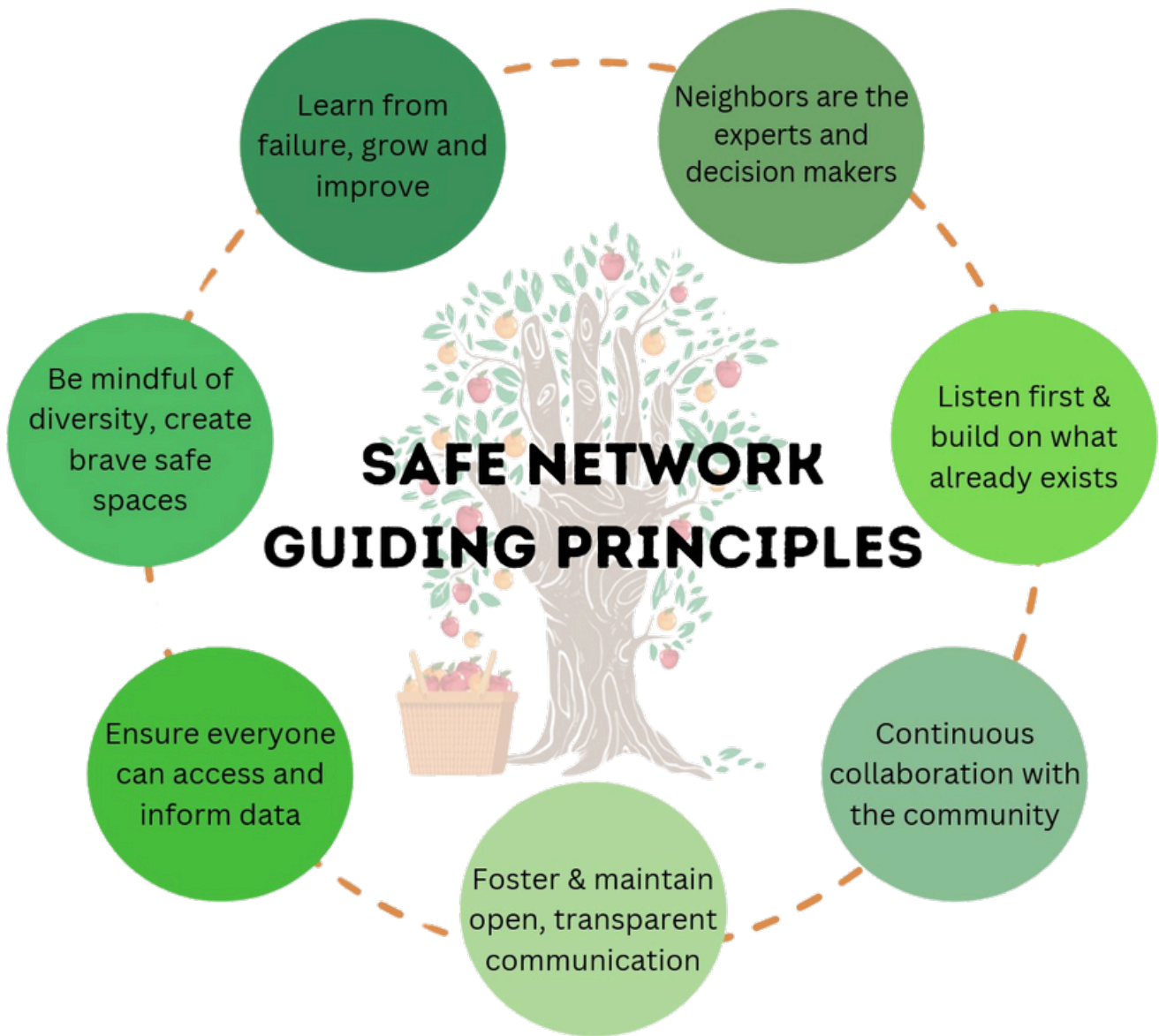
<p><b>SNAP benefits decreased due to 2023 Omnibus spending bill cuts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in number of participants stating that their benefits lasted the full month from 30% to 5%<sup>14</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expiration of the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit in 2022</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child poverty rate increased at record-high rates from a historic low of 5.2% in 2021 to 12.4% in 2022, largely attributed to the expansion and termination of this tax credit<sup>11</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inflation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Inflation rate in the U.S. in 2022 was 6.5%, which was considerably higher than the national average prior to the pandemic (2013-2019), which fluctuated between 0.0% at its lowest in 2015 and 2.9% at its highest in 2018<sup>24</sup>.</li> <li>• Grocery costs increased for 63.2% survey participants in 2022, higher than other categories like utilities, rent, childcare, and health insurance<sup>13</sup>.</li> <li>• The inflation rate at the close of 2023 was 3.4%; however while prices may be decreasing in some consumer areas, grocery prices have continued to increase<sup>3</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food deserts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of Cincinnati's population lives in a food desert where residents have little or no access to healthy, fresh foods<sup>7</sup>.</li> <li>• Compared to the national average of 24-34 grocery stores within 1 mile of all residents, Cincinnati averages 14 or less<sup>7</sup>.</li> <li>• Groceries stores in food deserts do not often accept WIC or EBT<sup>21, 22, 23</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expiration of nationwide school child nutrition waivers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program for free and reduced lunches now requires an application process, of which many who previously benefitted may no longer qualify<sup>2</sup>.</li> </ul>

The problem is deep and wide, and its impact is broad, with harmful effects on children's developmental, behavioral, academic, and emotional outcomes.

# Framing the SAFE Network

At the onset of COVID-19 which exacerbated inequities, a variety of Cincinnati agencies and stakeholders were prompted to coordinate a response informed by actionable data to address food insecurity.

Based on expressed needs and hopes of families and communities, the System to Achieve Food Equity (SAFE) network developed a family-centered, community-based, cross-sector learning network that seeks to tackle childhood food insecurity in three neighborhoods in Cincinnati, Ohio (Avondale, East Price Hill, and Lower Price Hill).



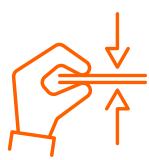
As a sub-network of the All Children Thrive Learning Network at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital, SAFE is a network of over 300 individuals and 100 organizations committed to improving food security in Cincinnati to ensure that all children have the food that they need to grow, develop, learn, and thrive. The SAFE Network includes regional and neighborhood food organizations, healthcare, education, and government institutions, data scientists and families in the Cincinnati area.

SAFE is currently focused in three neighborhoods: Avondale, East Price Hill and Lower Price Hill.

## Our True North



All 70,000 children in Cincinnati have the food they need to grow, develop, learn and thrive.



SMART Aim 1: Close the meal gap for children and families from 303k to 0 by December 31, 2028.



SMART Aim 2: Improve self-reported food security for children and families by 5% per year starting in 2024 with a 20% improvement by December 31, 2028.

To accomplish these goals, the network focused on the following:



**“With the price of food and the financial insecurity that’s in our community, and around the world, this project has brought a light into a lot of people’s lives.”**

**- Jennifer Foster,  
Avondale Resident**



# Co-Production with Community

Co-production is an approach where families, partners, and community members work together to analyze outcomes and design unique solutions by sharing influence, skills, and experiences. It helps us to learn how to ask better questions, solve complex problems, and build and strengthen relationships<sup>18</sup>. It guides us in understanding family experiences in underlying barriers and holds us accountable in sharing power in decision-making and strategizing.



