



RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY  
FOOD BANK

# 2023 Annual Report





Rhode Island Community Food Bank

# Leadership

## Officers of the Board

### President

Jyothi Subramaniam  
Former Faculty  
Johnson & Wales University

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### Vice President

Rilwan Feyisitan, Jr.  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
East Bay Community Action Program\*

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### Treasurer

Michael DiSandro  
Senior Vice President  
First Citizens Bank

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### Secretary

Debbie Thurston  
Food Coordinator  
Tap-In\*

## Board Members

**Maureen Barishian**

Senior Accountant/Investment Analyst  
Bryant University

**Aline Binyungu**

Executive Director & Co-Founder  
Women's Refugee Care\*

**Darrèl Brown**

Vice President  
Rhode Island Conservation Law Foundation

**Cynthia Butler**

Founder & President  
Butler & Associates

**Mary Eastman**

HR Lead, Fidelity Institutional Client Experiences &  
FBOT Operations Services Group  
Fidelity Investments

**Kimberly Fernandez**

Executive Director  
Federal Hill House Association\*

**Angelo Garcia**

Executive Director/Founder  
Segue Institute for Learning\*

**Brian Gross**

Creative Partner  
NAIL

**Yvette Kenner**

Administrator  
McAuley Ministries\*

**David Macchioni**

Store Manager  
Stop & Shop

**Peter Marino**

President & Chief Executive Officer  
Neighborhood Health Plan  
of Rhode Island

**Kathy O'Donnell**

SVP & Head of Public Affairs  
Citizens Bank

**Mathies J. Santos**

Former Associate Chief, Patient Services  
Providence VA Medical Center

**Paul Silver**

Partner  
Hinckley Allen

**Alison Tovar, PhD, MPH**

Associate Professor of Behavioral  
& Social Sciences  
Brown University School of Public Health

**Genie McPherson Trevor**

Editor  
edible RHODY

**David Veliz**

Director  
Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition  
to Reduce Poverty

**Polly Wall**

Former Managing Director  
Royal Bank of Scotland

**Lisa Wesner**

VP, Global Brand Finance  
Hasbro

**Martha Wofford**

President & Chief Executive Officer  
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island

\* Member Agency

## Generous Support in the Face of Challenging Times

# A Letter from our Leadership

For many of us, 2023 was a return to a more normal way of life after the uncertain times of the pandemic. We got out, we resumed our previous level of activity – and our overly busy schedules. But one thing hasn't changed. As Rhode Islanders continue to be faced with sky-high rents, and inflated food and utility costs, many of our neighbors are struggling.

At the Food Bank, we're working harder than ever to meet the demand for nutritious pantry staples, fresh produce and culturally relevant foods to be distributed through our agencies. You may have noticed that this year's report is in a digital-only format. Forgoing the cost of printing and mailing an Annual Report enables us to focus more money where it's needed – on feeding Rhode Islanders.

In this Annual Report, you'll meet members of our community who work hard to support their families, but still need extra help. You'll meet a large organization, a small business and a local family whose generosity inspires us. And we'll update you on the grant funding we secured for the Sankofa Initiative in Providence.

We're so grateful for the generous support of the individuals, corporations and foundations that made it possible to do this important work. Your investment in the Food Bank has enabled us to distribute more food to meet the increased demand and to continue to offer programming centered on the health and well-being of our guests. We hope reading these stories will inspire you to continue your support for our work. Together, we can achieve a hunger-free state.

With gratitude,



**Jyothi Subramaniam**  
Board President

*Jyothi Subramaniam*



**Andrew Schiff**  
Chief Executive Officer

*Andrew Schiff*



A guest at the North Kingstown Food Pantry checks out a demo by our Healthy Habits team and comes away with a new recipe and some of the ingredients she'll need to make it.



#### **Our Mission**

To improve the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders by advancing solutions to the problem of hunger.

#### **Our Vision**

We envision a state where no one goes hungry.

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MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING**  
**AMERICA**



The students of Southside Elementary School in Providence paid us a visit to take a tour of our facility and learn about food insecurity.









# Year in Review

## Advocating for Change & Coming Together in Community

FY2023 was a busy year for the Food Bank. With the generous support of our donors, we were able to increase our food distribution by 1.2 million pounds, distributing over 16.2 million pounds of food. This included 3.8 million pounds of fresh produce and 2.7 million pounds of culturally relevant food.

