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21



# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT





# Letter from the President & CEO

2021 was an incredible year for the Lowcountry Food Bank and the neighbors we serve. As we highlight our 2021 impact, we reflect on the year's many challenges while keeping a laser focus on our mission to lead the fight against hunger.

The food insecurity rate remains high at 11% in the 10 coastal counties of South Carolina. This is equivalent to 161,430 of our neighbors, of whom 45,540 are children. Our work to ensure that every neighbor who experiences food insecurity has equitable access to healthy food remains focused and strategic while we navigate higher food and transportation costs, food procurement challenges, shipping delays, and industry-related labor shortages. Despite these many challenges, we were able to provide the equivalent of nearly 34 million meals during 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities already facing momentous challenges of underemployment, low income, and a lack of transportation and access to grocery stores. We have continued to innovate, not only focusing on the food we distribute but also on deepening our understanding and responses to the root causes of hunger and food insecurity and how these issues can best be addressed in the varying and unique communities we serve.

We have diversified our food distribution models to expand access in rural areas, specifically in Williamsburg, Jasper, Hampton, and Colleton counties. We have significantly increased the number of mobile food distributions, which specifically meet our neighbors where they are. We are utilizing GIS mapping and sophisticated data to inform when and where food is most needed. We continue to expand our information technology capabilities, which has improved our fleet management efficiency and decreased our truck fleet costs.

In 2021, we expanded our Food for Health initiative. A person who experiences food insecurity has an increased risk for health issues and chronic conditions, but these risks can be mitigated by access to nourishing foods. Working alongside our health care partners can improve our neighbors' access to the foods they need to thrive, which is integral to improving health outcomes, decreasing health care costs, and improving long-standing health disparities.

In 2022, we are advancing initiatives and innovations that ensure our neighbors who experience food insecurity have equitable access to healthy food. Our Agency Council, comprised of partner agencies, who distribute nearly 90% of the food we procure for our neighbors, are truly the backbone of the Lowcountry Food Bank. We work together toward achieving greater operational efficiencies and capacity so our neighbors can get the food assistance they need in their own community. Our Agency Council, comprised of partner agencies that know our neighbors best, provides valuable insight and input into our neighbors' needs, and together, helps us design and implement the most appropriate and effective responses.

Partner agencies have positively evolved through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to improve their ability to reach and serve our neighbors.

We are innovating with community-based, refrigerated storage that allows greater flexibility in the distribution of foods, along with the ability to store fresh and perishable produce for longer time periods and reduce the amount going to waste. This has been particularly effective in harder to reach rural areas.

We are implementing additional ways to practice sustainability, including compost expansion, reevaluating food packaging, exploring solar incentives and electric car-charging stations, and monitoring our truck fleet's fuel efficiency.

The Lowcountry Food Bank Foundation has been established to provide a permanent, sustainable source of future income to supplement funds raised to support our mission.

We continue to evolve our equity, diversity, and inclusion work to improve our ability to respond appropriately to the neighbors we serve. Listening to our neighbors and our partner agencies continues to help us learn from the lived experiences and challenges our neighbors face.

As we look to the future, we have an audacious goal to decrease hunger and food insecurity in coastal South Carolina by 25% by 2025, which would reduce the number of neighbors who are food insecure from 164,000 people in 2021 to 123,000 in 2025.

I am inspired every day by the commitment and passion of our partner agencies, donors, volunteers, and dedicated staff who carry out critical work for the neighbors we serve. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that hunger has many faces. Neighbors who volunteer to pack food boxes for others may suddenly face a hardship and need temporary food assistance while they regain stability and ultimate self-sufficiency. Only through deep connections with our partner agencies and community partners, and support from our donors, can we truly address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity and realize the positive outcomes needed for our neighbors to secure a healthy future.



*Nick Osborne*

**Nick Osborne**  
President & CEO



# 2021 IMPACT

40.7

Million Pounds Of Food And Essential Items Distributed

33.9

Million Meals Served

200,000+

Neighbors Served

15.1

Million Pounds Of Produce Served

13.2

Million Pounds Of Food From Retailers That Would Otherwise Go To Waste

196,019

Meals Prepared In The Zucker Family Production Kitchen

7,825

Veteran Meals Served

135,500

Senior And Adult Meals Served



- 35% Retail
- 26% USDA
- 12% Produce (Local & Regional Farms)
- 9% Local Donors
- 6% Purchased
- 5% Farm to Families (ended in March '21)
- 4% Feeding America
- 3% Other Food Banks
- <1% Food Drives



- 51% Individual Gifts
- 16% Grants
- 13% Federal Funding
- 10% Special Events
- 8% Corporate Support
- 1% In-Kind
- 1% United Way

96%

Of Our Charitable Dollars Are Spent On Direct Programs And Services

322,881

Miles Driven By LCFB Trucks

250+

Partner Agencies Distribute Food To Our Neighbors Who Experience Food Insecurity

22,000+

Volunteer Hours Worked

183,000

Contacts Reached Through Nutrition Education

70,000

Boxes Packed In The Lowcountry Food Bank Volunteer Center

133,000

Backpack Buddies Packs Distributed At 50+ School Partners



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## Faith Outreach Ministries Provides Local Neighbors with Equitable Access to Healthy Food

Our partner agencies are the lifeblood for distributing healthy food directly to our neighbors. Last year, they distributed more than 90% of the food procured by the Lowcountry Food Bank, including more than 13 million pounds of fresh produce.