**“All of our volunteers come from the community that we serve so this has created a sense of community both with the volunteers that might not have met each other, but also the people who come to pick up food.”**

**- Aaron Moore, Senior Manager of Partnerships & Programs, Last Mile Food Rescue**

The SAFE Network creates spaces for co-production as exemplified by the Neighborhood Leadership team. Neighborhood leadership meetings began in 2022 to serve as a safe space for community members to share their lived experiences. These forums help provide valuable insight for the network to learn, grow, and develop strategies around systemic barriers to food access that families face across Cincinnati. With a network desire to enhance long-term communication strategies with our neighborhood leaders, these meetings continued throughout 2023 on a monthly basis in the Avondale and East Price Hill neighborhoods. The feedback and expertise of these neighborhood leadership groups ensure that the network continues to be led and owned by the community.





# A Community-Led Network



Our work in SAFE is a shared effort that involves engaging diverse members and groups with the purpose of planning, funding, designing, building, evaluating, and maintaining effective and sustainable solutions to inequitable food access in our communities. Leadership is distributed across 3 workstreams to ensure there are checks and balances in operations and decision-making. Neighborhood leadership groups uplift family voice and share needs and recommendations for food strategies and approve solutions.

Community organizations plan and share initiatives with neighborhood leaders and incorporate community voice and recommendations. The SAFE Stewardship team then manages resource allocations and support based on what is proposed by community organizations in collaboration with the neighborhood leadership teams.



SAFE network members across all 3 workstreams joined for our annual summit in September 2023 to lead theory and strategy building for the network in the upcoming year. Acknowledging and affirming individual and collective leadership, the community gathered to reflect on collective learnings and celebrations in the past year and uplift ideas, thoughts, and voices in various facilitated conversations and sessions to build longer-term strategies for the upcoming year and beyond (see 2024 Priorities section below for the outcome of these discussions.)



# Distributing Leadership & Power

As a community-based, cross-sector, family-centered learning network, we have worked towards distributing leadership to reduce power differentials and promote leaders across the network in taking ownership and responsibility to reach our shared goal. As mentioned above, SAFE remains organized into three interconnected nodes, each mutually reinforcing the others. In this structure, leadership is distributed so that all stakeholders focus on collaboration and resource sharing.

From focused workstreams to checks and balances, SAFE is striving to ensure its rapidly growing network of people and organizations elevates the voices and leadership of people with lived experience and those working at the frontlines; affirms and supports skill-building of people who are not typically seen as leaders; and democratizes collective decision-making, in theory and goal setting; intervention design, selection, and evaluation; and allocation of resources including funding.

Stakeholder surveys are conducted quarterly to assess network growth and engagement, and provide opportunities for members to guide SAFE activities through feedback.

This feedback helps to identify individuals who may want to take on more ownership within the network, or those whose capacity may be changing so everyone can gain the support they need.

With the rapid growth of the network, these surveys have helped the project team to keep a pulse on changes in engagement levels of core members, identify barriers, and have leadership development conversations with interested members.



Systems to Achieve Food Equity | ACT Well-being With Community led by C. Riley | August 2021 (v2)

These surveys have also helped us to understand where further role clarification was needed for our leaders, and we are actively working to better refine these roles and responsibilities. We hope to continue using these learnings to better support and structure roles and expectations throughout the network.



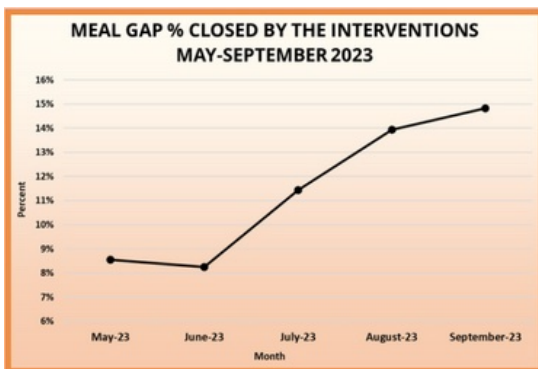
# Learning to Learn Together

To grow in expertise and impact, the SAFE Network continues to use quality improvement (QI) methodologies and strong network collaborations as we learn how to better learn together.

## Learning through Community-Led Interventions

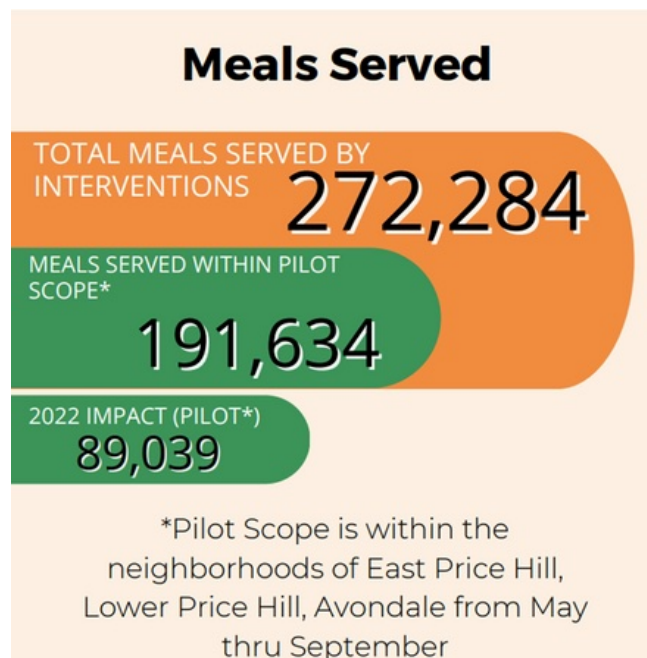
To continue learning from the previous year's efforts to improve food security ([see more in Year 1 report](#)), the interventions supported in 2022 were invited to collaborate, test, and learn together again in 2023 with funding provided by the Kroger Co. Zero Hunger Zero Waste (ZHZW) Foundation. Using the governance structure outlined above, food organizations shared intervention ideas at neighborhood leadership meetings where recommendations and feedback were used to co-create interventions with those who would use the proposed resources and services. Funding was distributed by the stewardship team based on neighborhood need as informed by the meal gap measure (to be discussed later on in this report).

\$218,100 was distributed across 7 interventions for a combined impact as shown below. Please see the full 2023 SAFE Network Community-Led Intervention Impact Summary report in the appendix. In addition, you will also find briefs on the incredible interventions that our network partners facilitated to make this great impact.



**“There are no stores, so this is a life preserver for those that live here.”**

**- Jonathan Harris,  
Avondale Resident**



# Key Learnings from Community-Led Interventions

In addition to the joint impact in closing the meal gap for families and neighborhoods, the 7 interventions shared key learnings from their efforts as follows:

<p><b>Customer Feedback and Communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective tools include flyers, text communications, and word-of-mouth</li> <li>• Make event signage easy to see (visible from large streets for moving cars)</li> <li>• Gathering voice of customer is important but difficult. Removing barriers to collect survey responses is key (QR codes were not always effective)</li> <li>• Changes in phone numbers can happen frequently with intervention participants, making ongoing communication difficult</li> </ul>
<p><b>Language and Cultural Barriers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for bilingual volunteers for effective communication, especially in Spanish</li> <li>• Certain populations eat different foods, so it is important to have culturally appropriate / relevant food options at distribution sites based on participant demographics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Licensure and Inspection Process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting up new food intervention programs may require additional time upfront for licensing, inspections, and other regulatory processes.</li> <li>• Support from city staff and from those with lived experience help navigate the process smoothly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nutrition and Education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrition education nurtures a spirit of communal responsibility and respect</li> <li>• Addressing food equity requires changing the narrative on how people view food and produce - Kids get excited to eat healthy foods if they're taught how!</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partnerships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships with other organizations helps to             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Better identify and coordinate help for families in need</li> <li>◦ Find and recruit volunteers for interventions</li> <li>◦ Share resources and information to help each other's interventions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Joining SAFE Network activities fosters connections and partnerships within the food space</li> <li>• Anticipate staffing/resource issues and communicate often</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program and Distribution Logistics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning around how food is transported to homes is critical (e.g. reusable bags/backpacks for carrying produce, delivery options)</li> <li>• Various packaging and delivery service options exist, but effectiveness depends on the program scale and scope</li> <li>• It is important to think about future expansions and long-term goals when planning ideas to test</li> <li>• Incorporate community preferences and data in planning logistics (e.g. peak times distribution events, preferred locations)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality Improvement &amp; Data</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QI tools help harmonize language and learning across interventions</li> <li>• Data is helpful for advocacy and future funding requests</li> <li>• Data is often hard to collect during intervention events if not planned and resourced ahead of time</li> <li>• Some data is harder to collect than others (e.g. household sizes)</li> <li>• Converting intervention data into a harmonized meal gap measure is often case-by-case</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staffing and Volunteers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing skills of staff &amp; volunteers is an important part of interventions (e.g. customer service, project management, communications strategies)</li> <li>• Roles and expectations for both staff and volunteers is necessary</li> <li>• Involving community members in interventions helps to spread awareness, and improves impact</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability for families and interventions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is difficult to assess whether families are moving out of crisis after receiving services and if there is a point where they no longer need them</li> <li>• Adapting or adding services/programs help create sustainable funding sources</li> <li>• When resources/services are limited, adjusting and communicating appropriate scope is critical</li> <li>• Fundraising events can lead to sustainable funding sources</li> </ul>