### **Weathering a Perfect Storm**

In March of 2023, many families who relied on the boost to their SNAP benefit that was put in place during the pandemic saw that benefit partially cut when the emergency SNAP allotment was eliminated. This came at a time when families were also grappling with the impact of inflation, creating a perfect storm. From January through November of 2023, our member agencies saw an average of 79,596 guests per month – an increase of 27% over the same period the previous year. With your help, the Food Bank continues to increase distribution, despite our own food costs increasing. [Help support the increased distribution of nutritious food.](#)

### **Advocating for Free School Meals**

For two years during the pandemic, public schools received federal funds to provide lunch and breakfast to all students, free of charge. When this federal

program ended in September 2022, Rhode Island opted not to continue it with state funds. This meant that parents were once again paying for school meals based on household income. During the 2023 legislative session, two similar bills under the umbrella of “Healthy School Meals for All” were introduced to the legislature to make school meals permanently free for all students. The Food Bank was part of a coalition advocating for these bills to ensure our kids have access to the nutritious food necessary for good health and academic achievement, regardless of ability to pay. Though the legislation gained traction, Healthy School Meals for All was ultimately not passed. In 2024, the Food Bank will be working closely with the coalition to share the benefits of this legislation and encourage our state’s leaders to make room for it in the budget going forward. [Help us advocate for change.](#)

### **Uncovering the Depth of the Need in our State**

For the first time since 2019, the Food Bank embarked on its Rhode Island Hunger Survey, with help from the Survey Research Center of the Brown University School of Public Health. The Food Bank enlisted the support of 60+ volunteers to survey 459 guests of our member agencies over three months. The survey was designed to help us know the demographics of who we serve, where the need is highest, what other services people use, and more. By



understanding who we're serving, we can better ensure Rhode Islanders are getting the support they need. [Read the Hunger Survey brief.](#)

### Major Grant to Impact West End

In the summer of 2023, the Food Bank was thrilled to announce that we were one of 10 food banks nationwide to receive a grant from Feeding America's Food Security Equity Impact Fund. Each participating food bank applied on behalf of a local nonprofit working to address racial disparities in food insecurity. We were awarded \$500,000 in grant funds for the Sankofa Initiative of the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation. [Learn more](#) about how Sankofa will put this funding to work over the next two years to make a difference on the West Side of Providence.



Chef and Kitchen Manager, Nahami King (left) and Chef Ron Lewis prepare hundreds of empanadas to be served at our Kids Cafe sites.

# Program Updates

## Programming That Prioritizes Health & Well-Being



### Healthy Habits: Eating Well on a Budget

[Healthy Habits: Eating Well on a Budget](#) is the Food Bank's community nutrition program that bridges the gap between food insecurity and health for the individuals and families who visit our pantries. Through the lens of accessibility, cultural competency and health equity, our culinary and nutrition professionals provide practical, science-based education to the communities we serve. Last year, they provided **143** classes, demonstrations and workshops, helping **2,350** guests eat healthfully on a budget.



### Kids Cafe

[Kids Cafe](#) provides healthy evening meals to children at risk of hunger at four after-school programs, including the Boys & Girls Club of East Providence, the Pawtucket YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket and Segue Institute for Learning in Central Falls. Food Bank chefs and nutrition experts prepare approximately **435** healthy meals daily, Monday through Friday, at no cost to our partner sites or the families they serve. In addition to healthy, culturally diverse meals, the team provides kid-friendly nutrition education, designed to engage students in healthy eating habits and teach basic cooking skills.





A young girl at Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket enjoys her egg cup on "breakfast for dinner day".



CSFP recipients at Kennedy Manor in Pawtucket look forward to picking up their boxes, which include a block of fresh cheese, shown here.



A volunteer packs a Meals4Kids box with nutritious foods.



## Senior Boxes

The federal [Commodity Supplemental Food Program \(CSFP\)](#) administered for the State by the Food Bank, supplies qualified low-income seniors with a monthly box of healthy USDA staples to help stretch their food budget. The boxes are distributed at low-income senior high rises and through our member agencies. Last year, the US Department of Agriculture allotted Rhode Island **2,240** food boxes each month to provide to vulnerable seniors in our community.

