

2023 Annual Report

COMMUNITY UPDATES

The 2023 Local Food Action Plan Annual Report - Community Updates document contains crowdsourced updates provided by public, private, nonprofit and other community partners. Updates are listed in alphabetical order by organization name and specific page numbers are listed below in the table of contents.

The 2023 Local Food Action Plan Annual Report features two additional elements:

- An Executive Summary
- An [interactive StoryMap](#)

For more information on the Local Food Action Plan and to stay connected to future work please contact the City-County Local Food Team:

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Local Food Action Plan Goals:

 **A:** Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies.

 **B:** Improve access to and education about healthy food, affordable food and local food.

 **C:** Increase the role of food in economic development.

 **D:** Prevent food-related waste.


 **Equity:** Advance a fair and just food system for ALL people, free of discrimination.

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All People's Fresh Market

- In 2023, we saw more and more families looking for food assistance through the All People's Fresh Market as the price of food, utilities and rent continued to increase. September 2023 was our busiest month since August of 2020. In total this year, we have provided 83,655 baskets of fresh produce to 15,756 unique families (50,162 individuals). That is a 15% increase in the number of families we served compared to 2022.
- In January, we brought on an additional part-time staff member to support the All People's Fresh Market as traffic at the market increases. This brings our Healthy Eating and Living team to three full-time staff members and four part-time staff members.
- We have signed up over 1,600 new families at the All People's Fresh Market since the beginning of this year.
- Contact - Jess Grady (jgrady@4allpeople.net)

American Heart Association, Central Ohio

- As a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives, the American Heart Association (AHA) is committed to driving forward sustainable solutions for nutrition security and expanding access to health care; two components critical to the adoption of Food is Medicine (FIM) interventions. In 2023, AHA published a [Presidential Advisory on Food is Medicine](#), serving as a roadmap for the research, advocacy, quality measurement and public awareness that will lead to widespread adoption and coverage of FIM interventions. Highlights of the advisory include:
 - Equity as central to the Initiative and as a patient-centered approach.
 - Efforts to build a robust evidence base for FIM and advocate for FIM to be a regular and reimbursable component of health care.
 - A call to action for a national, cross-sector partnership approach.
- A request for proposals followed the advisory focusing on feasibility and implementation science, specifically achieving high rates of enrollment and engagement, and testing ways to achieve significant short-term changes in healthy eating behavior. The Initiative's research aims to generate evidence needed to provide widespread coverage of food-based treatment options for the millions of Americans living with chronic disease.
- The AHA continues to collaborate with local organizations to implement food security screening protocols and healthy food and nutrition guidelines policies. Adoption of such policies includes education on healthy lifestyle choices for individuals served, while aiming to increase access to healthier food choices. Mini grants have been awarded in support of implementation efforts. Highlights can be found in the most recent [Driving Community Impact in Central Ohio overview](#).
- Contact - Diana Briggs (diana.briggs@heart.org)

Broad Street Presbyterian Church Food Pantry

- In our second full year, the Fresh For All program at Broad Street Food Pantry has expanded with purchases of over \$50,000 from 11 local farmers to distribute free to low income families that come to our pantry for food. All farmers are within 100 miles of Columbus; 63% are women owned businesses, 36% are BIPOC owned, 18% are LGBTQIA+ owned, 54% are first generation farmers, and 45% are urban farmers.
- Beginning in 2023, we are also partners in the We Grow: NES grant provided by the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation. All We Grow growers are BIPOC or women owned businesses. The Pantry purchased a total of \$1,180 for direct distribution to pantry shoppers (not including farm market purchases) – that's approximately 390 units of produce (average cost \$3 per unit). We also harvested more than 200 units of produce from the BSPC garden for direct distribution to pantry shoppers.
- This year, we offered our growers the opportunity to participate in two farmer's markets held at the Broad Street Presbyterian Church where church members and community members purchased locally grown produce and other cottage goods from four We Grow: NES vendors, two community businesses (including Bronzeville) and four additional local

growers. Total market sales were \$1,644 (\$177 for NES growers); the Broad Street Food Pantry purchased an additional \$2,100 (\$186 NES growers) of produce for distribution in the pantry. Pantry shoppers received coupons so they could also purchase local grown produce and those purchases accounted for 25% of market purchases.

- Contact - Kathy Kelly-Long (kklong@bspc.org)

Bronzeville Growers Market

- Bronzeville Growers Market, in collaboration with other Near East Side entities, embarked on moving local growers from passion to profits and encouraging economic development by focusing on gardens as economic activity. We hired a project manager to oversee production and a project coordinator to oversee business mentorships. We provided education and mentorship through working with a diverse group of agricultural experts and made referrals to outside sources for business start-up information. Information was provided on a weekly basis. Half of the growers participated as vendors at local farmer markets and one has moved to developing a formal, sustainable business model. This was possible with funding from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations and the Centers for Disease Control/Columbus Public Health.
- Bronzeville Growers Market is a member of the Community Gardens Network, an initiative under a grant from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations. Two community gatherings have strengthened the relationships with other participants. We also benefited from a grants development workshop and from summer interns. We continue to give leadership to the Urban Farm Coalition, an organization of BIPOC farmers, principally from central Ohio, who became a state non-profit at the end of 2023.
- Bronzeville Growers Market conducted two sessions of the Bronzeville Agracademy, a 10 week online gardening course that also links African Indigenous Knowledge to contemporary practices in the spring and fall. Classes are free and online. We are also part of the teaching staff for the inaugural "Teach The Grower" course sponsored by the Urban Farmers Coalition held in the spring. This is a post-secondary certification approved by the State of Ohio for all ages. Scholarships and paid internships were available.
- Bronzeville Growers Market commenced its sixth growing season on July 6 and concluded with a Harvest Festival on September 7. Each week had a special theme and there was a coordinated weekly cultural program incorporating local musicians and spoken word artists. Health kits from the Columbus Public Health were also distributed to market attendees.
- BGM also participated in two markets hosted by Broad Street Presbyterian Church as part of the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations grant.
- BGM launched a "Let's Cook" cooking series with the co-sponsorship of OSU Wexner Medical Center, at Legacy Pointe in October. A second course has been requested for winter 2024.
- Julialynne Walker's appointments to the Wexner Medical Center Health Equity Advisory Board and the Black Farmer Network Advisory Council continue to be a source of information to the NES community. She also worked closely with three other statewide groups: AgNoire, a policy focused group, Black Food and Farmer Network, a resource network, and The Stinner Summit, a collaboration of activists.
- Contact - Julialynne Walker (info@bronzevillegrowersmarket.com)

Central Ohio Food Waste Reduction Capacity Grant

- The City of Columbus, Franklin County and the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) partnered with Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to [announce the recipients](#) of the Central Ohio Food Waste Reduction Capacity Grant. The total grant award of \$36,800 will be distributed across eight organizations. The work of each of these organizations is helping advance the priorities of the Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative (COFWI), a diverse set of organizations helping build a unified approach towards halving food waste in the region by 2030. The eight organizations selected for funding are Crossroads World Outreach Ministry, Cultivate Community Development Corporation

(Cultivate CDC), Food Rescue US – Columbus, Ohio Hispanic Coalition, Sunbury Urban Farms, Westerville Area Resource Ministry (WARM), Food Soldier, and Franklinton Farms. Projects range from purchasing cold storage for WARM and Food Soldier to increase the number of perishable foods that can be rescued and redistributed to offering education on backyard chicken composting (Sunbury Urban Farms) and household and community composting (Cultivate CDC). Across the board, the projects seek to prevent food from becoming waste, rescuing and redistributing high-quality surplus food, and recycling remaining food scraps to build a more resilient and less wasteful regional food system.

- Contact - Jane Boehm (jane.boehm@swaco.org)

City-County Community Garden Grant

- The 13th year of the Community Garden Grant brought in a record number of applications. The Garden Grant is a funding collaboration between the City of Columbus, Franklin County and the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation. Since the COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown, many communities took to growing their own food to increase food access and availability in their neighborhoods. A total of 64 gardens were awarded \$59,247 in total funding in 2023. In addition to providing direct funding, Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation provided \$23,534 in donated product to 90 gardens. Community gardens make a big impact on access to nutritious food, community engagement, and vacant lot beautification, especially through our partnership with the Land Bank. Urban agriculture benefits our local food system, our economy and our environment.
- Franklin Park Conservatory’s Community Garden Grant provided \$20,00 of funding from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners in 2023 to support 15 community gardens.

City of Columbus - Compost Ordinance

- The City of Columbus Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the Columbus and Franklin County Local Food Action Plan both support enabling and growing green businesses and urban agriculture facilities with a focus on equity. The Local Food Action Plan outlines goals and actions to create a stronger and more efficient local food system and reduce organic waste going to the landfill. The Columbus Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2021 by Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, set a citywide goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 that centers equity and environmental justice. The 2019 waste characterization study from the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) outlined that of all the organic waste materials entering the landfill, food waste was the highest at 15%. Building on the plan implementation accomplishments of 2018, the City and County Local Food Team’s 2019 goal is to further support and encourage urban agriculture activities in residential districts. The lynchpin to achieving this goal lies within updating the City of Columbus Zoning Code to reflect the way urban growers within Columbus compost organic materials. The overall goals of this proposed legislation and policy are to clarify and define residential composting activity, add compost as a service of the Division of Refuse, harmonize and align definitions with Columbus Public Health Code, and allow the Department of Public Service and Columbus Public Health authority to regulate and enforce compost standards.