Larry Nowak at Faith Outreach Ministries in Myrtle Beach began supporting local neighbors more than ten years ago when his pastor had a vision to launch a feeding ministry.

Larry and his fellow parishioners began serving a small number of families, and their food distributions gained momentum over time. Though Larry owns a bustling local business, his passion is serving people, learning their unique life stories, and helping them get back on their feet.

Faith Outreach Ministries partnered with the Lowcountry Food Bank to open a food pantry four years ago to reach neighbors who needed food assistance when floods and hurricanes hit the South Carolina coast. When the pandemic hit in 2020, Faith Outreach Ministries began hosting Lowcountry Food Bank drive-thru food distributions. What started as a monthly Saturday distribution expanded as people's needs grew exponentially. Larry was also instrumental in adding food distributions in Socastee where there were no food pantries and thousands of local neighbors had limited access to healthy food.



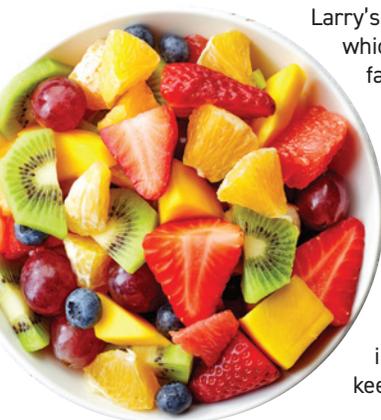
*Our partner agencies are the lifeblood for distributing healthy food directly to our neighbors.*

Larry realized his vision to engage local veterans and students in the distributions, which also enabled them to give back and contribute their time. This work gave veterans a greater purpose and allowed them to serve others. Larry noted, "it is an embodiment of food shopping at its finest, often with fresh produce, milk, meat, dry goods, and canned food for neighbors to choose from, allowing them to focus on their lives without the additional barrier of food access to contend with."

One veteran who volunteers with Larry developed a computer program that maintains a live food pantry inventory. He also created an online system that enables neighbors who experience food insecurity to place an advanced food order and pick it up at their convenience.

Larry's volunteers pre-package food for drive-thru distributions, which can serve up to 30,000 pounds of food and serve 200-300 families - about 1,000 people - at a single distribution.

Larry's goals for 2022 include the expansion of food distributions to additional high-need areas within Myrtle Beach where demand is greatest. In concert with the Lowcountry Food Bank Agency Relations Team, Larry has implemented food pick-ups from local retailers for direct delivery to partner food pantries in remote areas of Horry County where food access remains a challenge. Larry is now training local neighbors to work at food distributions in their own neighborhoods, which addresses the stigma that keeps some people from visiting food pantries.



**Larry Nowak knows how much increased access to healthy food means to his neighbors.**

When describing the neighbors he serves, Larry says, "most of the people we serve are underemployed and their work is seasonal, so when employers cut back, our neighbors need temporary food assistance." He says many people who work full-time live right on the edge of homelessness. He loves when neighbors who once sought food assistance are back on their feet and come to volunteer and distribute food to others. One woman who came into the pantry told Larry, "I had nothing in my apartment. If not for this, I would not know what I would be eating tonight."

Larry reminds us that given the choice, our neighbors do not want to be in a food line for assistance. Ensuring that his neighbors have access to healthy food is his passion, and he and his volunteers get to know the people they serve. A food pantry visitor told him recently, "because this food is available to me, I've been able to graduate from school, I have a job, and I can now feed my family on my own." Larry says it is difficult to put words to this experience, but he relishes his ability to serve.



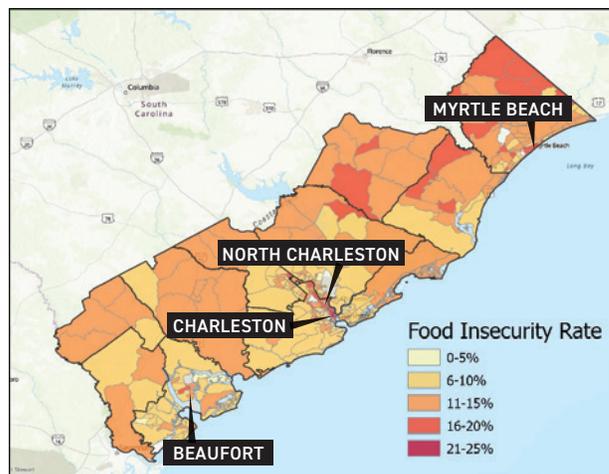
# GIS Mapping and Equitable Food Assistance Strategically Serves Our Neighbors

Lowcountry Food Bank uses geographic information system (GIS) mapping to help strategically pinpoint where our neighbors need food and mobile food distributions, including rural areas where access to grocery stores and fresh produce may be a challenge. These GIS mapping tools also help us match our partner agencies and food pantries with the hunger relief programs that best serve our neighbors in their unique communities.