## Meals4Kids

[Meals4Kids](#) boxes provide 5 days of healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks, as well as kids' activities and information about social service resources. Boxes are distributed through food pantries and community organizations, and include things like cereal, macaroni and cheese, snack bars and tuna with crackers. Last year, the Food Bank distributed over **12,000** of the shelf-stable boxes to families in need.

meals**4kids** 



SNAP Outreach Coordinator Melinda Flores offers support at an agency booth.



## SNAP Outreach

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical benefit for those who need food assistance, providing funds they can spend on food in the grocery store. Yet many people don't know they're eligible for the benefit, or struggle to navigate the application process. Our trained, multi-lingual [SNAP Outreach](#) team visits agencies to assist guests who may be eligible to apply for SNAP. Last year, the team completed **213** agency visits, reaching **3,401** households to help determine eligibility, fill out forms, answers questions and make referrals for basic needs and legal services. As a result of these visits, qualifying individuals were able to claim an estimated **\$1.3 million** in SNAP benefits that they may have otherwise missed out on.





Examples of the contents of a convenient To-Go Bag.

## To-Go Bags

The Food Bank offers convenient [To-Go Bags](#) for unhoused guests at our urban meal sites. Packed in reusable drawstring backpacks, these bags contain seven light meals and sixteen snacks, made up of nutrient-dense foods that are easy to open and don't require refrigeration or cooking. Over **4,000** bags were distributed last year in high-need areas.



Speaker Joseph Shekarchi (left) and Senator Sandra Cano (center), joined Food Bank CEO Andrew Schiff, board member David Veliz and Chief Philanthropy Officer Lisa Roth Blackman for a tour of the Food Bank, in support of the work we're doing.





Flannery Sullivan, Community Nutrition Manager, shares the sugar content of various beverages with a mom at the Segue Institute for Learning in a Healthy Habits workshop.



The Food Bank provides food to 18 meal sites, including New Beginnings in Woonsocket. Pictured here, a volunteer brings warmth to her guests in addition to a meal.



Joyce, a guest at East Bay Food Pantry in Bristol, takes home fresh bread in addition to pantry staples.





# Food Bank Stories

## Sabrina Navigates her New Life in Newport

After her partner's death, Sabrina moved her two daughters, in kindergarten and third grade, from Providence to Newport for a fresh start. She received her CNA certification and is working in healthcare, while navigating her new life as a single mom with resilience and strength.

Despite her daily struggles trying to make ends meet, Sabrina is doing her best to progress in her career and forge a stable life for her girls. She receives SNAP, but it's a catch-22—because of her new job, the amount of her benefit went down, but her salary isn't enough to make it all work. "It's tough," Sabrina shared.

**"I've had to choose between getting certain foods for my kids and paying my bills. But now I feel things are starting to get better."**

We met Sabrina on a recent visit to the Martin Luther King Junior Community Center in Newport, lovingly referred to by its guests as "the MLK." The MLK is one of the Food Bank's 143 member agencies, where guests can visit the pantry as well as receive other support services. Sabrina raved about the foods available to her at the pantry, including meat. "I can always chef something up," she quipped.

Sabrina says that every day is a unique challenge with unexpected twists, which makes resources like the MLK critical to her household's well-being. "If I didn't have this food pantry, it would put a real dent in my household. I need the resources—without this, I wouldn't even know how to feed my kids, and that's a very scary thing."





Sabrina chooses hearty soups from the shelves at the Martin Luther King Junior Community Center in Newport.





Alana and Grace, employees at Tallulah's Farm Fresh Providence location, serve tacos and smiles.

## A Business Rooted in Rhode Island Gives Back

*Tallulah's Taqueria prioritizes their giving around feeding neighbors*

Kelly Ann Rojas, co-founder of Tallulah's Taqueria with her husband Jake, loves Rhode Island. "It's such a tight community and that's what the Food Bank taps into," Kelly shared. Kelly and Jake opened the first brick and mortar Tallulah's location in the Fox Point neighborhood of Providence in 2014, with two more stores to follow.

The Tallulah's team has supported the Food Bank in many ways over the years, including participating in our fundraising events. But recently, they've taken a more innovative approach to giving. In FY2023, the small business donated nearly \$6,000 to the Food Bank.

Tallulah's uses a platform that connects with their online ordering app. When a customer places an online order, they can choose to make a donation to the Food Bank, with Tallulah's matching a portion of each contribution. The restaurant also offers an employee program that matches employee donations up to \$250 a year, and allows them to participate in volunteer opportunities at their normal rate of pay.