City-County Local Food Board - Impact Evaluation Project

- Over the last three years the Local Food Board, Local Food Team, and Franklin County Local Food Council have partnered to assess our shared work through the lens of racial and health equity while developing a vision for what comes next. All of this has prepared us to assess and evaluate the Local Food Action Plan with new energy and a fresh perspective. The Plan was completed and adopted in late 2016, and the Local Food Board believes this is the right time to reassess and plan for the future. The proposed project has three elements: Current Conditions Scan + Assessment, the Impact Evaluation, and Future Implementation Priorities. The results of the Impact Evaluation will be an informal report developed to guide the future work of the Local Food Board, Local Food Team, and Franklin County Local Food Council.

City-County Local Food Board - Zoning Recommendations Project Team



- The Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board created the Urban Agriculture Zoning Recommendations Project Team (Action C-6 in the Local Food Action Plan) with the objective of identifying zoning recommendations and best practices to enable and support small-scale urban agriculture in Franklin County. In 2023, Local Food Team staff focused on research, capacity building and developing relationships with City, County and SWACO staff to co-create models and best practices for potential updates to local urban agriculture, community garden, and residential composting regulations. Local Food Team staff plans to reconvene the Project Team in 2024 with the aim of completing a report on zoning recommendations.

City of Columbus - Keep Columbus Beautiful



- In 2023, the City of Columbus demonstrated its commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship through a comprehensive initiative aimed at reducing food waste. As a pivotal component of the city's Climate Action Plan, the multifaceted strategy focused on increased accessibility, education and community engagement.
- One of the key milestones in this initiative was the opening of three food scrap drop-off sites. These sites provide residents with a convenient solution to divert food waste from landfills, contributing to the city's broader sustainability goals. The introduction of accessible drop-off points aimed to make food waste disposal a seamless part of residents' daily routines.
- The City proudly unveiled the first Waste and Reuse Convenience Center, a new facility designed to collect a variety of materials, including food scraps. This center, open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., became a one-stop destination for residents looking to responsibly dispose of food scraps, electronics, clothing and cardboard.
- To further bolster awareness and engagement, the City, in collaboration with SWACO, launched the "Save More Than Food" education campaign. Utilizing digital ads, billboards and mail pieces, this initiative focuses on residents living near food scrap drop-off sites. The campaign aimed to educate the community about the environmental impact of food waste and the benefits of utilizing the newly established drop-off locations.
- The collective efforts of the City of Columbus and its residents have yielded remarkable results in just a few short months. Over 27,000 pounds of food waste have been diverted from landfills, reinforcing the community's dedication to sustainable practices. This significant achievement underscores the positive impact that strategic planning, community engagement, and accessible resources can have on reducing environmental impact.
- Contact - Aryeh Alex (awalex@columbus.gov)

Community Growers' Network (CGN)



- The Community Growers' Network (CGN) demonstrates a multi-faceted approach to building food system resilience in Columbus by engaging a group of small-scale and/or minority growers (female, Black) who are also urban civic agricultural leaders. Each Community Grower (CG) grows food in their low-income neighborhood to catalyze significant improvements in fresh food access. The CGN aims to foster collaboration between eight CGs: Bronzeville Growers Market; Kimball Family Farms; Four Seasons City Farm; Highland Youth Garden; SE Urban Farm; The Garden Club Project; South Side Family Farms (Lead CG); and, Franklinton Farms (Convener). The CGN employs an education coordinator and an outreach coordinator whose efforts support volunteerism and educational offerings at each CG's site.
- With support from the USDA (Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production grant, \$296,000 for 2022-24) and the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation (\$40,000 for 2022-24), the CGN empowers small-scale growers with financial and relational resources to expand hyperlocal fruit/vegetable production and access. In 2023, the CGN:
 - Hosted a large CGN gathering at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio and

- monthly check-in meetings, offering training for support services and community.
 - Coordinated shared assets across CGs, including expertise, tools and relationships. For example, one CGN member was able to install a high tunnel with the support of another CG's workforce development participants.
 - Grew \$214,342.90 of fresh food in their communities.
- The CGN looks forward to continuing this important and exciting collaboration in 2024.
- Contact - Emma Gardner (emma.gardner@franklintonfarms.org)

Columbus City Schools - Farm To School Program

- The Columbus City Schools Farm To School program grows curiosity and confidence through community gardening in Ohio's largest school district. The goal of the program is to engage and educate urban students through experiential learning where students in over 300 classrooms/210 gardens across the district are engaged in hands-on experiences where they plant, harvest and taste produce such as snap peas, radishes, basil, cilantro, spinach, kale, bok choy, tomato, lettuce and collards. Students learn about cooperation and the stewardship of caring for living things and are exposed to different career paths in agriculture. Integrated garden lessons teach the students the importance of where food comes from and the nutritional value of the produce grown. We want to thank our community partners from Scotts Miracle Gro, Columbus Foundation Better Together, Connecting Kids Inside Out, Beck Foundation, Highland Youth Garden, Lowes, Franklin County Extension Team, Franklinton Farms, Teacher Dream Grant, Local Matters, Urban Garden Grant, and Franklin Park Conservatory for your continued support with knowledge, supplies, and programming for the students of Columbus City Schools.
- Our program supports Goal B of the City of Columbus and Franklin Co. Local Food Action Plan which is: improves access to and education about healthy food, local food, and affordable food.
- Contact - Katie Young (kyoung10222@columbus.k12.oh.us)

Community of Caring Development Foundation

- On October 1, the Community of Caring Development Foundation marked one year as operator of the Linden Fresh Market. To celebrate, we had a Customer Appreciation Week which among featured daily sampling of foods from many of the ethnic cultures represented by the people who come to the market. The week culminated in an old-fashioned American Backyard Cookout. Throughout the year, our mission to Create a Connected Community was in full effect as we added 17 new community partners, including Seminary Farms, Urban Farm Church and Torro Meats. Our Transitional Employment Program received a donation from 5/3 Bank to offer a Rehab & Maintenance Training Program.
- Market Staff - Kathleen Oliver, Market Manager, and Michael Bracy, Assistant Manager, have settled into their leadership roles. They have operations serving an average of 200 people per day. Staff includes five seniors from AARP and Vantage and high school students from Cristo Rey and Columbus Alternative doing work internships.
- Market numbers thru November 2023
 - Households Served: 43,727
 - Total People Served: 157,902.
 - Food Distributed: 1,102,819 lbs.
- Market 2024 - We want to build out programming to support the well-being of families living in the Linden Community. With a grant from the Curry Foundation, we plan to expand our Family Engagement program, adding a staff person to serve more families, provide training to help build the capacity of local churches and community organizations who work to serve families living in poverty, and add more training offerings to our Transitional Employment Program.
- Contact - Robert Caldwell (rcaldwell@callingallconnectors.org)

Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA)

- The CDFA-NASDA Foundation Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers Access to Capital Toolkit is a set of best practice resources designed to provide practical assistance to communities looking to invest in socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The toolkit addresses topics from effective revolving loan fund management to leveraging bonds, tax increment, and other forms of public and private capital to encourage increased investment in socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Contact - Angela Blatt (ablatt@cdfa.net)

DNO Produce

- DNO Produce positively influences the Franklin County food system by leading and participating in various cross-sector initiatives.
- Our partnership with Food Rescue Columbus redirected 30,276 pounds of fresh produce from potential waste to neighbors in need.
- Committed to bolstering the local food economy, our involvement in the USDA's Local Food Purchasing Agreement (LFPA) - Ohio CAN Program integrated new Franklin County farmers into our operations, resulting in the distribution of 96,360 pounds of Ohio-grown produce statewide.
- Collaborating with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, we provide nutritious food access for Franklin County residents. By teaming up with their kitchen, we provided 150,000 summer meals for children, contributing 2,150 hours of skilled labor valued at \$69,960. Our Fresh Cut Food Drive engaged the community in a conversation about nutrition insecurity and yielded 1,400 pounds of produce and 267 donations for WCBE 90.5. Additionally, our community donation program dispatched 6,429 pounds of fresh produce to Columbus-area nonprofits.
- Maintaining a central focus on community engagement, we served as the headline sponsor for the Hunger Run 5K, supporting the Neighborhood Services Inc. Food Pantry. We share industry expertise through community outreach, including guest lecturing at OSU and hosting educational tours of our facility, fostering a deeper understanding of food systems within our community. In advocacy, we collaborate with Hunger Free Schools Ohio, and engage Ohio's congressional delegation for increased access to fresh produce in USDA nutrition programs. Our efforts were recognized by Senator Sherrod Brown in September when he acknowledged us in introducing his Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act.
- Notably, we were invited to represent the entire fresh produce supply chain at the White House Conference for Health, Hunger and Nutrition. Actively participating in the Food as Medicine movement, we advocate for 1,115 waivers that will improve central Ohioans' health outcomes through dietary interventions such as Produce Prescriptions.
- Contact - Alex DiNovo (adinovo@dnoproduce.com)

Family Adolescent Child Community Engagement Service (FACCES)



- FACCES is situated within a community grappling with the harsh reality of being a food desert. The absence of convenient access to nutritious food options looms large, leaving residents with limited choices for sustaining a healthy lifestyle. In this community, transportation is often not a feasible option for many. Residents rely on walking, biking or public buses, rendering distant grocery stores impractical.
- In the absence of nearby grocery stores, the community often finds itself dependent on the closest available options - a McDonald's and a corner store. The lack of access to nutritious food creates a ripple effect, profoundly impacting the overall nutritional well-being of the community and, notably, the health of its children. Moreover, the community's reliance on convenience and fast-food options is rooted in a lack of resources and education on preparing healthy meals. Breaking away from ingrained habits and embracing a nutritious lifestyle becomes challenging without proper guidance and resources.