## Facilitating Learning Spaces



With all of the individual and collaborative work done by network members, it was important to create spaces and opportunities to teach and share learnings across the network. This effort included teaching QI concepts at monthly meetings, supporting leaders with QI tools and expertise as they test interventions and study their impacts, and facilitating all-teach-all-learn spaces to share successes and failures so we can all improve and learn from one another.

Formal QI training is also offered to SAFE members through Cincinnati Children's ImpactU and Community QI courses so that the power of QI not only lies in what we do to improve food security, but also in how we work as a learning network in equitable ways.

## Sharing our Learnings Beyond the Network

In addition to creating and disseminating the [SAFE Network Year End Report in 2023](#), the Network identified several other opportunities to share learnings including: Presenting at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Improvement Expo<sup>5</sup>, hosting another summit in September of 2023<sup>19</sup>, presenting in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Forum in 2023<sup>10</sup>, and publishing a manuscript regarding the community-led interventions addressing food inequities in the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>8</sup>.

While sharing culmination of network learnings in the forums above was an honor for the teams involved, it is important to remember that teams collaborated to share learnings and data throughout the entire year to make sure we were we were able to make such an incredible impact.

**"I love the trainings, I love the camaraderie, I love the input that everybody brings together."**

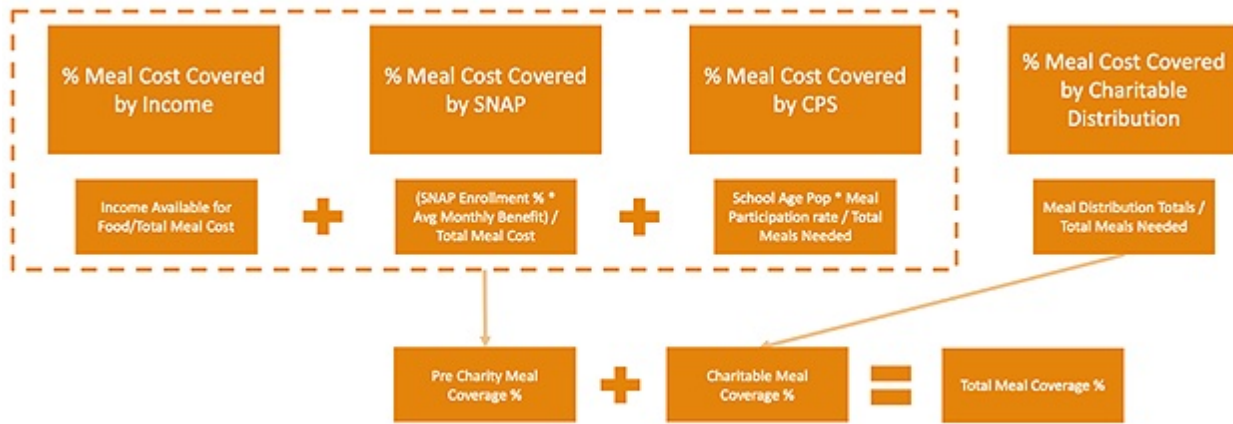
**-Dina Mullins, Avondale Resident**





# Sharing Data and Governance

To ensure progress toward our goals, SAFE collected, analyzed, and shared data regularly, allowing for innovation, capability building, and co-production. With support from many network members, the [SAFE Network Meal Gap Dashboard](#) was launched in the spring of 2023 to visualize progress toward closing the meal gap. The meal gap measurement is calculated at neighborhood scale using income, SNAP, school meal, and available charitable distribution data to determine the total meal coverage percentage.



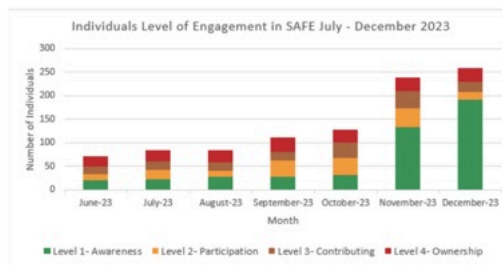
CHARLES HOFFMAN, BA.SI

To compile the monthly charitable meal coverage data for this dashboard, SAFE network members tested ways of tracking food distribution data within their own organizations and collaborated on conversion formulas to estimate equivalent meals served from measures such as pounds of produce distributed and sales transactions at local grocery stores.

In the spirit of co-production and continuous improvement, several amendments have been made since launch based on community feedback: addition of definitions and calculations, filters, a food resource map, among other changes.

While food insecurity and closing the meal gap remain our overall outcome measure to track with data, other measures to track network maturity and effectiveness include stakeholder engagement efforts as shown to the right.