**"The Food Bank is our go-to cause. When you see the emotion behind someone receiving something as basic as food, that means more than any statistic you might read. Everyone responds to kindness and love."**

**– Kelly Ann Rojas**



## For the Paiva's it's Personal

*East Providence retirees devote themselves to their community*

Louise and Don Paiva are retired, but keep a full schedule of activities supporting their East Providence community, especially around food security and education.

Don was born in East Providence, and the couple have lived in their home in Riverside for 53 years. When Food Bank member agency Good Neighbors Food Pantry moved from Bristol to Riverside down the street from the Paiva's in 2014, they dove right in. Both Louise and Don served on the board for several years and continue to volunteer at the pantry and meal site. Louise, who worked in marketing and PR at Memorial Hospital for 28 years, tries to plug in her professional skills wherever she can, setting up collection drives and doing grant writing for the pantry. Don volunteers as a cook at the meal site and wherever else he's needed.

The couple have been donating to the Food Bank since 2006. Don shared that after their first child was born, Louise was home taking care of their son, and he got laid off so they got assistance in the form of food stamps.

This experience gave Don an appreciation for what it was like to be on the other side of the issue. Louise stressed that food insecurity can affect anyone and that anyone can help. Every size contribution makes an impact, whether you can give a lot or a little.

**“People have a perception of what someone who visits a food pantry is like, but you can be one paycheck or a series of unfortunate events away from food insecurity. It can happen to anyone.”**

**– Louise Paiva**

Don and Louise Paiva in the Food Bank's warehouse.





# Blue Cross Engages Colleagues in Fostering Healthy Communities

Carolyn Belisle, Managing Director of Corporate Social Responsibility for Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, puts a strong focus on colleague engagement around philanthropy. “We’re a better organization when our colleagues understand what’s happening outside the walls of this building,” Carolyn shares. As a long-time supporter of the Food Bank, Blue Cross ensures that employees understand the link between food security and overall health, and how the Food Bank is working to alleviate hunger in Rhode Island. “We don’t want our folks to support the Food Bank just because it’s the right thing to do,” notes Carolyn, “but because we all have a role to play in the health of our community.”

Blue Cross engages all of its associates in its food security efforts through regular communications and even a little fun. Each Thanksgiving, employees participate in the “Gobble Games,” dividing into teams represented by different Thanksgiving dishes and using the Food Bank’s online giving platform. Employees make donations on behalf of their favorite Thanksgiving foods – with all proceeds going to the Food Bank.

In addition to generous corporate grant funding, Blue Cross also collaborates closely with the Food Bank on the RI Life Index, a Blue Cross and Brown University School of Public Health initiative that provides food insecurity data that we report in our annual Status Report on Hunger. “Access to nutritious food is absolutely essential to good health,” notes Blue Cross President & CEO Martha L. Wofford, who serves on the Food Bank’s Board of Directors. Martha adds, “Unfortunately, food insecurity is all too common and affects every community in our state. But that should not be the case. No one should go hungry. We’re proud to partner with the Food Bank to help serve more Rhode Islanders.”

**“Food insecurity is all too common and affects every community. But that should not be the case. No one should go hungry.”**

**– Martha Wofford**

**Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island President & CEO**





Carolyn Belisle, Managing Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at Blue Cross (left) with Food Bank CEO Andrew Schiff and Blue Cross President & CEO, Martha Wofford





## “Without the Pantry, I’d Go Days Without Food”

Heather, 41, is a devoted mother supporting five children. Her disability income, stretched thin after essential expenses like rent and utilities, leaves little room for groceries. Yet, her meatloaf recipe brings warmth to her family’s table. “Their dad is a better cook than me, but my meatloaf wins,” Heather laughed.

Heather visits Your Neighborhood Food Pantry in Providence – a resource that plays a vital role, filling in the gaps and providing essential support her family relies on each week. **“I’m struggling just like everybody else. The food prices are going up, and we’re on a limited income. Without**

**the pantry, I would have to go days without food,” Heather revealed. “I get SNAP but it only lasts us about two weeks.”** With SNAP assistance falling short and unable to feed her growing teens, the pantry becomes an essential part of feeding her family.

“I can barely pay for all my bills, but I need to make sure my kids are fed,” Heather says, emphasizing that pride should never stand in the way of her family’s well-being. “There are times where my sons ask me, ‘Mom, did you even eat today?’” For Heather’s family and so many others, the food assistance she receives at Your Neighborhood Pantry is essential on their journey toward financial stability.