- FACCES recognizes the urgent need to address these systemic challenges. The FACCES Kitchen & Theater’s primary objective is to provide a safe and well-equipped environment for cooking classes and nutrition workshops. The theater will serve as a platform for educational programs, performances and cultural events. FACCES aims to promote healthy eating habits and culinary skills among young people and their families, empowering them to positively impact their overall well-being. This facility is located less than 100 feet away from the FACCES Urban Garden and will accomplish the true meaning of the farm-to-table concept in an urban environment.
- Contact - Kori Johnson (food@thefaces.org)

Food Rescue US - Columbus

- Since January 1, 2023, Food Rescue volunteers have completed 9,300+ individual food rescues, recovering 1,000,000+ pounds of food. Volunteers now complete an average of 200+ rescues every week.
- Notable new partnerships in 2023 include: Scotts Research Gardens (rescued 8,000+ pounds of tomatoes, peppers and squash); Hilton Downtown (two weekly pickups of prepared food and unprocessed ingredients); Littleton’s Market; the recently-opened Fox in the Snow Dublin location (daily rescues of any unsold baked goods); and the OSU Outpatient Care facility at New Albany.
- The OHIZ Pilot Project grant that we began in 2022 has been extended for an additional year. In 2023-2024, we are focused on implementing local interventions based on data gleaned from our community needs assessment regarding barriers to food access in the Hilltop and Franklinton neighborhoods of Columbus.
- In July, we began participation in an accelerator program facilitated by La Soupe and Second Helpings to develop and begin a "transformation" kitchen where some recovered food will be transformed into prepared meals under the supervision of a professionally-trained chef, then delivered to receiving agency collaborators. We often encounter massive rescues of fresh produce, some of which is on the verge of going bad or is more than a receiving agency can realistically distribute. Meanwhile, a lot of our receiving agency collaborators can only accept prepared food or individually-packaged meals because their clients don't have access to kitchens or the ability to make meals. This program will allow us to tackle both issues at once, furthering our mission of avoiding food waste and ensuring that surplus food reaches those who need it in a format they can use. In honor and memory of our dear friend Roshelle "The Food Soldier" Pate, we're calling it Ro's Kitchen. A soft launch in November transformed rescued food into 130+ meals and regular operations are scheduled to begin in January.
- Effective January 1, 2024, we will no longer be operating as a site of Food Rescue US (the national organization) but will instead be a department of Local Matters. Our new name will be Columbus Food Rescue. We will continue to use the Food Rescue US app, pick up surplus food and deliver it to agencies that can distribute it. Working with Local Matters, we will streamline our ability to apply for local and state funding, meaning that a donation to our operation stays 100% in town. Finally, joining Local Matters as employees, with the potential to hire additional employees in the future, is a big first step in seeing our commitment to growing and diversifying the pool of people paid fairly to do this work.
- Contact - Emily Rials (emily@foodrescue.us)

Franklin County Board of Commissioners - ARPA Funding for Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4

- On November 7, the Franklin County Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution allocating \$181,270 to support a community farm in partnership with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective and located at the NBC4 headquarters on Olentangy River Road. This grant is the latest action in support of the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Action Plan, which seeks to address inequities in residents’ access to healthy, affordable food, and to

strengthen the local food economy and supply chain.

- The Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 will strengthen the local food system and increase access to locally grown produce by combining traditional and modern agricultural techniques such as vertical growing towers, greenhouses and community garden boxes, and will incorporate food processing and storage capabilities. The farm will serve the neighborhood surrounding the NBC4 headquarters, which is home to a diverse population that includes many students and a growing New American community.
- Funding for this project came from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which was passed by Congress in 2021 and earmarked \$350 billion for state and local governments to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative economic impacts. Among the allowable uses of these funds was supporting the overall health of communities and reducing the economic harms to households, small businesses, impacted industries, nonprofits, and the public sector.
- The Franklin County Board of Commissioners identified the local food system as a key area of investment to address the negative economic impacts of COVID-19, improve overall community health, and create greater sustainability and resiliency in our food supply. The City-County Local Food Team developed ARPA recommendations based on discussions with a wide range of local food system stakeholders and a review of key existing plans (e.g., Local Food Action Plan, Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty, City of Columbus Climate Action Plan, SWACO Food Waste Action Plan, LFAP Racial Equity Study) to identify key priority areas, shovel-ready projects, and community partners with the capacity and expertise to implement these projects.
- Franklin County is hopeful that the City of Columbus will partner on funding these ARPA recommendations in the coming years.

Franklin County Board of Commissioners - ARPA Funding for Urban Agriculture

Critical Infrastructure Grant

- On November 7, the Franklin County Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution allocating \$166,667 to Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District (FSWCD) to support the creation of the Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant. This new grant will allow small for-profit urban farms and non-profit community gardens to apply for up to \$15,000 of funding to scale up their growing operations.
- The purpose of the Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant is to strengthen the local food supply chain, increase food crop production, processing and distribution via sale/donation by local farms and gardens, accelerate the ability of growers to scale up their operations, and ensure support for socially disadvantaged farmers (e.g., BIPOC, women, immigrants, refugees, low income individuals). This grant is the latest action in support of the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Action Plan, which seeks to address inequities in residents' access to healthy, affordable food, and to strengthen the local food economy and supply chain.
- The Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant will strengthen the local food system and increase access to locally grown produce by filling a significant funding gap for growers who want to scale up their operations but lack the creditworthiness and consistent income to qualify for a bank loan. This grant is an innovative approach to supporting small scale agriculture that could serve as a model for other cities and counties across Ohio and the country.
- Funding for this project came from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which was passed by Congress in 2021 and earmarked \$350 billion for state and local governments to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative economic impacts. Among the allowable uses of these funds was supporting the overall health of communities and reducing the economic harms to households, small businesses, impacted industries, nonprofits, and the public sector.
- The Franklin County Board of Commissioners identified the local food system as a key area of investment to address the negative economic impacts of COVID-19, improve overall

community health, and create greater sustainability and resiliency in our food supply. The City-County Local Food Team developed ARPA recommendations based on discussions with a wide range of local food system stakeholders and a review of key existing plans (e.g., Local Food Action Plan, Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty, City of Columbus Climate Action Plan, SWACO Food Waste Action Plan, LFAP Racial Equity Study) to identify key priority areas, shovel-ready projects, and community partners with the capacity and expertise to implement these projects.

- At this time, the Franklin County Urban Agriculture Grant is only in place for 2024 but we hope to demonstrate the need in the community and identify funding for future years. Franklin County is also hopeful that the City of Columbus will provide funding for this grant in future years.

Franklin County Board of Commissioners - Café Overlook

- In 2023, Café Overlook in the Franklin County courthouse complex celebrated its successful first year in operation. Café Overlook is on the 16th floor at 373 S. High St. and serves breakfast and lunch to county workers and visitors to the county complex. Since opening, Café Overlook has doubled as a workforce development, hiring employees who are social service clients and paying a livable wage of at least \$15 an hour while providing job readiness training. About 150 employees have completed the program thus far, with many employees now working in higher paying jobs in the industry.
- A group of restaurateurs owns and operates the café through a non-profit corporation called Service! Relief for Hospitality Workers. Managers include Sangeeta Lakhani (formerly of The Table), Letha Pugh (co-owner of Bake Me Happy) and Matthew Heaggans (owner of Preston's).
- “The restaurant’s success is thanks to the passionate local restaurateurs and social service organizations who go above and beyond to help employees. Their dedication shows in everything they do, such as helping employees on housing, health care and other services. Word about the program’s success is spreading. We have a list of potential employees waiting for a chance to start.” - President Kevin L. Boyce, Franklin County Board of Commissioners

Franklin County Board of Commissioners - Local Food System Funding



In 2023, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners continued its longstanding support of local food system initiatives and implementation of the Local Food Action Plan through the provision of funding to address food access, create new infrastructure, expand economic opportunity, and ensure equity in the food system. Below are a few of the food system initiatives funded in 2023 by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners:

- Mid-Ohio Food Collective - **\$500,000** - Funding provided for emergency food assistance for Franklin County residents.
- Service! - **\$500,000** - Funding provided for capital cost construction of a commercial kitchen space for workforce development and an incubator kitchen for entrepreneurs who want to launch a food business but lack sufficient capital.
- St. Mary School Inc. - **\$500,000** - Funding was provided for a new dining hall, kitchen and development of a program for health, among other items.
- Impact Community Action - **\$347,000** - Funding was provided for the capital costs of constructing an incubator kitchen and garden space that will provide workforce opportunities and low-risk incubator space for learning to grow/prepare healthy food.
- Franklin County Public Health - **\$250,000** - Funding provided to address health disparities and advance adoption of the Health & Equity in All Policies policy, which includes food system elements.
- The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension - **\$225,000** - Funding was provided for overall management of the International Harvest Garden and support for those utilizing the garden.

- Children’s Hunger Alliance - **\$150,000** - Funding to provide healthy and nutritious meals to children at risk for food insecurity in Franklin County.
- Charitable Pharmacy of Central Ohio Inc. - **\$150,000** - Funding to expand the Pharmacy in the City heart healthy nutrition access program to all patients.
- Franklin Park Conservatory - **\$131,024** - Funding was provided for the City-County Community Garden Grant, Growing to Green, Teen Corps, and Farmers Market programs.
- Mid Ohio Market at St. Stephen’s Community House - **\$108,000** - Funding provided for expanding Mid-Ohio Market to 27 hours of operation per week and increasing food access for people experiencing food insecurity.
- Mid-Ohio Food Collective - **\$100,000** - Funding provided for the purchase and distribution of food to Franklin County soup kitchens, pantries, emergency shelters, and community distribution events.
- Neighborhood Services Inc. - **\$61,462** - Funding was provided for NSI to replace their 40 year old primary storage freezer and install a walk-in freezer that will enable them to serve more people for a lower overall cost.
- Feed the Kids Columbus Inc. - **\$22,588** - Funding provided for serving food to children experiencing food insecurity over Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring breaks at 28 central Ohio schools.