## SAFE ENGAGEMENT



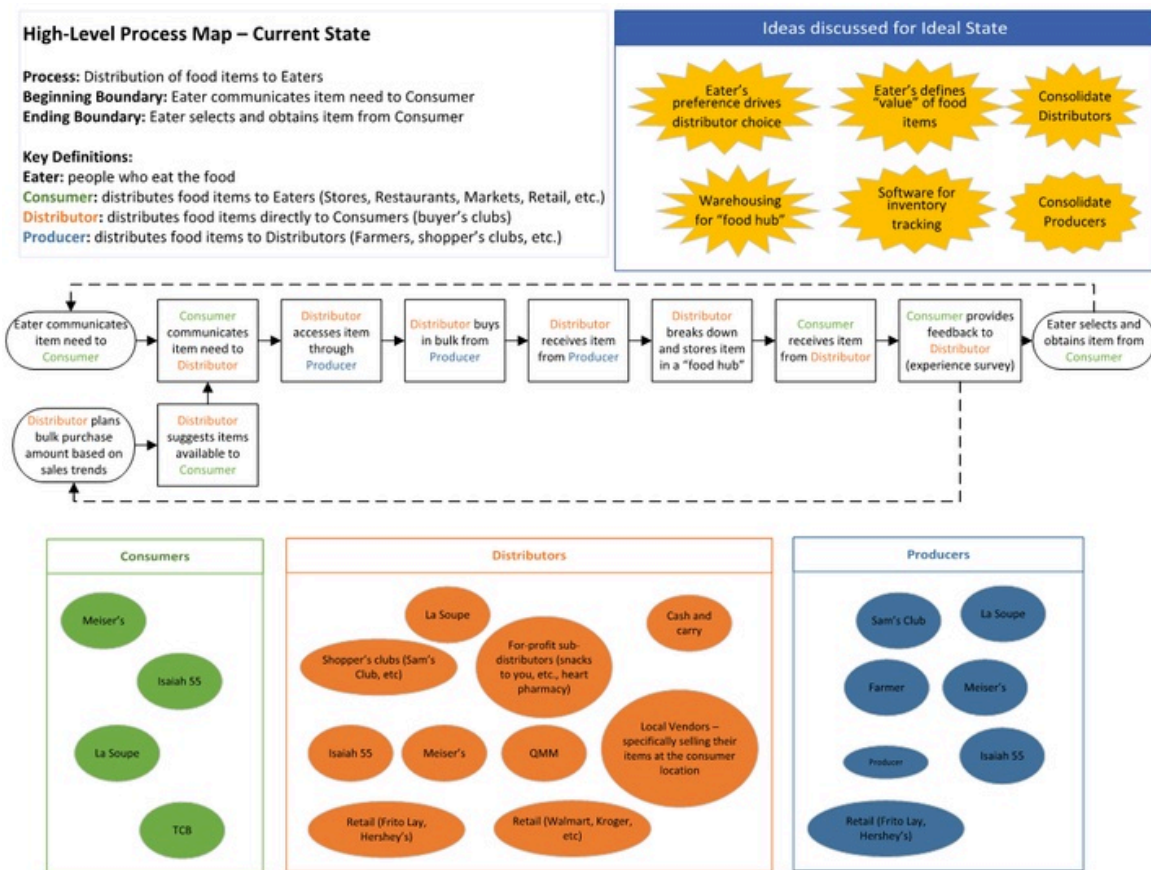


# Equitable Sustainability

SAFE strives to ensure that solutions to food insecurity are both equitable and sustainable. There is enough food in Cincinnati to feed everybody, but the systems in place provide inequitable access and distribution. As a network, we stress the need to move from a scarcity & competition mentality to more equitable distribution of resources both within the network and beyond. For example, SAFE builds strategic partnerships to fund and support interventions primarily within structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods, and incorporates food rescue & recovery as an ethical, effective model.

## Sustainable Food Distribution Network

Freestore Foodbank and other SAFE network organizations collaborated in exploring sustainable ways to distribute food across the city using the 2022 Feeding America Food Security Impact Fund. The group was awarded a \$250,000 Planning Grant and a subsequent \$500,000 Implementation grant to explore the Cincinnati food distribution network and understand the needs and opportunities of food producers, distributors, and consumers to access food more equitably and affordably. Process, systems, and network mapping tools were used to understand and visualize information and support the design of structural interventions to improve neighborhood-level food sovereignty.



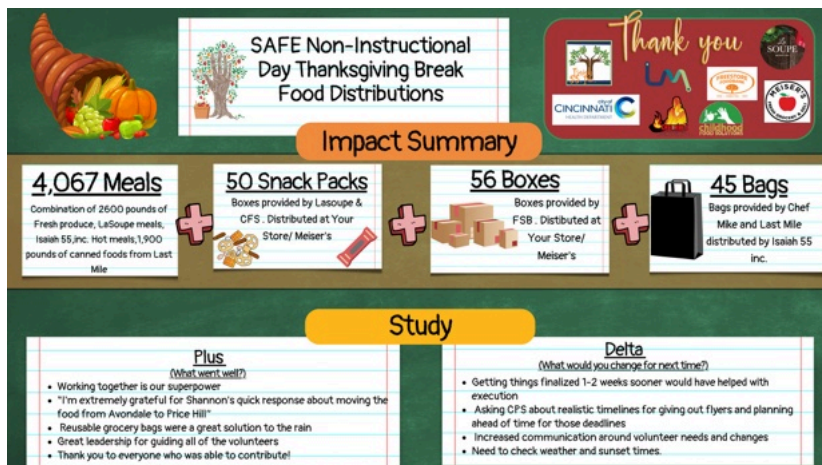
Version 1 updated 4/6/2023

# Sustainability Through Food Policy

The Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council (GCRFPC) through Green Umbrella has spearheaded network efforts in elevating strategic policy priorities and opportunities for advocacy in 2023. Members from GCRFPC educated the network on the Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Programs and shared opportunities for individuals to engage in policy work through committees on farm & land use, access & education, infrastructure, and institutions. SAFE network members lead and support in these committees and efforts, and we hope to continue learning ways to synergize efforts for broader impact.

## Sustainable Solutions for Non-Instructional School Days

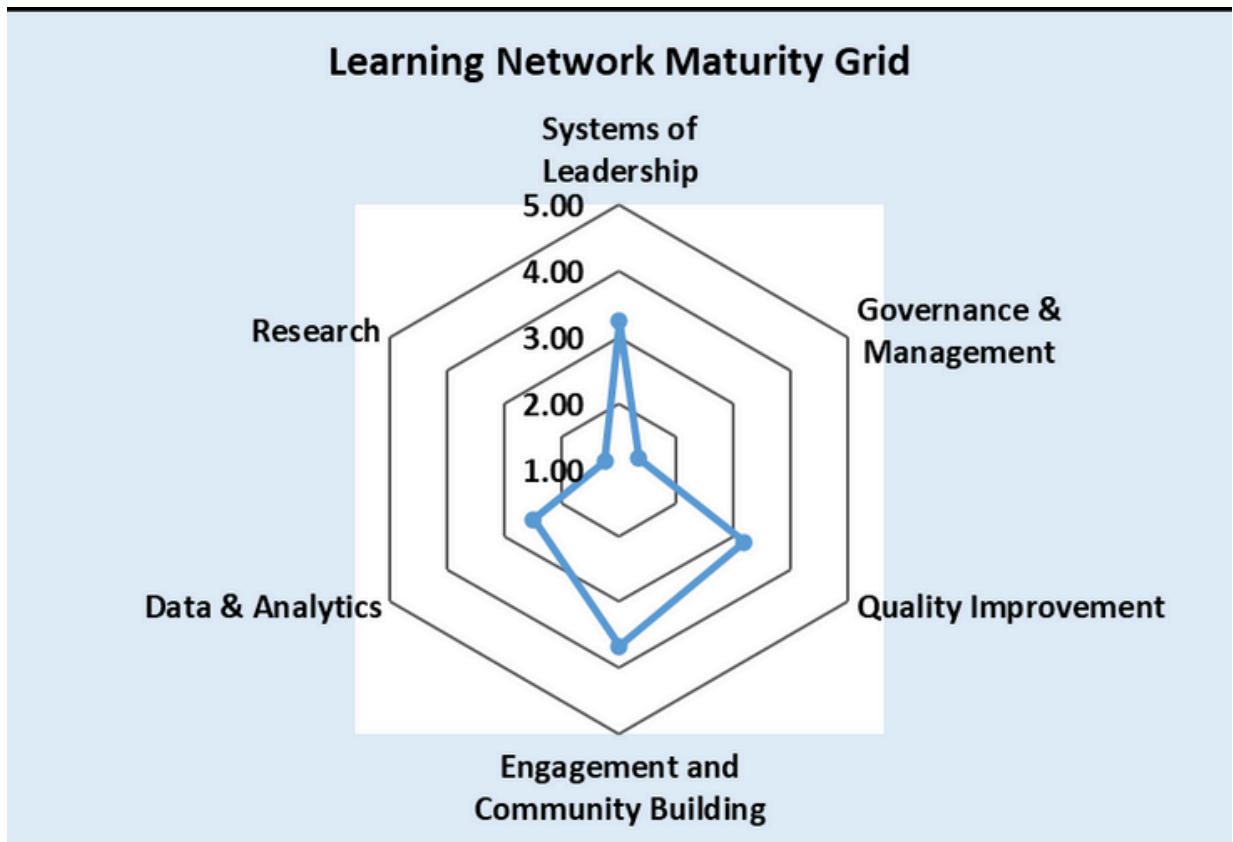
An additional policy focus for the network over the last year has been non-instructional school days (NISD) for children. Work around this policy was initiated in 2023 as a way of building and testing theory around the need for free meals on weekends and holidays when school is not in session. The team tested various methods of sharing information and distributing food and resources during Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks (along with the community-led intervention initiatives taking place primarily in the summer break months). The team plans on compiling outcomes and learnings from the 2023-2024 school year to guide strategy and action in the upcoming year. Impact visuals from the Thanksgiving and Spring Break initiatives are below.