While Heather was not comfortable being photographed, we joined her as she browsed the shelves at Your Neighborhood Food Pantry.







## Truck Stop Raises Funds and Fun

On June 1, 2023, we welcomed guests to the Food Bank for our Truck Stop: Festival of Street Eats fundraiser. It was a beautiful night of delicious food and happy snackers that brought in \$200,000 for the Food Bank! Thank you to our sponsors, guests and vendors for making it a night to remember.

Guests at the 2023 Truck Stop event sample food and drinks from more than 20 local food purveyors while supporting our work.







Anne Szostak and her grandchildren pack bags to be distributed at the East Bay Food Pantry. Helping others runs in the Szostak family.



## Ending Hunger is a Family Affair

In 2002, Anne Szostak, the former Chair and CEO of Fleet Bank of RI, co-chaired the Food Bank capital campaign that put us in our current location on Niantic Avenue. Seeing the scope and scale of the work that the Food Bank could do in this new space cemented her involvement in our work. But it was not the first time Anne and her husband Mike, a sports writer, got involved in food security issues.

Mike Szostak shared his recollection of growing up in a large family north of Boston. "With 8 kids, there was only just enough. My parents received federal surplus food items like cheese and milk to help feed us." Mike shared his admiration for the Food Bank's emphasis on healthy food. "We live in a society of ultra-processed food because it's all many people can afford. But we can't lose sight of the importance of healthy food. The Food Bank plays an important role in providing it."

"One thing I've always appreciated is how well the Food Bank is managed," Anne shared. "You're efficient and effective in what you do, staying focused on the mission and not wasting any resources. Your donors' dollars are put to great use."

Anne and Mike have passed down their passion for philanthropy to their daughters Brooke and Kate and to their grandchildren. "Over the years, it's evolved into a family discussion, bringing our daughters into the decision-making," Anne said. "They bring a different perspective. They take pride in our family being active in our community. That's a joyful thing for us."

"Food is a source of coming together in joy," Anne's daughter Brooke shared. "I feel privileged that I can give my family healthy foods. It's such a basic human need, so as a parent, it hits me hard that there are people who, despite working really hard and trying their best, can't get access to the food they need."

Now, Anne and Mike are engaging their four grandchildren in an age-appropriate way, impressing upon them that even they can have an impact and do good for someone else. "Is there anything more basic than having a roof over your head and food on your table," Mike asked. "If Rhode Islanders can help out those who can't meet those needs, it's a no-brainer."

**"I feel privileged that I can give my family healthy foods. It's such a basic human need, so as a parent, it hits me hard that there are people who, despite working really hard and trying their best, can't get access to the food they need."**

**– Brooke Greenthal, daughter of Anne & Mike Szostak**





Farmers from the West End show off the produce they grow to be sold at the Sankofa World Market, which is one of the programs that will grow as a result of the Food Security Equity Impact Grant.





## Growing Hope in the West End with a Feeding America Equity Impact Grant

The Food Bank was the recipient of a \$500,000 grant from the Feeding America Food Security Equity Impact Fund on behalf of the Sankofa Initiative of the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation (WEHDC). [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 ours. Each food bank applied for the grant on behalf of a local organization to address root causes of hunger and food insecurity in communities of color.

The Sankofa Initiative is a trio of food and agriculture programs, serving a largely immigrant and refugee community. It includes a farmers market, community gardens and a commercial kitchen, which promote self-sufficiency and economic well-being for residents of the West End of Providence. 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 budding BIPOC business owners, and hire staff to manage their community farmers market and gardens.

Since the grant funding, the Food Bank has done healthy cooking demonstrations at the Sankofa World Market farmers market and assisted Sankofa with their plans to grow their infrastructure. We've also distributed hundreds of \$20 farmers market vouchers to nearby food pantries, which improves the food security of our pantry guests, while at the same time boosting the business of the growers who sell at the market. As the two-year grant period progresses, we'll provide updates on how the organization continues to put the funding to work.





Guests enjoyed tasty local bites at our last Empty Bowls event in 2019.