Franklin County Food Business Portal

- The Franklin County Food Business Portal continued connecting food businesses and entrepreneurs with valuable resources and services needed to plan, launch and grow a food business in Franklin County. The Portal hosted over 700 unique site visits, with six food and agricultural business entrepreneurs requesting and receiving a direct connection to services from OSU Extension and the Small Business Development Center.

Franklin County Local Food Council

- The Franklin County Local Food Council (FCLFC) Steering Committee collaborated extensively with the Local Food Board (LFB) and City/County staff throughout 2023 on increased coordination and communication. This included drafting a proposal for expanding the LFB by three seats appointed by the FCLFC for the purpose of ensuring critical equity-focused community voices are engaged and prioritized on the Board.
- In April, the Local Food Board reviewed and voted to recommend this proposal to City and County leadership. The FCLFC engaged its membership to take the next steps in planning for potential future expansion of the LFB. This included drafting updated bylaws, gathering input from key community stakeholders, and developing processes and criteria by which to recruit, vet, interview, and potentially appoint new members to the LFB. The FCLFC plans to continue working closely with the LFB and City/County staff to ensure a committed focus on racial and health equity in the implementation of the Local Food Action Plan.

Franklin County Public Health

- In 2023, Franklin County Public Health (FCPH) continued a partnership with Mid-Ohio Food Collective to provide free produce to the community. FCPH’s Clinton Township Community Health Action Team (CHAT) served 2,889 families consisting of 9,345 individuals at the Clinton Township Produce Market. This produce market saw a 24% increase in families served compared to 2022. The FCPH CHAT also distributed a total of 258 Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) boxes to low-income seniors providing them with additional nutritious foods. Additionally, FCPH partnered with the Westerville Area Resource Ministry (WARM) to bring weekly food donations to the free food shed located at the Clinton Township Fire Department (3820 Cleveland Ave.) to further assist those in need.
- Through the Ohio Department of Health’s Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) grant, FCPH completed a Policy, Systems and Environmental Change (PSE) Assessment in Franklin Township to help us better understand the barriers that exist as it relates to healthy eating and active living. This grant also provided support for improvement in the availability

of nutritious food choices in public spaces. Health Commissioner Joe Mazzola approved Food Service Guideline recommendations that support the implementation of the Good Food Here Nutrition Standards in all vending machines located in Memorial Hall. These standards set limits on calories, saturated fat, trans fat and sodium. The passing of such recommendations will hopefully serve as a model for other worksites and public spaces interested in offering healthier food options.

- Contact - Unity Smith (unitysmith@franklincountyohio.gov)

Franklin Park Conservatory & Botanical Gardens

- Farmers Market
 - The Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Farmers Market is in an urban setting, two miles from downtown Columbus. The weekly market supports a total of 28 vendors with an average of 18 in attendance on a weekly basis. In 2023, the market had 6,380 customers and was able to facilitate the use of \$24,894 in nutrition incentives, including EBT, WIC and Senior Farmers Market Coupons. The total combined income for our local producers was over \$60,000.
 - The market regularly hosts musicians and food trucks, offering our community a gathering place, as well as a place to purchase fresh, whole foods in an underserved area. There is no vendor fee to participate, allowing access to new producers and farmers by eliminating financial barriers that might otherwise prevent participation in the market. Possibly, as a result of this policy, this market has a large percentage of BIPOC and women owned businesses that participate (65%).
 - The market hosts a booth called Veggie Champs which offers kids the opportunity to taste a seasonal fruit or vegetable and learn about it. It offers recipes and nutritional information for the adults, too. By participating, kids receive \$2 in Veggie Bucks to spend on a fruit or vegetable of their choice. This empowers them to begin to make healthy choices as young consumers. In 2023, we had 614 customers visit the VC booth.
- Growing to Green & Community Garden Grant
 - The Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Garden's Growing to Green is a free community garden program for all of central Ohio. The program includes advocacy, education, technical assistance, volunteerism, financial resources, recognition, leadership development, and networking for all community gardens. These spaces include schools, donations, allotment, pollinators, educational, urban farms, cooperatives, workforce development, therapy, demonstration, and city beautification gardens.
 - In 2023, Growing to Green connected with 7,909 individuals and 372 gardens in central Ohio and beyond through its programming and provided technical support at 100 gardens. Franklin Park Conservatory's Community Garden Grant provided \$20,00 of funding from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners in 2023 to support 15 community gardens.
 - Research shows that "The benefits of community-based gardening projects likely extend beyond food security, as gardens provide fresh vegetables, and the process of gardening involves physical exercise. Community gardens contribute to community wellbeing by influencing the nutritional and social environment." (Carney & Hamada, 2011; Egli, Oliver & Tautolo, 2016).
 - Community gardens are one of the most effective third places, a term coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, which refers to home being first place and work being second place. These third spaces are physical places where people can easily and routinely connect with each other. Social classes and backgrounds can be leveled-out in ways that are rare these days. I think the most commonly thought of third place is your local coffee shop.
 - Community gardens are led voluntarily by the individuals in the community and have many barriers such as time, helping hands and limited funding. Most importantly, many lack the administrative capacity in volunteer coordination, grant writing,

- marketing, strategic planning, documentation, and so on.
- Many organizations rely solely on the annual Urban Garden Grant to sustain their spaces and sometimes expand their mission. Growing to Green is here to help provide that extra support through our expertise in all the things listed previously. Our mission is to advocate and demonstrate how incredibly crucial these spaces are to our communities, especially to our disadvantaged and under-resourced communities.
- Teen Corps program
 - The Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Teen Corps Program is an eight week paid educational internship for teens who live and attend school in Franklin County. The teens are 15-18 years old and spend 20 hours a week learning to garden, developing their customer service and communication skills and developing good workplace habits. At the end of the eight weeks, the teens will have learned about many areas of the food system, including: gardening knowledge and skills; basic understanding of plant science, ecology and agriculture; nutrition and healthy eating habits; culinary skills; and, sustainability and green careers.
 - This year, 24 teens participated in the summer program, with four teens continuing for an additional 10 weeks (60 hours) in the fall, as part of our Teen Corps Leaders Program (TCLP).
 - After the eight week internship, participants are asked to reflect on their experiences. Here are some of the responses to the following prompts:
 - Teen Corps helped me improve my diet - 47% agreed/strongly agreed.
 - Teen Corps helped me gain skills in gardening - 100% agreed/strongly agreed.
 - Teen Corps helped me better understand food systems - 100% agreed/strongly agreed.
 - Teen Corps helped me value plants more than before - 91.3% agreed/strongly agreed.
 - Teen Corps helped me try new food - 82.6% agreed/strongly agreed.
- Contact - Sean McKay (smckay@fpconservatory.org)

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

- Franklin Soil and Water is excited to announce the successful launch of the 2023-2024 Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant. This grant was made possible with funding from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, and with support and guidance from the City of Columbus, Franklin Park Conservatory, OSU Extension, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, and the Columbus and Franklin County Local Food Board. This grant builds on and contributes to the ongoing efforts to implement the Columbus and Franklin County Local Food Action Plan.
- We believe this grant fills a key funding gap in the Franklin County urban agriculture space, and hope this gives local growers an opportunity to scale-up their operations and strengthen the local food system. The purpose of the Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant is to strengthen the local food supply chain, increase food crop production, processing and distribution via sale/donation by local urban farms, accelerate the ability of local growers to scale up their operations, and ensure support for socially disadvantaged farmers (e.g. BIPOC, women, and low-income growers).
- Towards the end of 2024, we will have several successful projects in the ground and start compiling grant reporting data and stories. We hope to be able to renew this grant for the 2025 growing season as well.
- Contact - Annabel Spranger (aspranger@franklinswcd.org)

Franklinton Farms

- Franklinton Farms (FF) is a nonprofit urban farm with a mission to nourish neighborhood wellbeing and connection through farming, gardening and education. FF provides

hyperlocal produce and offers garden education programs to Franklinton neighbors to create a more resilient, sustainable local food system.

- In response to food insecurity in Franklinton, FF offers sliding-scale prices, delivery, limited free distribution, a free 24/7 U Pick garden, and traditional community garden spaces. Through these efforts, FF distributed over \$16,000 of produce to low-income neighbors and community members in 2023.
- FF continued its free, weekly, warm season farm stand in South Franklinton, reaching the most segregated part of the community, which is predominantly Black and/or Somali American. Additionally, the Lettuce 'NJoy Food Truck, our mobile approach to food access, distributed 101 meals to neighbors in South Franklinton this fall.
- Knowledge is integral to food sovereignty, and FF cultivates the skills for growing food in people of all ages. FF's therapeutic and academic Garden Education initiatives have served 800+ individuals in 2023 in local schools, community spaces and on-site in the Patrick Kaufman Learning Garden.
- FF is also committed to partnering for food system resilience in other food-insecure Franklin County neighborhoods. FF launched the Community Growers Network, a two-year initiative funded by USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production program and Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, to convene and support eight minority Urban Growers in central Ohio who grow fresh produce in and for their low-income neighborhoods.
- Contact - Emma Gardner (emma.gardner@franklintonfarms.org)

Giant Eagle, Inc.