## A Sustainable SAFE Network

While sustainability and systems level transformation are priorities amongst network organizations, the All Children Thrive team has also been working to ensure sustainability in the SAFE learning network itself. The network utilizes the learning network maturity model to build up the network infrastructure for ongoing effectiveness and sustainability. Community learning systems are unique from the typical learning networks seen within the healthcare setting, so while the model is used as a guide, modifications are being made to the language, content, and tools, one being the maturity matrix.



The maturity matrix is used to identify strengths and opportunities for growth within a variety of domains. The matrix helps leadership teams determine what steps may be needed to support continued growth and maturity of the network in general. As the maturity matrix for the Community-Learning system is refined, we look forward to sharing this more widely for assessment across the various network partners.

# Looking Behind. Looking Ahead.

## 2023 Summary

The network has been incredibly busy and productive over the last year. We made progress on every goal and recommendation that were shared in our first annual report and are excited for what is on the horizon.



## 2024 Priorities and Future State

Reflecting upon and building on the efforts from 2023, the SAFE Network met at the SAFE Summit in September to recommend strategic priorities for 2024. In order to close the meal gap by 2028, it was evident that the network needed to build and reinforce infrastructure for sharing information, ideas, learnings, and resources across the network and beyond. To do this, the following priorities for 2024 were developed, presented, and affirmed by Neighborhood Leadership groups and SAFE stakeholders in December 2023.



Continue to build data infrastructure and functionality for standardized and easy collection, analysis, and use



Build theory on how food work can incorporate systems change toward all children thriving



Create spaces for teaching and learning to build up leaders in the network



Connect food to families, people to people, resources to need areas in equitable ways



Equity focus on Hispanic and Spanish speaking population across the workstreams



While the SAFE network continues to grow and mature, there is still more work to be done and we cannot do this alone. Cincinnati has enough food resources to feed every child and family, but it requires systems transformation to ensure all have equitable access. We each have a part to play, and we hope you will join us on this journey as we strive to create a System that Achieves Food Equity together.

**“This project has brought a light to a lot of people’s lives. Changed behavior, changed habits, and a change in life expectancy itself.”**

**-Jennifer Foster, Avondale Resident**

We thank you for the ongoing support and contributions to the SAFE network.

## Acknowledgements

84.51°  
All In Cincinnati  
American Heart Association  
Black Power Initiative  
Chef Mike's Burning with Style Culinary Services LLC  
Child Hunger Alliance  
Childhood Food Solutions  
Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
Cincinnati Public Library  
Cincinnati Public Schools  
City of Cincinnati Health Department  
Community Action Agency  
Focus Cincinnati  
Freestore Foodbank  
Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition  
Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council  
Green Umbrella  
Hamilton County Job & Family Services  
Heartfelt Tidbits  
HyperFarm  
Isaiah 55 Inc.  
Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati  
Kroger  
La Soupe

Last Mile Food Rescue  
Lehigh University  
Lord's Gym Ministries  
Love in Action Ohio  
Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli  
Mercy Health  
MyWhy  
Miami Valley Meals  
The Community Builders  
The Health Collaborative  
The YMCA  
Transformations CDC  
UMC Food Ministry  
University of Cincinnati  
University of Louisville  
Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation  
Whole Again  
Your Store of the Queen City  
Queen Mother's Market  
Sam Hubbard Foundation  
Santa Maria Community Services  
Society of St. Andrew  
Y Marketplace at Gamble-Nippert YMCA  
Along with many others!

Join us! Scan the QR code to contact us for more information.



This project was financially assisted by The Kroger Co. Zero Hunger | Zero Waste Foundation



Report created by the All Children Thrive Learning Network Team



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# Appendix

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# Appendix A: References

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# Appendix B: SAFE Network Community-Led Intervention Impact Summary 2023

## SAFE NETWORK COMMUNITY-LED INTERVENTION IMPACT SUMMARY 2023

### Meals Served

TOTAL MEALS SERVED BY INTERVENTIONS **272,284**

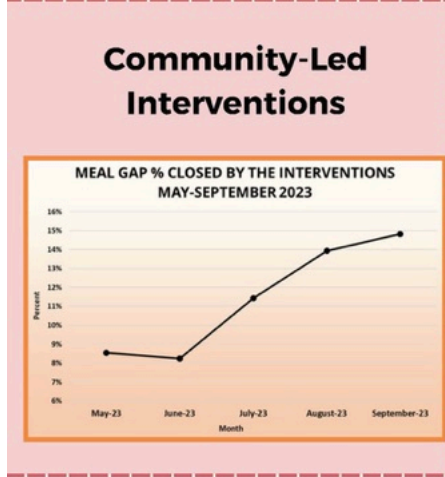
MEALS SERVED WITHIN PILOT SCOPE\* **191,634**

2022 IMPACT (PILOT\*) **89,039**

\*Pilot Scope is within the neighborhoods of East Price Hill, Lower Price Hill, Avondale from May thru September

### 2023 Key Drivers to Success

- 
**PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY & OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**
  - MyWhy leverages school and community organizations to maximize volunteers and neighborhood food access
  - Last Mile Markets operate through volunteers and market champions who live near the market site
  - Childhood Food Solutions collaborates with library and other public locations to distribute shelf-stable food to those who need it most
- 
**COMMUNICATION & CO-PRODUCTION WITH COMMUNITY**
  - All interventions co-designed and approved at neighborhood meetings
  - Last Mile pilots text communication to shoppers on market days
  - Meiser's Well-Being Club designs curriculum with shoppers based on what skills they want to learn
  - Lords gym distributes more culturally appropriate meals to increase meal satisfaction to 94%
- 
**FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY**
  - Chef Mike opens food truck business as sustainable business model to fund free cooking classes
  - Isaiah 55, Inc. opens Garden of Eat'n store for cooking & gardening classes, fundraiser events, and free food distribution site
- 
**DATA & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT UTILIZATION**
  - Childhood Food Solutions tests different delivery methods for more efficient food box deliveries
  - Your Store teaches QI tools to Meiser's staff to better track interventions for equitable solutions
  - Lords gym harmonizes meal distribution data to add to collective SAFE Network meal gap measure



### Participating Organizations



SAFE aims to ensure that all 70,000 children in Cincinnati have the food that they need to grow, develop, learn, and thrive



# Appendix C: Community-Led Intervention Storyboards

## Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli by Your Store of the Queen City

Submitted By: Rebecca M. Hennessey, Founding Executive Director and Meiser's Initiative Director  
 Storyboard Design by Rachel Uhrig, All Children Thrive Systems to Achieve Food Equity (SAFE) of Cincinnati Children's Hospital & Medical Center  
 Contact: 513-236-4146 (cell) | [reba@yourstoreqc.org](mailto:reba@yourstoreqc.org) | [www.yourstoreqc.org](http://www.yourstoreqc.org)  
 Send donations to Your Store of the Queen City 734 State Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45204



### BACKGROUND

When Lower Price Hill's long-time fresh grocery shuttered, neighbors experienced the multi-fold impact of food apartheid.

- Lost Time + Money:** Traveling outside the neighborhood to a grocery cost low-income families both time and money. Shoppers adapted with options that were fast or had a long shelf life. There was also more need for walkable emergency food.
- Community Health:** Many families reported new onset and negative nutrition-related impacts on developmental, behavioral, psychological, and physiological health conditions at all ages.