## SAVE THE DATE: Empty Bowls is Back!

March 27<sup>th</sup> 2024 | Waterfire Arts Center

Handmade bowls and gourmet bites: A tasty way to give back. Join the Food Bank for the return of our Empty Bowls fundraising event on March 27th. [Learn more and get your tickets here.](#)



# Food Bank Finances

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

## FY23 Statement of Financial Position

### ASSETS

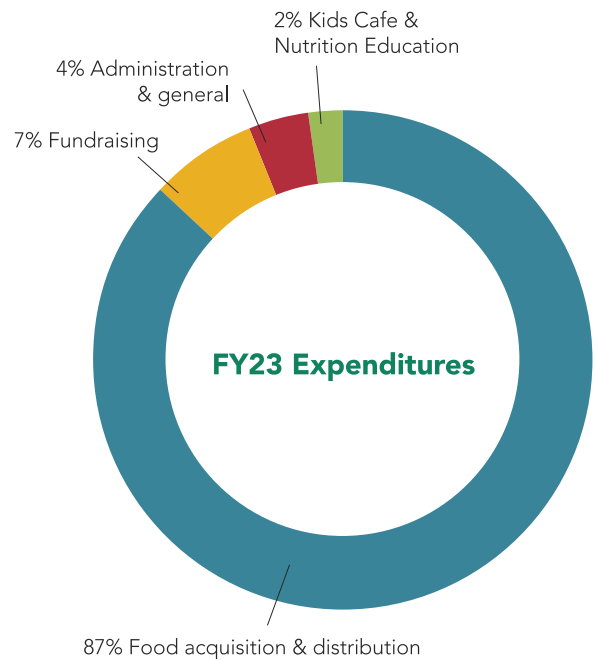
Cash and cash equivalents	\$3,962,867
Accounts & grants receivable, net	1,016,115
Food inventory	852,916
Prepaid expenses & other assets	311,003
Property & equipment, net	5,737,346
Investments	11,325,924
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$23,206,171</b>

### LIABILITIES

Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$932,221
Operating leases payable	50,529
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$982,750</b>

### NET ASSETS

Without donor restrictions	\$21,550,725
With donor restrictions	672,696
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$22,223,421</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$23,206,171</b>



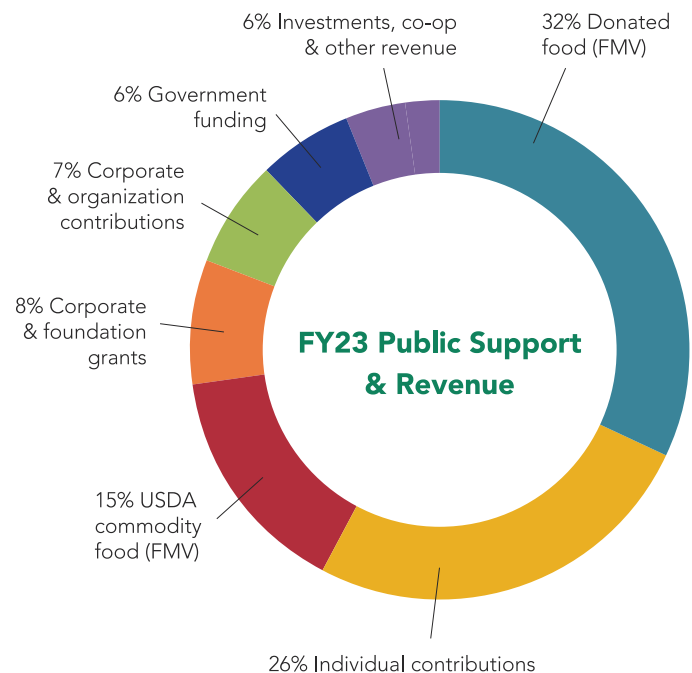
## FY23 Statement of Activities

### PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUE

Contributions	\$11,949,255
Food contributions (fair market value)	9,052,765
USDA commodity food (fair market value)	4,396,414
Co-op revenue	182,682
Government grants & contracts	1,844,806
Net investment income & other income	1,436,669
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT &amp; REVENUE</b>	<b>\$28,862,591</b>

### EXPENSES

Program services	\$27,636,408
Management & general	1,341,422
Fundraising & development	2,033,628
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$31,011,458</b>
<b>DECREASE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>(\$2,148,867)</b>



The financial statements of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank Association are audited by Kahn, Litwin, Renza & Co., Ltd. A copy of the complete audited financial statements, along with the auditor's report thereon, is available at [rfoodbank.org](http://rfoodbank.org).





RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY  
**FOOD BANK**

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