- Giant Eagle, Inc. has prioritized the support of the communities it serves since the company first opened its doors. Giant Eagle is committed to increasing food access, reducing food waste, and enriching the local food system in central Ohio through a variety of partnerships, programs and initiatives.
- In addition to partnering with fresh food rescue organizations in an effort to reduce food waste, Giant Eagle also works closely with the Feeding America Network, including a longstanding relationship with Mid-Ohio Food Collective. Giant Eagle works to support Mid-Ohio Food Collective through a variety of initiatives including two annual register donation campaigns that raise direct funding support, rescuing food from its supermarket locations that is distributed through the Mid-Ohio Food Collective network, and providing financial support to the Mid-Ohio Farm Development.
- The company also helps fight food insecurity and fund nutrition education programs through the Giant Eagle Little Shopper Treat Card Program which raises funds for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals with all funds raised in the region benefitting Nationwide Children's Hospital directly.
- Giant Eagle is also dedicated to supporting the local food chain through community development efforts. One example of this work is the company's unique partnership with Franklin Park Conservancy and Botanical Gardens. Through the program, customers can purchase an exclusive It Takes a Hive to Thrive™ reusable tote bag to help us support local pollinator sustainability efforts. For each bag sold in central Ohio, one dollar is donated to support pollinator education programming and support Franklin Park Conservatory's Pollinator Palooza.
- Contact - Renee Pilat-Dawson (renee.dawson-pilat@gianteagle.com)

Growing and Growth Collective

- The mission of GGC is to improve health outcomes, deepen community engagement and foster economic empowerment through the facilitation of responsive, culturally-relevant and evidence-based programming. The mission and impact pillars were advanced in 2023 as follows (non-exhaustive set of examples):
 - Food Access & Affordability: All 28 raised beds in the Greenway Community Garden that are available for independent growing were reserved by residents and friends of the Near East Side at no cost. In the same garden, a six-bed section was managed

for free Pick What You Need community access. In the Hildreth Community Garden, 30 raised beds were managed by over 40 volunteers throughout the growing season and harvest were largely dispersed to the Urban Aging Residents Coalition. Board Street Presbyterian Church incorporated produce from its onsite garden into selections for clients of the Church's Food Pantry. Visitors and staff of the King Arts Complex were invited to take fresh, ripe produce home with them from the four large raised beds that GGC manages in a space called the Julialynne Walker Gateway Learning Garden.

- Agricultural Education in Cities: Common Ground, a flexible workshop-style program for youth that raises awareness about systemic factors shaping food access and land justice, teaches the basics of growing as a means of overcoming some systemic issues. It was delivered as a multi-week series at GEMS and a one-day 4-H SPIN Club open to all youth in/near Franklin County.
- Comprehensive Health & Wellness: The OSU Wexner Medical Center/James Mobile Education Kitchen led three different cooking demonstrations in the Hildreth Community Garden throughout the 2023 growing season, featuring vegetables and herbs that were grown on-site.
- Equitable Community Development: With GGC being a partner in the We Grow - NES pilot project that is testing out the capacity of the Near East Side to support a closed-loop food system, it was exciting that two Greenway Community Garden Growers participated in the initial season as commercial farmers, providing fresh produce to residents and other shoppers at affordable rates and creating a stream of income for themselves.
- Contact - Adrienne Williams & Jera Oliver (growingandgrowthcollective@gmail.com)

Highland Youth Garden

- In 2023, Highland Youth Garden took significant steps forward in expanding and deepening our work to grow minds, grow food and grow community in partnership with our Hilltop neighbors. We distributed 5,758 pounds of fresh local produce to our community, 3,759 pounds of which we grew ourselves. In total, 85% of the recipients were Hilltop and Franklinton residents. We hosted 4,100 school children's visits to explore STEM learning and gardening. We built 10 new raised vegetable garden beds for Hilltop residents and continued to support growth in an additional 22 gardens planted in previous years. We hosted three highly attended community festivals where we explored healthy recipes with our families. A group of Westside teenagers worked 1,595 hours during summer learning how to garden and advocate for food justice in their community. One of our Green Teens has declared farming as her preferred career path and four of the teens from this summer continued on with us in the fall to run our market and work with the younger children. We also made some significant strides in expanding our programming by offering four weeks of our first-ever summer camp and establishing new partnerships with West High School and Westmoor Middle School. Finally, we significantly expanded our physical facilities through the construction of 25 new raised beds and an outdoor kitchen. We look forward to fully utilizing these new facilities in 2024.
- Contact - Shelly Casto (shelly@highlandyouthgarden.org)

The Kroger Co.

- Kroger's Columbus Division provided more than \$1 million dollars in charitable giving and donated or rescued food to fight hunger, increase food access, and improve racial and health equity in central Ohio. This charitable giving advances the company's Zero Hunger Zero Waste mission and improves the communities in which Kroger is proud to serve. Highlights include support and events with or in support of the Columbus Urban League, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, Sprout Five Learning Center, Direction for Youth and Families, Catholic Social Services and Our Lady of Guadalupe Food Pantry, Stonewall Columbus, A Star House, and Kaleidoscope Youth Center, among other organizations.
- Contact - Mark Bruce (mark.bruce@kroger.com)

LifeCare Alliance

- In 2023, LifeCare Alliance marked its 125th anniversary and its 50th year as the provider of Meals-on-Wheels in central Ohio. In 2023, demand for home delivered meals remained at 87% above pre-pandemic levels and we delivered more than 1.2 million meals to 5,776 Franklin County residents.
- Our Senior Dining Centers served 64,248 meals to nearly 3,087 Franklin County residents at 36 sites around central Ohio. These older adults not only received nutritious, affordable meals, but they did so in the company of their neighbors, warding off the epidemic of loneliness by joining friends for lunch and engaging in planned activities ranging from senior style shows to visits with the football Buckeyes.
- In 2023, The LifeCare Alliance Senior Farmers Market connected 4,819 Franklin County older adults with access to nearly 60,000 pounds of fresh, locally grown produce and honey.
- This year, LifeCare Alliance pivoted the focus of our dedicated cancer supply pantry to better align with the specific nutritional needs of our clients actively battling cancer. Rather than groceries, the pantry now provides nutritionally dense supplements such as Ensure and Glucerna to clients for free with a prescription. In 2023, 1,134 cancer clients received 1,542 cases of these vital nutritional supplements.
- The agency further served 402 individuals in Franklin County living with HIV/AIDS. These clients received 18,585 home delivered meals and 887 personalized grocery orders valued at between \$150-\$175 each.
- From our beginning in 1898 when Carrie Nelson Black founded the agency to improve the health and welfare of Columbus' poor and working families, to 1973 when we became the second Meals-on-Wheels program in the nation, to today when the federal government is studying LifeCare Alliance to replicate its success across the nation, the Alliance of associates, donors, volunteers, elected officials, and community partners has only grown stronger every year. Being There Matters™
- Contact - Tricia Strahler (tstrahler@lifecarealliance.org)

Linden McKinley STEM Academy

- The Linden McKinley/St. Stephen's Community Farms embraces the community by addressing inequality while providing training that meets 21st century skills to overcome societal indifferences. In 2023, the farm operation increased in size and was able to contribute over 11,000 lbs. of produce to the Mid-Ohio Market at St. Stephen's. A small portion of the produce was also utilized in the classroom to provide hands-on learning labs for the students at Linden McKinley STEM Academy. Additional work on the farm includes community engagement that allows for community members to get hands-on experience which includes learning where their food comes from and how to produce their own food on their own property. This engagement has increased over the past four years and was very predominant during the COVID year which allowed us to embrace the community in a way that met the needs of the community in a time of despair and uncertainty. Students get firsthand experience on how to care, treat and harvest plants while enjoying the outdoor environment and the physical engagement that it brings. School aged field trips take place on the farm and allow teachers to provide their students with unique opportunities that engage students with activities that reflect on current or past in-classroom learning. Adult tours are conducted to raise awareness of urban agriculture and the importance it has on the community and Columbus as a whole. As we look into the future in 2024, the Farm envisions an additional expansion and the revitalization of the fish farming operation and an increase in hydroponic production. The farm is funded through the Career Technical Education and Food Service Departments at Columbus City Schools. Additional support and guidance come from grants that are encompassed and managed through Saint Stephen's Community House.
- Contact - Eric Valentine (evalentine@columbus.k12.oh.us)

Local Matters

- Local Matters celebrated 15 years of creating healthier communities through food education, food access and food advocacy in 2023.
- Our food access work was amplified by the efforts of our Veggie Van and 18 community gardens. We launched free Veggie Van delivery this year, which means shoppers within I-270 can have fresh and affordable groceries delivered right to their doorstep. Our team built lasting connections at new Veggie Van pop-up markets and curated thousands of produce boxes, snack boxes and meal kits for partner sites across Columbus in 2023.
- Through a partnership with Nationwide Children’s Hospital, we successfully launched the Fresh Connect pilot program, providing Linden families with \$150 each month to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables at selected retailers.
- We offered food education to community members of all stages and ages from preschoolers to seniors. After a summer of ongoing classes at 25+ sites across Columbus, our food educators settled into our busiest fall of programming yet. We entered the second year of the Franklin County Community Partnerships Grant that fostered the expansion of our programming at Whitehall City Schools, allowing us to double the number of classes we teach at Kae Avenue Elementary School in 2023.
- The Community Advocates Group led critical conversations on the importance of emergency planning and response as it pertains to food, engaging partners like AEP and the American Red Cross.
- In sum, we collaborated with more than 60 partners, reached over 16,000 participants, and provided over 900 hours of service this year.
- Contact - Courtney West (cwest@local-matters.org)

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Food Pantries

- In 2023, LSS Food Pantries saw a 37% increase in visits and a 27% increase in unduplicated clients at our pantry locations in Franklin County. We are working hard to meet the needs of our participants by providing fresh produce and shelf-stable food amidst a year of rising food costs, successfully serving 35% more meals (1,479,443) to our neighbors, particularly in the South Side and Linden regions in Columbus. We also broke ground and completed our first successful harvesting season in our new Champion Community Garden, which produced and donated 1,301.9 lbs of fresh food to our Champion Food Pantry right next door with the assistance and partnership of Garden District and South Side Family Farms (SSFF). This fresh, locally-grown produce was then made accessible to LSS participants and customers, promoting the health and wellness of the South Side. We were also able to host a number of educational programs and events at this garden site, such as an herb-growing class (jointly with Sean McKay and Community Development For All People), and a Garden Walking Tour with South Side Thrive Collaborative and SSFF, which connected community residents to garden sites in their neighborhood.
- Contact - Joel Call (jcall@lssnetworkofhope.org)

Mid-Ohio Food Collective

- Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) marked a historic 2023, building on innovations to strengthen the local food system while responding to record need for food assistance. MOFC helped feed more than half a million Ohioans last year, and over two-thirds of the nearly 80 million pounds distributed was fresh food.
- The Mid-Ohio Farm on the Hilltop is slated for substantial completion soon, thanks to generous support from City of Columbus CDBG funding. The farm aims to realize its smart farm vision in 2024 with educational programming, community engagement and innovative farming methods to increase food access in the Hilltop and across central Ohio.
- The Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 expanded with significant support from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, collaborating with NBC4 and community partners like Riverview International Center to deepen MOFC’s connection with neighbors seeking to grow their own food.