### THEORY

### LEARNING CYCLES

**Community Collaboration:** Council, residents, organizations, businesses, and City of Cincinnati piloted and adopted neighborhood-designed, developed, and operated system-change food sovereignty interventions:

- Emergency Groceries:** Supporting existing meal-gap initiatives in store, at neighborhood pantries and during school noninstructional time – championed this need citywide in SAFE meetings as well.
- Farmers Market:** Returning in March 2023 this lively neighborhood event with weekly free food touchpoint, and elevating and connecting neighbor foodmakers who are able to develop their local food production through entrepreneurship and selling in the market. Coaching in food safety and local regulations, networking as peers for opportunities to develop businesses locally and citywide.
- Brick and Mortar:** Opening Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli 6 days per week, with a culturally appropriate blend of subsidized and free groceries and meals and nutrition incentives (Produce Perks), including learning programs, a free food and fruits + veggies section, daily meals, and partnerships distributing food for children.

### RESULTS

- Emergency:** A robust neighbor-informed pantry, soup kitchen, and network of organizations perpetuates, enhancing responsiveness to emerging food needs (e.g., SNAP cuts, school non-instructional days, seasonal and month-end gaps).
- Farmers Market:** Lively outdoor events transform the block weekly. They connect community with socializing, art, free produce and local food sales. They grow trust and outreach for shopper-based quality improvement.
- Brick and Mortar:** Meiser's is now in its second year of operations, developing an all-community Dream Team of leaders in operations.

### MOST PROUD & WHY

Each step in this project has seen significant accomplishments. See below:

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meiser's was closing after 40+ years.</li> <li>Community Meiser's new neighborhood action team formed for grocery &amp; housing.</li> <li>Vision and building location secured through Price Hill Hill, LPH Council &amp; Business Alliance and City of Cincinnati.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Price Hill Hill begins construction and restoration of the Meiser's neighborhood building.</li> <li>Neighbor grocery surveys.</li> <li>Subsidize operation not available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nonprofit Your Store of the Queen City created through neighbors' vision.</li> <li>Women's Business Center supports planning.</li> <li>New store meetings &amp; working groups start.</li> <li>Vote to keep family name.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Price Hill Hill's existing/under lease work continues through 2022 with delays due to pandemic.</li> <li>Later Your Store begins tenant fit-out.</li> <li>Farmers Market begins outside including free resource groceries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GRAND OPENING - Construction is completed.</li> <li>Equipment installation &amp; health permitting. Furniture, counters, &amp; local hiring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of operations.</li> <li>Team food safety and leadership trainings.</li> <li>Meiser's Grocers.</li> <li>Growways free foods program.</li> <li>Establishing authentic, careflow &amp; supply chain.</li> <li>Grow opening &amp; deli.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data based community health partnerships.</li> <li>Community manager development.</li> <li>Family Chef Clubs making community meals.</li> <li>Outdoor patio, entrepreneur &amp; local produce market.</li> <li>Documenting learnings &amp; share.</li> </ul>

### GREATEST CHALLENGES

- Describe the greatest challenge of this project.**
- Funding and resources:** ED often forgoes her salary to cover operational costs. Cold storage and electrical limits needing upgrade within building.
- Locating and investing time and coaching in appropriate types of professional development for neighborhood leaders who don't have corporate or institutional backgrounds.** Taking the concept of sovereignty from a status of consulting/meetings to a higher level: QI, design, direction and operations to ensure end-user centered refinement that also benefits employee career futures.
- Integrating QI tools into programming processes managed by community teammates.** Adjusting parameters for free food programming to efficiently manage resources in a manner that meets growing needs of target populations. (example: Kids snacks, Meals for unhoused neighbors.)
- Differentiating and updating communications to support knowledge and understanding of programs by neighbors with different reading skill levels, and Spanish language speakers.**
- Socially supported goal setting and education opportunities to connect neighbors with nutrition and cooking learning after significant gap in food access from 2017-2021 limited exposure to opportunities to practice fresh food preparation.**







# Chef Mike's Burning With Style Culinary Services, L.L.C.

Chef Michael Vinegar



### BACKGROUND

Food deprivation in poverty-stricken neighborhoods leads to high numbers of preventable diseases. From working first-hand in such communities, I noticed a gap in knowledge around the relationship we all share with food. These areas have a high presence of convenience foods which elevates the need for practical education to heighten awareness in nutrition principles so that people in such communities are empowered to navigate choices that lead to a healthier diet.

### THEORY

**Goal:** Feed 100 youth per week and raise awareness of personal nutrition principles and culinary skills.

**Intervention Description:** Teach cooking classes with nutrient-dense ingredients and provide training on nutrition and classical culinary skills.

**What's Next:**

- With the addition of our food trailer, the next plan is to add an entrepreneurial sector to our training program that allows youth to utilize the skills they've learned in a business venture. Students will develop a menu, learn basic ins and outs of culinary business operations, host special events and eventually establish their own business.
- The trailer will also be used to alleviate food disparities for immigrant community members, offering use of the mobile kitchen to provide their families with preferred foods that reflect their heritage as well as a similar opportunity to learn entrepreneurship principles to utilize their culinary traditions in business.
- The trailer will also be used to help partnering organizations elevate service of their intended interventions to alleviate food disparity around the city.




### LEARNING CYCLES

**Plan:** Teach cooking classes with nutrient-dense ingredients and provide training on nutrition and classical culinary skills.

**Do:** We cook twice per week and feed about 60 students per class. Children's classes are every Tuesday and Thursday at Santa Maria Community Center.


**Study:** The classes have been great! More and more students are gravitating towards the program.

**Act:** We're gearing up to add hospitality and entrepreneurial training to the program in 2024.

### RESULTS

This year so far, Chef Mike has served **3,438 meals** through the cooking classes.



### MOST PROUD & WHY

I see the difference 2 hours can make for kids. The vibe we create through the food we make nurtures a spirit of communal responsibility for one another and raises respect in and for community members.

### GREATEST CHALLENGE

I could use a staff. I need to hire an assistant to train younger students in hospitality service so that I can focus on selecting a culinary team of youth to build and plan out monthly events to showcase their skills.



# Isaiah 55 Inc.

Shannon Carr, Founder/CEO, Isaiah 55 Inc.



## BACKGROUND

Isaiah 55, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 2005 to relieve human suffering by providing food and resources to those in need living in Cincinnati's inner-city neighborhoods.

Our mission is to grow food to feed the less fortunate healthier options.



## THEORY

### Intervention Description:

- Register families to receive 1 hot meal and 2 meal kits each week
- Deliver meals 2 days per week
- Operate Garden of Eat'n restaurant 2 days per week

### Scope:

Neighborhood: East Price Hill  
Timeframe: June 30 (first delivery) through October 27, 2023.

**SMART Aim:** Register 50 families to receive weekly meals from June 30, 2023, through October 27, 2023



## LEARNING CYCLES

**Plan:** Prepare and deliver hot meals and meal kits to East Price Hill families

**Do:** 3 families volunteer on a regular basis to prepare meals and meal kits

**Study:** The need for resources is greater in East Price Hill than any other community I've served. We have a lot of work to do

**Act:** Next year I want to increase the number of families we serve and figure out a way to get an accurate number of people living in each household. I will also consider hiring an employee to assist with the program.

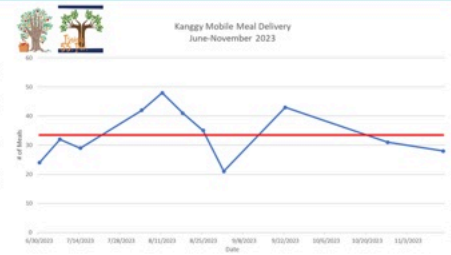


## RESULTS

374 Meals Delivered

9 Food Giveaways with produce, food boxes, buying food for families

238 Prepared Meals for the local Rising Star Youth Bowling Program Jun-Aug 2023



## MOST PROUD & WHY

In December 2022 we acquired our very own restaurant. We received funding from the S.A.F.E (Systems to Achieve Food Equity) Network. We were searching for a space to house our meal delivery program. We purchased the old JoJo Fish and Chicken in East Price Hill. We remodeled and prepared the space for our program. We had a grand opening parking lot party for the community. We had a DJ, Clown, free food, giveaways and games. We also had a mural painted on the side of our building.



