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## MEDIA RELEASE

# FEEDING AMERICA AWARDS RI COMMUNITY FOOD BANK \$500,000 EQUITY IMPACT GRANT TO ADDRESS RACIAL DISPARITIES IN FOOD INSECURITY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WEST ELMWOOD HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION'S SANKOFA INITIATIVE

**Food Bank will host a virtual town hall on Thursday, September 7 at 12:00 noon for the community to learn more about Sankofa Initiative and the partnership.**

**Providence, RI** | The Rhode Island Community Food Bank has received a \$500,000 grant from the Feeding America Food Security Equity Impact Fund. [Feeding America](#), the nation's largest hunger-relief organization, awarded more than \$4 million in [Food Security Equity Impact Fund](#) grants to 10 food banks nationwide, including the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. Each food bank applied for the grant on behalf of a community-based organization to address root causes of hunger and food insecurity. The Fund is part of Feeding America's broader grantmaking strategy to intentionally support communities of color and rural communities known to be disproportionately impacted by food insecurity.

The Food Security Equity Impact Fund was created in 2021 and seeded with a \$20 million donation from MacKenzie Scott. This year, grants ranged from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and the Rhode Island Community Food Bank received the maximum funding for its application on behalf of the [Sankofa Initiative](#) of the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation.

"We know that communities of color experience food insecurity at disproportionate rates," said Ami McReynolds, chief equity officer of Feeding America. "As we work to improve food access for all, we need to invest in local organizations whose work helps to remove barriers that lead to long-term or multi-generational food insecurity. These grants are a major step in our journey toward community-led change."

The Sankofa Initiative is a trio of food and agriculture programs, including a farmers' market, community gardens, and commercial kitchen, which promote self-sufficiency and economic well-being for residents of the West End of Providence. The Initiative was developed in 2011 due to demand for healthy food access. Many residents, especially those of African, Central American and Southeast Asian backgrounds, reported that they were unable to find fresh, affordable food that was reflective of their native diets. Despite being food insecure, they didn't want to just receive a bag of food from a local pantry. They wanted to be involved with growing and helping sustain their community's local food system.

The Sankofa Initiative has transformed over 35,000 square feet of blighted properties into community garden sites that provide space for low-income residents to grow food, many of whom are refugees. It also includes a large industrial kitchen to support neighborhood catering businesses and farmers' market vendors, and the Sankofa World Market, which provides space where Sankofa growers can sell their food.

Sankofa plans to use the multi-year grant funding to expand its growing capacity with a new greenhouse; renovate their kitchen space to accommodate small business training for culturally relevant local businesses; provide workshops and nutrition education to community members and hire staff to manage their community farmers market and gardens.

“This grant is a game changer for the Sankofa Initiative and for the West End community,” shared Candace Harper, executive director at the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation. “The funding will allow us to complete work that will expand our reach and enable us to serve more neighbors in need. We’re grateful to the Food Bank for nominating us and to Feeding America for granting us the funds.”

“We’re so honored to have the chance to work with Feeding America and the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation on this funding opportunity,” said Andrew Schiff, RI Community Food Bank CEO. “The Sankofa Initiative is a perfect fit for the Impact Fund’s mission and we’re thrilled to see these funds put to use right here in Providence.”

**The Food Bank will host a virtual Town Hall on Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM, offering the community the opportunity to learn more about the Food Equality Impact Fund, the Sankofa Initiative and its plans for the funds. [Register for the Town Hall via Zoom.](#)**

#### **About Rhode Island Community Food Bank**

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank distributes food to 80,000 struggling Rhode Islanders each month through a statewide network of 143 member agencies including food pantries, meal sites, shelters, youth programs and senior centers. Last year, the Food Bank distributed 16.2 million pounds of food, of which approximately 3.7 million pounds was fresh produce and 2.8 million pounds was culturally relevant foods. The Food Bank is a member of Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization. To learn more, visit [rifoodbank.org](http://rifoodbank.org).

#### **About West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation**

The mission of the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation is to promote the development of healthy, sustainable communities through housing services to help individuals and neighborhoods meet their affordable housing needs in the West End neighborhood and other parts of Providence and Rhode Island. Learn more at <https://www.westelmwood.org>.

#### **About Feeding America**

Feeding America is committed to an America where no one is hungry. The organization supports tens of millions of people who experience food insecurity to get the food and resources they say they need to thrive as part of a nationwide network of food banks, statewide food bank associations, food pantries and meal programs. They also invest in innovative solutions to increase equitable access to nutritious food, advocate for legislation that improves food security and work to address factors that impact food security, such as health, cost of living and employment. The organization partners with people experiencing food insecurity, policymakers, organizations, and supporters, united with them in a movement to end hunger. Visit [www.FeedingAmerica.org](http://www.FeedingAmerica.org) to learn more.