- MOFC expanded its network of Mid-Ohio Markets in 2023, adding three new no-cost, grocery store experiences for our hungry neighbors. New Markets are in Knox County (Center of Hope), East Columbus (Bishop Griffin) and Grove City (Gantz Road).
- MOFC celebrated its first deployment of refrigerated lockers, offering 24-hour free food access at the Mid-Ohio Market at Norton Road on Columbus' far west side. We look forward to expanding this initiative to make fresh, healthy food accessible to our communities.
- MOFC announced plans to transform a former Kroger into the Eastland Prosperity Center in southeast Columbus. The planned human services hub, anchored by a large Mid-Ohio Market, will bring together nutritious food, health services and critical community services to comprehensively address issues of hunger and health once completed.
- Contact - Mike Hochron (mhochron@mofc.org)

Mid-Ohio Food Collective - Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4

- In November 2023, the Franklin County Commissioners unanimously approved \$181,270 to support the Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4, an urban agricultural space operated by Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) located behind the television station's headquarters in northeast Columbus. The project advances the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Action Plan by making locally grown produce more accessible to Franklin County residents. The county's investment in the future of the Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 will support continued improvements to the innovative urban farming space.
- The Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 combines traditional and modern agricultural techniques such as vertical growing towers, greenhouses and community garden boxes. The farm serves the neighborhood surrounding NBC4 off Olentangy River Road which is home to a diverse population that includes many students and a growing New American community. The funding puts the farm in a strong position going into 2024. With the county's generous support, MOFC can strengthen its ability to provide fresh, locally sourced produce to Franklin County residents and build on the progress achieved in 2023. Highlights from this year's work on the farm include:
 - May 2023: MOFC completed upgrades to the site's water and electrical access, setting the stage for more productive growing seasons ahead.
 - June 2023: About 50 volunteers helped improve the site on NBC4's Founders Day of Service. The work includes garden plots available for public use by the farm's neighbors.
 - July 2023: The farm team conducted its first harvest of 2023 from the Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 with lettuce going straight to MOFC's no-cost community markets in Franklin County.
 - September 2023: The farm welcomed neighbors for a community open house in partnership with Riverview International Center. MOFC distributed fresh produce grown by the Mid-Ohio Farm team, including garlic, radishes, kale, peppers, and herbs free of charge to nearby residents.
 - October 2023: The farm team conducted its second harvest of the year and welcomed its new Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 Manager Allison Davis. With volunteers' help, the team planted 124 fruit trees and berry bushes on the property.
 - November 2023: The Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 welcomed Board of Commissioners President John O'Grady to tour the facility in advance of the county's funding announcement.
- MOFC thanks the Franklin County Commissioners for this investment in Franklin County's sustainable local food ecosystem. We look forward to our continued partnership with the county to help our neighbors live healthier, more productive lives.
- NBC4 news reports on the Farm:
 - [NBC4 Mid-Ohio Farm expanding after receiving more funding \(11/7/2023\)](#)
 - [Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 set to receive grant to support food action plan \(11/4/2023\)](#)
 - [Fruit trees planted at NBC4 Mid-Ohio Farm help fight food insecurity \(11/2/2023\)](#)
 - [Mid-Ohio Food Collective changing the face of urban farming \(9/29/2023\)](#)
 - [NBC4 staff give back to help end hunger on company's Founder's Day anniversary](#)

[\(6/16/2023\)](#)

- [Founder's Day of Caring 2023: NBC4 employees give back on company's anniversary \(6/13/2023\)](#)
- Contact - Mike Hochron (mhochron@mofc.org)

Mid-Ohio Market at Columbus State Community College (CSCC)



- The Mid-Ohio Market at Columbus State, located at 400 Grove St. on the Columbus campus, is a source of nutritious food for students, their families and community members. The Market provides fresh produce and other staples to allow students to fully concentrate on their education. A recent survey at Columbus State Community College revealed that only 31% of students were aware of the on-campus food pantry. At the beginning of the 2021 academic school year, only 15% of students reported visiting a food pantry, on- or off-campus. During the 2023 Spring Semester, students who used the market had a higher success rate and were retained at a higher rate than the overall undergraduate student population. The U.S. Department of Education has awarded the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program grant to Columbus State. Part of this grant will allow the College to encourage greater student participation in market shopping, provide a broader variety of healthy foods, and disseminate nutritional education and cooking recipes. Beginning in January 2024, the Market will host student-only events and provide information about eligibility, how to shop, and how to prepare healthy meals. Students will also have a chance to win curated meal boxes and slow cookers. Between January 1 and December 14, 2023, the Mid-Ohio Market at Columbus State had 26,895 service events, reaching 3,426 unique families and 2,364 students. We hope to surpass these numbers in 2024 with the help of the Basic Needs grant.
- Contact - Stephanie A. Clemons, PhD (sclemons8@csc.edu)

Mid-Ohio Market at St. Stephen's



- The Mid-Ohio Market at St. Stephen's provides free and nutritious foods to Franklin County residents and stabilization and resource support by providing connections with additional community resources through wrap-around, short-term case management services. The market is traditionally identified as a choice food pantry-where people can shop and can choose the food based on their family's dietary, cultural and religious beliefs. Consumers can complete a full shop (canned items, grains, protein, dairy, misc., etc.), once a week and receive fresh produce everyday M-F. The market also offers a mobile market that operates twice a week. The mobile market provides a box of food with both perishable and non-perishable foods to families in the Linden neighborhood who do not have access to transportation. In addition to a variety of foods, we provide hygiene items (soap, toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, etc.), household items (laundry detergent, sanitizing wipes, toilet paper, etc.), diapers/wipes along with wrap around services through partnerships with other community agencies. Community partners conduct resource tables to educate customers on current programs available.
- 2023 numbers served at the Mid-Ohio Market at St. Stephen's:
 - 10,450 households unduplicated
 - 35,068 individuals unduplicated
 - 137,476 visits to the market
 - Served 106 zip codes
- Contact - Marilyn Mehaffie (mmehaffie@saintstephensch.org)

Mount Carmel - Healthy Living Center



- The von Zychlin Healthy Living Center (HLC) celebrated 10 years of service in Franklinton and Central Ohio on November 14, 2023. In the last decade, the HLC has hosted over 4,000 wellness programs with over 150,000 encounters. This celebration was commemorated with a community open house debuting a new public mural in the entrance of the building and a new video capturing the impact that the center has had over the last 10 years.

- In 2023, the HLC managed its first full season of a successful education garden that included four programs hosted in partnership with OSU Extension. Produce grown was fully utilized in HLC cooking programs or distributed to community members.
- The Healthy Living Center successfully hosted two cohorts of a new hands-on cooking and nutrition education program called Culinary Medicine: Health Meets Food which is a community facing curriculum based on principles of the curriculum being implemented with Mount Carmel's medical residents.
- The HLC assisted in managing a produce prescription program within the health system in partnership with Mid-Ohio Food Collective. Initially starting with Mount Carmel's internal medicine clinic at Grove City, reach has expanded to five other service areas system wide with at least 50 patients enrolled to date.
- Contact - Josh Edwards (joshua.edwards@mchs.com)

Near East Side Grocery Co-op Project

- Inspired by the Undesign the Redline exhibit, the Policy, Research and Evaluation section in the Center for Public Health Innovation at Columbus Public Health conducted comparative analysis on food access projects to combat food insecurity created by food deserts. Concurrently, the Columbus Public Health Epidemiology Team conducted food access mapping using metrics (social vulnerability, food assistance, grocery store) and identified three key neighborhoods in food deserts, with one being the Near East Side neighborhood. Conversations continued in the community, leading to the formation of a Food Access steering committee that is organizing around a Food Co-op.

Ohio Department of Agriculture

- ODA's Marketing Division works to promote, market and expand access to local, Ohio-made food and agricultural products.
- ODA's signature marketing program Ohio Proud added an additional 19 school districts to On the Menu. Schools may use the Ohio Proud logo if serving Ohio Proud foods in their cafeteria. This was part of ODA's Farm to School Grant, which also created training videos for producers and food service directors interested in learning more about farm to school.
- The Zero Waste Space returned for a second year at the Ohio State Fair. ODA partnered with commodity organizations to use compostable products in their food service. Fairgoers were encouraged to limit waste and learn what is compostable and recyclable. The 2022 pilot ran three days, while 2023's operated for six. A live display was available outside of the building, with corn being grown in compost soil made from items collected at last year's fair.
- ODA and OSU Extension partnered for a fourth year on Ohio's Victory Gardens Program. Thousands of seed kits were available for free to the public to encourage planting gardens at home. Initially, a small pilot program with a dozen counties in 2020 has grown to include 50 counties.
- Ohio CAN (Community, Agriculture & Nutrition) continues to grow since it began in 2022. Historically underrepresented producers can sell food to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. These products are distributed to Ohioans in need through the 12 Feeding America food banks and 3,600 member charities across all counties.
- Contact - Ashley McDonald (ashley.mcdonald@agri.ohio.gov)

Ohio Food Policy Network (OFPN)

- The Nourishing Tomorrow: A Forward-Looking Ohio Food Summit was hosted by the Ohio Food Policy Network (OFPN) and took place on October 20, 2023. The Summit brought together 126 food systems professionals and advocates for discussions on innovative food policies and programs. Participants were welcomed by an introduction to the OFPN's work and policy platform during the opening session.
- The Summit featured a Farm Bill panel where the unique impact of the 2023 Farm Bill on Ohio's diverse agricultural sector was explored. The lunch session included a talk on

agroecological management. A food policy panel focused on the positive changes driven by city and regional policies in Ohio.