## GREATEST CHALLENGE

- Our greatest challenge was that we couldn't feed the entire neighborhood. We didn't have enough resources. We need to create criteria for who we serve.
- Language barrier. We don't speak Spanish so there was a barrier to serving Spanish speaking participants
- Participants often reported incorrectly the number of people in their family on the meal delivery program application. We discovered this when we invited parents to pick up donated items for their children, such as shoes and clothing.





# Last Mile Market In Avondale

Aaron Moore- Last Mile Food Rescue

## BACKGROUND

- The Last Mile Market is a Free "Farmers Market" Style mobile distribution currently in Avondale
- The Market takes place 2-4 days a week depending on the time of year
- With high rates of food insecurity and limited access to nutrition, the intervention is designed to close the "Meal Gap" in Avondale.
- By bringing rescued food in a refrigerated van, the market has lower costs than the traditional food pantry model.



## DATA AND MEASURES

- The Last Mile market tracks customers served, and meals distributed as its key metrics.
- 2023 Results: 92,000 meals distributed 62,227 customers served.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Community engagement was essential to this program
- Keeping the distribution simple helped us to better serve customers
- Word of mouth and grassroots communication were most effective

## THEORY



## RESULTS



## DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Last Mile Market will re open 4 days a week in May with the goal of increasing our customers served and meals delivered Year over Year through continuous improvement.





# Impact Summary

[mywhycincinnati.org](http://mywhycincinnati.org)

[mywhy45203](https://www.instagram.com/mywhy45203)



## Mission

Our mission is to equip underserved children with the knowledge & the training to properly feed themselves for a lifetime.

## Goals

- Improve food equity
- Reduce food insecurity by increasing access to nutritious foods in Cincinnati neighborhoods where access is limited
- Educate children about the benefits of proper nutrition
- Distribute fresh fruits and vegetables to area school children who are nutrient insecure prior to school holidays and closures in an effort to close the meal gap
- Provide hands-on experience in traditional farming, raised bed farming & hydroponics.
- Create a SUSTAINABLE produce source in Cincinnati nutrient deserts

## Results



Meals distributed year over year  
2022                      2023

**31289**

**49120**

## Programs

### The Power of Produce

School curriculum that teaches students the outcome of food on the body. This program is for students in 1st-12th grade. Lesson plans include:

- Eating the Rainbow.
- Food is your Pharmacy.
- Nourish to Flourish.
- Try it Tuesdays.

### Pay What you Can Farm Markets

Our pay-what-you-can market allows those using Snap/Ebt, WIC, and Senior farm market coupons to stretch their purchasing power and get up to \$60.00 of fruits and vegetables of their choice for as little as \$5.00.

### Level the Playing Field

Fresh fruit & veggies for all student athletes daily  
All students take home fresh produce each Friday  
Nutritional seminars for all students and their families

### Fruit for the Holidays

Fruit for a holiday ensures that students have something healthy to eat while away from school. Thanks to our donors and partners we are able to fill their backpacks with apples, oranges, and bananas for Thanksgiving, Christmas, MLK, President's Day weekend, and Spring Break.

## Current Sponsors

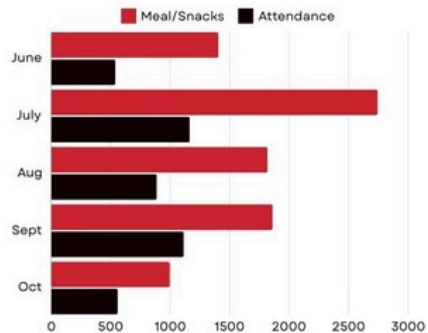


# COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVEN PROJECT FOR 2023



In 2023, we led impactful community-driven food initiatives in our sports program within The SAFE Network, prioritizing diversity and community engagement to combat food insecurity.

The significant difference in attendance and meals/snacks is attributed to the quantity of snacks provided. During the summer, practices occurred three times a week, offering each child a hot meal. Additionally, on the other two days, snacks were handed out on the practice field, with an extra snack for them to take home. After the 'back-to-school' session commenced on August 17th, weekly practices decreased to twice a week. One day included a hot meal, while on the second day, one snack was provided on the practice field, and an additional snack was given to take home.



The key learnings and insights in 2022 emphasized a lack of cultural diversity in food preferences. Last year's strategy involved involving community volunteers/caregivers experienced in preparing Soul food in large quantities. Why? Because this Southern cuisine can offer a sense of comfort, familiarity, and cultural identity to the underserved communities we serve, who may have limited access to a broader range of diverse and expensive food choices.

The 2023 Community Food-Driven Project aimed to engage the community, especially parents, grandparents, and caregivers of the participants, in addressing food insecurity efforts. Over the course of nearly 24 weeks of the football program, the objective was to have around 12 adults volunteer to cook on two occasions during the season. However, only 5 caregivers remained involved until the program's end.



## IMPACT OVERVIEW

**Connections/Interactions:** Over the course of 21 weeks, there were a total of 4,269 connections/interactions with the participants, including players, cheerleaders, caregivers, and siblings. This demonstrates consistent engagement and participation in the program, reflecting a strong sense of community involvement.

**Meals/Snacks Served:** Throughout the intervention period, 8,830 meals and snacks were served, addressing immediate food needs within the community and providing essential nutrition to participants.

**Volunteers:** A total of 298 volunteers, including coaches, assistant coaches, and church members, contributed their time and effort to support the program. Despite not reaching the expected number of community cooks, this still demonstrates significant community involvement and dedication to addressing food insecurity.

**Food Distribution:** Approximately 1,496 pounds of food were distributed to participants and their families, contributing to overall food security efforts and helping alleviate hunger within the community.

**Food Acceptance Average:** The program maintained a high average food acceptance rate of 94%, demonstrating participant satisfaction with the provided meals and snacks. This highlights the program's success in catering to the dietary needs and cultural preferences of the community.



# A New Safety Net Model To Turn Child Hunger Into Child Wellness

Anthony J. Fairhead & Matthew M. Hawkins  
Childhood Food Solutions (CFS)



## Four Main Causes of Child Hunger

- ❖ Grocery desert or lack of vehicle.
- ❖ SNAP decrease due to improved income or procedural error
- ❖ Food pantry limits and stigma.
- ❖ Difficult to budget food for 187 non-school days.



- ❖ CFS's Food Home Delivery Program provides a year-round food safety net.
- ❖ CFS attacks the risk of running out of food.
- ❖ CFS delivers 2 boxes a month and as many extra boxes as requested by the family.
- ❖ Calories in a box are equal to 27 meals.

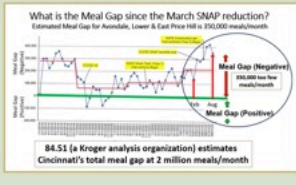
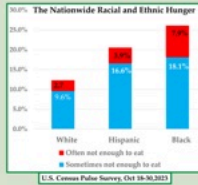
### How have these food boxes helped families?

Less stress:	63%
Not going to bed hungry:	49%
More relaxed because of getting the boxes:	74%
Doing better at work or school:	24%

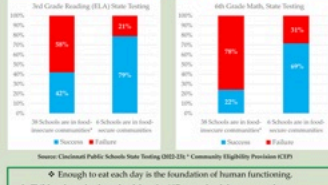
- ❖ Our families are telling us that they feel less stress. They are reliably receiving boxes of food.
- ❖ Stress affects physical and mental health, and results in emergency room and urgent care visits
- ❖ It's anonymous. CFS only has addresses. This minimizes the risk of stigma.
- ❖ A box has shelf-stable food that is ready to eat anytime.
- ❖ Chobani is funding our next pilot test to learn if our program's stress reduction leads to improved, measurable, family health outcomes.