- Afternoon breakout sessions covered topics such as the role of food hubs in transforming the food supply chain, farm-to-food assistance programs, and the healing power of food as medicine. The day concluded with discussions on community-driven food outlets, the significance of food and agriculture education programs, and a closing activity summarizing the day and outlining collective action. The Summit aimed to have nurtured a just, sustainable and thriving food system for all Ohioans, addressing key issues and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders.
- Contact - Zainab Pixler (pixlerzainab@gmail.com)

The Ohio State University - Agroecosystem Management Program (AMP)



- Ohio State's AMP program works to ensure that future farming and food systems improve quality of life for all people by being socially and economically viable, just and equitable, biodiverse, sustainable, and resilient. Our signature program, the annual Stinner Summit, is held each fall. Attendees collaboratively workshop possible projects around our mission. Summer 2023 saw the launch of our 2022 project The Stinner Climate Ambassador Program which created an educational and memorable summer internship program for 14 Ohio young adults. Stinner Ambassadors spent five weeks learning together from a variety of hands-on activities and experiences in central Ohio, Athens, Dayton and Yellow Springs. Led by the Methodist Theological School of Ohio, participants learned and volunteered at several Columbus area urban farms, growers' markets, food pantries, and other food system actors. The 2023 Stinner Summit met in Cleveland, but the theme of Building More Resilient and Equitable Food Systems in Metropolitan Regions brought in good statewide attendance. The selected project will fund a series of Stinner-style community discussion groups and local projects in Columbus and four other urban centers. Efforts will rely on existing local leadership with a focus on the BIPOC community. AMP also manages the Warner Grant program, which supports on-farm research projects that bring farmers and university researchers together around sustainable agriculture. Recent projects funded in central Ohio included season extension research to help local growers stay in production year-round and develop more consistent markets. Learn more at amp.osu.edu.
- Contact Douglas Jackson-Smith (jackson-smith.1@osu.edu) for more information.

The Ohio State University - Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics (AEDE)



- [Assistant Professor Jared Grant](#) joined Ohio State AEDE in June 2023. Below is a brief update on his work in 2023.
- Since joining OSU AEDE as an Assistant Professor, I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with various groups in the Ohio food system. In Franklin County, I was invited to serve as a guest speaker for Urban ROOTS. Urban ROOTS (Reshaping Outreach Opportunities through Self-Discovery) is a collaboration with the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, OSU CFAES, OSU Extension Franklin County, and local community partners. The object is to educate youth on the various aspects of food, agriculture and related sciences. For their session on careers in agribusiness/agricultural economics, I was invited as an educator to give insight into careers and answer the youth's questions. I joined the OSU Extension Urban Ag team as a faculty. I currently serve on their program committee for the upcoming Urban Food Systems Symposium in June 2024. With the Urban Ag team, I visited the OSU Extension Cuyahoga County Office where we participated in a discussion with urban farmers, the USDA Farm Service Agency Urban Committee, and the Urban Ag Community stakeholders. Last fall, I volunteered for the Linden Farmers' Market, where I assisted with set up, coordination and clean up for the events. Lastly, I represented OSU and presented research on survival analysis of SNAP allowable retailers at the SNAP Healthy Eating Incentives workshop at Auburn University. My research topics

include Food Security, Food Accessibility, and Behavioral Economics. Broadly, my research focuses on understanding and improving food initiatives designed for underserved areas by incorporating trust in the community.

- Contact - Professor Jared Grant (grant.829@osu.edu)

The Ohio State University - Food Recovery Network Chapter

- Ohio State University's branch of Food Recovery Network diverted over 10,000 pounds of food from landfills and held two educational events in 2023. For the 2022-2023 academic year, the University's Know Food Waste club hosted five events that educated students on reducing their food waste, found new ways to repurpose food scraps, and met with other sustainable clubs. Four events have been hosted in 2023 thus far. During the spring of 2023, Know Food Waste, along with other sustainable clubs on campus, participated in an Earth Day event open to all of campus. An Ohio State student (Yiheng Shu) and faculty (Brian Roe) assisted in publishing a [peer-reviewed article](#) titled Evaluation of a community-based food waste campaign using a national control group that details the assessment of the Save More Than Food campaign as implemented in Upper Arlington.
- [Evaluating the Effectiveness of the "Save More Than Food" Campaign in Changing Food Waste Awareness and Behaviors in Upper Arlington, Ohio Households*](#)
- Contact - Professor Brian Roe (roe.30@osu.edu)

The Ohio State University - Franklin County Extension

- Master gardener volunteers grew and donated 38,316 pounds of fruits, vegetables and herbs to 21 different neighborhood food pantries addressing food insecurity.
- The Urban ROOTS (Reshaping Outreach Opportunities Through Self-Discovery launching for Franklin County youth) program has grown in 2023. Youth engagement increased by 70%. 119 youth engaged through programming, including three library branches and two school districts. Urban ROOTS is a collaboration with the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, The Ohio State University, the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), OSU Extension Franklin County, and local community partners. Eighth graders from the urban core of Franklin County will experience hands-on and immersive learning opportunities that focus on food, agriculture, the environment, and related technologies in their lives.
- OSU Extension partnered with Franklin Soil and Water Conservation to provide Ag in the Classroom/Farm to School programming and educational support. Extension educators provided pilot testing an Agriculture in the Classroom project Growing Teachers Throughout the Seasons with 47 Columbus City School teachers. This is a STEM-based workforce development in agriculture project, creating experiential extensions of the classroom to engage elementary school youth in opportunities in agriculture as a career path.
- Extension educators working with Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center staff about a new garden curriculum collaboration for 2023-2024.
- Extension educators working with Franklin County Dog Shelter staff about a new herb and sensory garden collaboration.
- OSU Extension partnered with the Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio (BCCO) Office of Refugee Resettlement grant for the Department of Health and Human Services Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) for CROP: Cultivating Refugee Opportunity and Partnership providing technical support and programming. (10/1/22 - 9/30/25) \$298,905
- In 2023, Family & Consumer Sciences Extension educators provided nutrition, food preservation and food safety education to 948 people.
- Selected Impacts
 - Graduated 34 military veterans from the Beekeeping School for Military Veterans.
 - Graduated 64 new Master Gardener Volunteers.
 - Graduated 36 Master Urban Farmers.
 - Two new community garden projects were developed.
 - Food insecurity rates were reduced for participants in backyard gardening

- workshops.
- 68% of Master Urban Farmer Workshop participants increased the amount of food they grow as a result of participating in the program.
- 43% of Master Urban Farmer Workshop participants reported that they planned to start a new urban farm or urban food business as a result of participating in the program.
- 86% of Master Urban Farmer Workshop participants reported growing higher-quality or safer food as a result of participating in the program.
- Workshops, demonstrations, field days, tours taught by educators
 - 46 consumer horticulture events with 7,077 participants.
 - 18 urban agriculture events with 671 participants.
 - 17 Master Gardener Volunteer events with 697 participants.
 - Four sustainable agriculture events with 383 participants.
- Contact - Lindsey Latscha (latscha.1@osu.edu).

The Ohio State University - Wexner Medical Center (OSUWMC)



- In 2023, the [Healthy Community Center \(HCC\)](#) launched programming through a partnership with local community members and organizations. With ongoing building renovations, the HCC achieved significant progress in racial and health equity, environmental sustainability, community development, and local food initiatives with a focus on minimizing food waste. Situated on the Near East Side of Columbus, the HCC is evolving into a beacon for community-driven programs, emphasizing wellness and inclusivity. Signature events like Sunset Yoga and Market to Kitchen Thursdays exemplify our commitment to holistic well-being. Collaborations with the Maroon Arts Group and Growing Growth Collective underscore our dedication to community engagement and support for local businesses.
- Set to open in 2024, the Healthy Community Center, located at 1600 E. Long St. in the former Columbus Metropolitan Library Martin Luther King Jr. branch, will feature facilities such as a teaching kitchen, gardening education, and a healthy café. The Healthy Cafe will host local food vendors, contributing to the enhancement of the local food economy and community health. This enables the HCC to actively support and incubate healthy food vendors. Through diverse events, we offer inclusive services, irrespective of financial capability, aligning with our mission to create a positive on-the-ground impact accessible to all. As the HCC becomes integral to the community, our unwavering commitment continues to promote lifelong healthy lifestyles, foster community development, and address the unique needs of the Near East Side of Columbus.
- In September 2019, OSUWMC joined the [Mid-Ohio Farmacy \(MOF\)](#) in partnership with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective (Food Collective). The Food Collective is a regional food bank that delivers over 170,000 meals daily through 680 agency partnerships. Both OSUWMC and the Food Collective are located in a large metropolitan region in Ohio where food insecurity rate estimates range from 16.5%-32.2%. OSUWMC offers the MOF referral in nine clinics: three family medicine clinics; two general internal medicine clinics; three diabetes-specific endocrinology clinics; and, one maternal-fetal medicine clinic. Additional MOF partners include three Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), two free clinics, and a Medicaid managed care plan. The goal of the MOF is to establish a systematic screening and referral process aimed at addressing food insecurity through an electronic referral that connects patients to fresh produce through a food pantry near their home. The MOF uses a variation on food vouchers: a referral from a patient's healthcare provider to the network of over 16 MOF-affiliated food pantries in the metropolitan area. All income-eligible visitors to a food pantry can receive produce once a month, but MOF-participants are eligible to receive produce once a week or four times more frequently. To date, over 1,970 patients are enrolled in the program, and nearly 40% of those referred access a food pantry following the referral at least once. In total, OSUWMC patients have logged over 16,245 visits to food pantries through the program.
- Contact - Javonte McDonald (Javonte.McDonald@osumc.edu)

The Ohio State University - Zero Waste Initiative

- In 2019, Ohio State completed Phase 1 of the Organics Waste Master Plan. In 2023, Ohio State expanded organics collections operations to 120 facilities, including three Traditions dining halls, cafes, research labs, daycares, residence halls, event centers including Ohio Stadium and events at the Jerome Schottenstein Center, and Wexner Medical Center Nutrition Services. In FY23, Ohio State diverted 3,070 tons of organic materials.
- With the expansion of the composting program in FY23, Ohio State achieved a record-high diversion rate of 41.2%.
- The composting expansion has been supported with a robust peer-to-peer education program for students. The in-person training experience gives student volunteers the tools to educate their peers about the value of integrating sustainability into their daily lives through adopting a new composting behavior. Through this program, Ohio State students are developing into sustainability leaders on and off campus. So far in the autumn 2023 semester, 71 students have been trained as compost volunteers.
- Ohio State [launched a pilot in the residence hall Smith-Steeb](#) for students to be automatically enrolled in the composting program. Over 500 personal compost mini bins were distributed.
- Ohio State is implementing an FY24 \$50,000 Ohio State Energy Partners grant to support the purchase of individual mini bins for the off-campus compost drop-off program and bin-washing equipment for the whole campus program. <https://news.osu.edu/ohio-state-energy-partners-grants-support-innovation/>
- In Autumn 2023, Ohio State [expanded the reusable to-go container program to all three Traditions Dining Halls](#). The program will reduce waste to landfill and compost stream contamination.
- Ohio State collaborates with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) focused on sustainability, education and rehabilitation. Beginning in the summer of 2020, the organization evaluated the partnership to ensure it continues to align with our values and offers a benefit to the participants. The Zero Waste subcommittee of the University Task Force on Racism & Racial Inequities led this review. This group recommended that the university not only maintain the ODRC program but expand it to engage more individuals and locations. As a result, the university will continue this program and seek ways to enhance its impact following the task force's recommendations. We are also happy to report that all incarcerated individuals will now receive minimum wage for their participation in this program. The outcomes for the collaboration in FY23 include:
 - Ohio State Compost Tonnage: 463.81 tons of compost were processed at the ODRC London facility.
 - Football and Event Waste: 140.85 tons of gameday waste were processed at the ODRC London facility.
 - Funding to Incarcerated Individuals: \$33,592.50 was paid directly to incarcerated individuals for labor related to the university compost and football programs.
 - Program Outcomes: Of the 14 people who participated in the program in FY23, four were released/furloughed, four were reclassified into different jobs or locations, and six remain working in the program. None was readmitted into the system after being released.
 - Training: All employees received 43.25 hours of training in FY23. Any new employees receive 9.5 hours of onboarding training.
- Contact - Mary Leciejewski (leciejewski.8@osu.edu)

Osteopathic Heritage Foundations - Local Food System Investments

- In 2022, the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations (OHF) approved awards totaling more than \$887,000 as part of the Healthy Food, Healthy Franklin County funding opportunity. Funding was awarded through a Request for Proposals process to four organizations to catalyze change in Franklin County neighborhoods where residents lack access to healthy, affordable food and experience higher rates of chronic disease and other poor health

outcomes. Organizations supported through the initiative include Franklinton Farms, Mid-Ohio Food Collective, Partners Achieving Community Transformation and Produce Perks Midwest with the intent to increase availability of healthy food in low-access, low-income neighborhoods while supporting community-based efforts designed to improve the health of residents and communities.

- As of September 30, 2023, the four organizations have served 8,692 Franklin County residents, including Franklinton and Near East communities, pregnant women and new moms. More than \$244,000 - roughly 129,000 pounds - of fresh healthy food, mostly fresh produce, has been grown and/or distributed in and to vulnerable communities at farmers markets, onsite farm stands and u-pick gardens, and through participation in Ohio Senior Farmers Market coupons, Ohio WIC including WIC Farmers Market coupons, SNAP/EBT acceptance and participation in Produce Perks. Funded partners have also made local, healthy food available through foodbanks and food pantries and through retail market programs serving low-income communities, including mobile markets and corner/convenience stores. Fourteen new and expanding local food producers have increased the amount of food they grow and distribute in their communities, strengthening the local food supply chain and increasing the availability of fresh healthy food for their neighbors.
- “These investments and the outcomes achieved reflect OHF’s dual strategy of building capacity and supporting innovation within the emergency food system while simultaneously investing in local efforts to increase access, affordability and consumption of healthy foods. Together, these projects are contributing to a stronger and more resilient local food system, developing food production, food purchasing and nutrition education systems to improve health and quality of life in the community today and into the future.” - Susan Beaudry, Vice President, Osteopathic Heritage Foundations and Local Food Board Member
- Contact - Cheryl Graffagnino (cgraffagnino@ohf-ohio.org)

Produce Perks Midwest

- In 2023, Produce Perks Midwest (PPM) and the Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network led nutrition incentive programming at 22 participating farmers’ markets and grocery stores in Franklin County. Farmers’ markets participating in the Produce Perks program, Ohio’s nutrition incentive program (providing a \$1-\$1 match to SNAP beneficiaries for fruit and vegetables purchases), redeemed a total of \$45,431 in Produce Perks dollars in 2023. In addition, PPM partnered with Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and Local Matters to support pregnant women into our Infant Vitality Produce Prescription Program. Women in the program received over \$28,158 in fruits and vegetables, facilitating positive birth outcomes and household nutrition security among participants.
- Contact - Ana Bird (ana@produceperks.org)

Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO)

- SWACO’s Save More Than Food campaign received national recognition with features in The New York Times and NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt. New guides for proper food storage and troubleshooting composting were created and partnerships with Black-owned Power 107.5 and Giant Eagle grocery stores were formed to distribute the information to a wider audience.
- With funding from NRDC’s Food Matters Initiative, SWACO, the City of Columbus, and Franklin County distributed \$36,800 to eight organizations within Franklin County with projects to reduce food waste through donation, composting or other programs that divert food waste from the Franklin County Sanitary Landfill.
- Save More Than Food campaign assets were added to the EPA’s Preventing Wasted Food in Your Community: A Social Marketing Toolkit, a resource available to other public and non-profit organizations to help with the implementation of a food waste prevention campaign.

- With collaboration from SWACO, the Cities of Bexley, Columbus and Dublin implemented community-level Save More Than Food outreach activities which resulted in each community keeping more food waste out of the landfill.
- Franklin County is now home to 22 food waste drop-off locations across 11 communities, including new locations at SWACO's Recycling Convenience Center and three locations in the City of Columbus.
- To close out the year, SWACO hosted over 50 food waste partners, representing more than 35 different organizations, departments and businesses during the 2023 Central Ohio Food Waste Convening. Attendees celebrated five years of the Food Waste Action Plan and discussed how to continue to make progress on shared goals. SWACO and other partners will be leading work groups in the new year that will leverage partnerships to make progress on the action plan.
- Contact - Jane Boehm (jane.boehm@swaco.org)

South Side Family Farms

- South Side Family Farms, a program of The nonprofit ICANDO Community Development has continued on its path to provide nutritious healthy fruits and vegetables to South Side food-insecure communities. We've continued to build out our farm learning spaces located on two City Land Bank properties and continued construction of our farm stand on land provided by our friends at Donatos and The Grote family. This farm stand distribution structure will provide a 6'x14' refrigeration area built by Engineers Without Borders Ohio State Engineering Club. The structure will also house a micro greens operation and at least one hydroponic Grow Tower for fresh herbs and arugula production. We have plans to install solar power, water conservation, and a food scrap digester to demonstrate sustainability and conservation. This farm stand location will also serve as a distribution space, where in a walkable community model, customers will come to pick up their Produce Package CSA, and also shop through freshly harvested fruits and vegetables. Through all of our growing spaces, including one at LSS Food Pantries on Champion Ave., we will provide garden cooking sessions with local chefs, dieticians and residents showing off their cooking skills and preparing their best dishes out of our farm treats.
- It is our goal to establish a new climate resilient STEM-centered food system on 1.3 acres of land at a South Side Church on Frebis Ave. This space will allow us to fulfill our passion for building economic avenues by educating youth in sustainable agricultural practices, teaching farm building, and construction, marketing and merchandising, and gaining an understanding of where their food comes from. We are also still farming in Johnstown on three acres of farmland. Our goal is to leverage our produce sales to provide affordable produce for all.
- Contact - Minister Aaron Hopkins (minakhopkins@gmail.com)

What Chefs Want!

- In 2023, the What Chefs Want's Columbus distribution center acted as home base for 24 central/northern Ohio vendors. Across these 24 vendors alone, we purchased more than \$2.5 million in 2023 as we sought to expand their distribution network across the city, the region and beyond. Overall, we are proud to say that the Columbus distribution center stood out as our company's highest performing warehouse in the region in terms of sales volume that was specific to products grown/raised/created by small and mid-sized farms and food artisans.
- Our small and mid-sized vendor group is one where extra care is taken to expand equitable access to markets and to grow a more diverse vendor population. What Chefs Want's local foods department truly appreciates is the Columbus warehouse team's investment in distributing local/regional foods and their commitment to taking extra steps when necessary to make work with these vendors possible.
- Contact - Anna Haas (ahaas@whatchefswant.com)