- ❖ By preventing hunger entirely through a continuous home delivery of shelf-stable food, we can reduce stress and improve family wellness.
- ❖ Our latest pilot, with Chobani®, is a shelf-stable, Food as Medicine-focused program where there is also the potential for healthcare treatment cost savings.

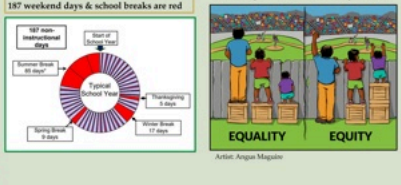
### Running Out of Food Is Happening Today.



### Why Are Kids Failing at Math and Reading?



### 178 school days are colored light blue 187 weekend days & school breaks are red



### Why Home Delivery?

- ❖ Students need consistent food to support their brain development, more than just on the 178 school days per year.
- ❖ SNAP "food stamps" are reduced when you earn more income. This quick removal of SNAP makes it more difficult to climb out of poverty.
- ❖ WIC food support does not start until a pregnancy is discovered so there is a possibility of women not having enough to eat early in their pregnancy.
- ❖ Free school meals help a lot on 178 school days, but provide fewer or no meals on 187 non-school days.
- ❖ Contact: Tony Fairhead, Executive Director 513-910-4162 Tony@ChildhoodFoodSolutions.org

### What Do Families Tell Us About This Unique Food Box Delivery Model?

n = 148 families\*  
N = 300 families  
Response Rate: 49%  
Deliveries serve 29 zip codes

How satisfied are you and your family with the food boxes?

97%

- The food boxes work well for my family and me.
- The food boxes do not work well for my family and me.

Demographic: 2.8 children per family (avg.)

American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Asian	0%
Black or African American	0%
American	67%
Hispanic or Latino	8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
White	39%

Testimonials:

- "It allows my family to have extra food vs. not enough."
- "I love the food boxes! Helps me save money and keeps me healthy."
- "It was great it came right on time because we were out of food. Thank God."
- "The food program has helped me and my family a lot due to the lack of food that I was receiving at the food pantries."
- "I do not have transportation, so the gift of having the boxes delivered to my home is a tremendous service."
- "This was an absolute blessing and I think the food boxes are more than I expected. This was very helpful for me and my 2 year old."

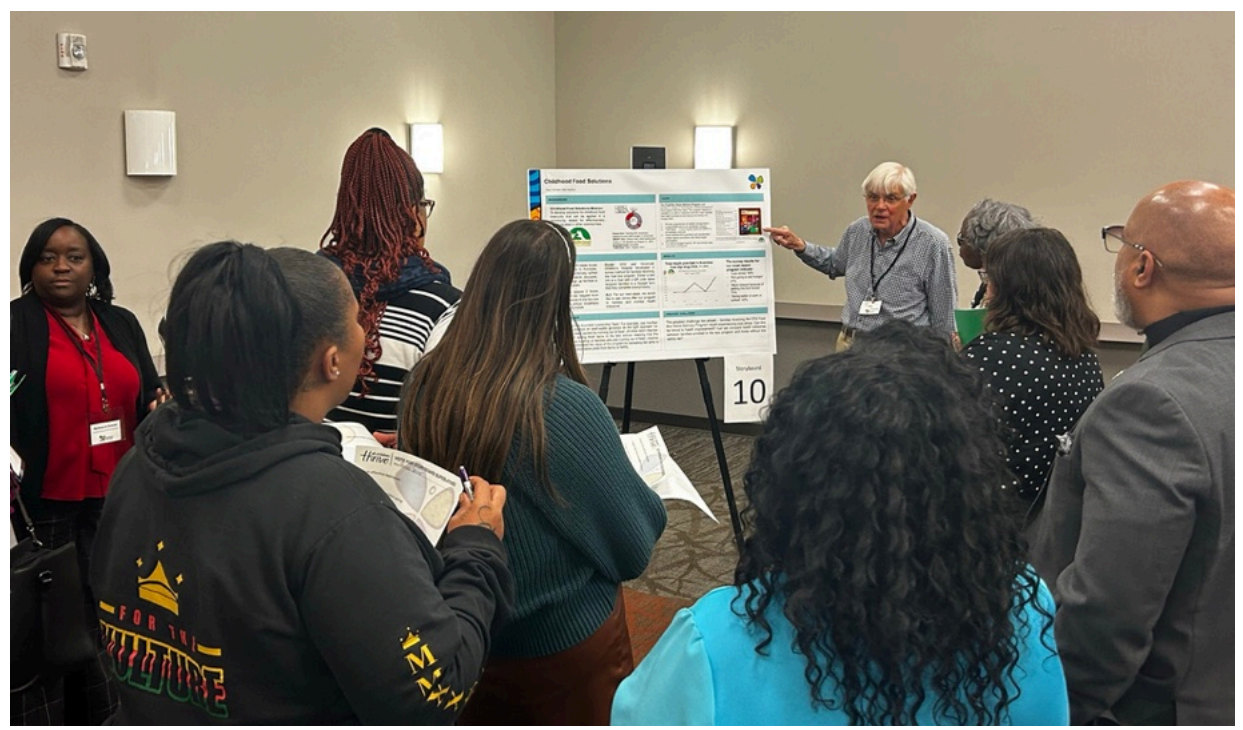
\*Data collected from March 2022  
Sample sizes slightly differ by variable

### Stress:

- Imagine the stress of your children crying with hunger, while you search for food.
- Imagine the stress relief of knowing you have received an unlimited, free delivery of food for use any day.
- Heroic hunger relief efforts from NGOs aren't yet solving the hunger crisis.
- For families who are hungry today, we must find a fully effective food safety net.
- ❖ Equity
- ❖ Prevention of running out of food
- ❖ Addresses the causes of child hunger
- ❖ No limits placed on families
- ❖ Reliability
- ❖ Realistic Program Sustainability

### "Too Many Families Don't Know Where Their Next Meal Is Coming From." President Biden, September 2022

- ❖ For those who are at risk of running out of food, our vision is that families will continuously receive a food box delivered to their doorstep to prevent hunger – a new safety net.
- ❖ Our delivery model addresses each main cause of child hunger.
- ❖ Our promising results are reported across diverse communities.
- ❖ When families have more than enough food, we have learned from the community that they share their food with hungry neighbors.
- ❖ What if this new safety net could reduce child healthcare treatment costs?
- ❖ If we are correct about the ongoing benefits of reduced stress, this program can result in healthier children, direct Medicaid savings, and a reduction of strain on our healthcare system.



# Appendix D: SAFE Network Partner Photos



Neighbors of all ages in Lower Price Hill come together for weekly Cooking Club (new in 2023 thanks to SAFE) to learn and prepare a Community Meal, which grew from 12 up to 100 weekly meals for all neighbors who need it. Leftovers are used for daily meals that feed the unhoused.



Outside of Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli, open to the public from all neighborhoods daily; in Lower Price Hill at 738 State Avenue at the intersection of State and Hatmaker just 2 blocks from Oyer School.



Free product area in the front of Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli; including freshfruits and vegetables, staple products, frozen La Soupe pans and meals, and odds and ends from food rescue partners at Last Mile and Master Precisions as well.



Your Store of the Queen City Board Co-Chairs distributing Fruits and Vegetables during a weekly LPH Farers + Makers Market; the week before Thanksgiving 2023 to address increasing needs of familie during schoo noninstruactional days.







heartfelt  
tidbits







# THE COMMUNITY BUILDERS