*South Carolina Statewide Food Insecurity Rate*

The example shown here illustrates the portion of the population within the counties we serve that is food insecure (food insecurity rate). While the statewide food insecurity rate is 11%, the rate is higher in many parts of our service area. Using data like



this, we can evolve our strategy to ensure equitable support to those neighbors most affected by hunger and food insecurity, especially our communities that are historically and systemically underrepresented.



## Refrigerated Containers for Our Partner Agencies Provide Increased Access to Fresh Produce

The Lowcountry Food Bank focuses on providing equitable access to healthy food throughout coastal South Carolina. We continuously innovate to address challenges that may prevent food access. Many of our partner agencies typically have limited refrigerated food storage capacity. Their ability to store and then quickly distribute fresh and perishable produce, especially in the highest need and hardest to reach rural communities, is critical for the people we serve.

In response to this challenge, we piloted an innovative approach to increase fresh and perishable produce capacity with the installation of 10-foot by 20-foot refrigerated storage containers at three partner agency sites.

These containers significantly increased access to fresh and perishable produce during an eight-month pilot period by 45% and provided an additional 72,000 pounds of food to neighbors who needed it.

Based on potential savings by these individuals and families who needed food assistance and the total cost of container installation, the estimated value of this produce was more than \$83,000 with the average time to recover the container cost at only about 10 months.

The containers have helped our partner agencies better support their communities that face hunger. Produce can be stored for longer periods of time, which enables our partner agencies and our transportation team to adapt to people's food needs and schedules. The opportunity to operate on additional days also results in less food waste.



Moving forward, Lowcountry Food Bank, in collaboration with our partner agencies, will explore opportunities to replicate and expand this produce model in additional communities.



## Lowcountry Food Bank Foundation to Provide Support Over the Long Term

We established the Lowcountry Food Bank Foundation and the Patricia S. Walker Endowment in the fall of 2020 to provide a permanent, sustainable source of income to supplement annual dollars raised by the Lowcountry Food Bank. This 501(c)(3) Foundation enables us to further expand access to healthy food.

The Foundation will donate investment earnings annually to the Lowcountry Food Bank and provide perpetual support to our mission. The Endowment will fund critical hunger programs for seniors and children, mobile food distributions, and emergency food in times of natural disaster and crises.

Estate gifts and bequests to the Foundation will be invested in the Endowment to grow in perpetuity and provide supporters a vehicle to leave a legacy. Donors may include the Foundation in their will or trust, make a tax-wise gift with a beneficiary designation, or generate annual income through a charitable gift. We established the Endowment with an investment corpus of more than \$1 million. Donors who include the Foundation in their estate plans are recognized as members of the Lowcountry Food Bank Full Plate Society, which provides public acknowledgment of their donation. For more information, contact Beth Atkinson, Major Gifts Officer, at 843-747-8146 ext. 123.

Foundation estate gifts will be invested in the Endowment to grow in perpetuity and provide supporters a vehicle for a bequest in their will as a legacy.



## FOOD for HEALTH

### Food for Health Nourishes Food Access

Individuals experiencing hunger and food insecurity have increased risks of chronic health conditions that can be greatly improved by consistent access to nourishing food. Lowcountry Food Bank believes that working alongside our health care partners to improve our neighbors' access to the nutritious foods they need to thrive is integral to improving health outcomes and decreasing costs associated with poor health. More than 10% of our partner agencies work with health care partners, and some are located within health clinics, a collaborative best practice that addresses barriers to accessing nutritious food. We have built upon this foundation and engaged with local health care partners to break the cycle between food insecurity and chronic disease.

Our Food for Health initiative includes three focus areas: Education, Advocacy and Access. We support health care partners in adopting food insecurity screenings and educate

providers on the intersection of food insecurity and health outcomes. We address community-level strategies to overcome barriers to food access through referrals to local coalitions and state-wide advocacy efforts pertaining to Social Determinants of Health policies. We strategically partner with health clinics in areas of low food access and high need to overcome barriers to food access through referrals to local partner agencies, providing emergency food assistance, or setting up onsite, client-choice pantries at the clinic.



*Our Food for Health initiative includes three focus areas: Education, Advocacy and Access.*

In addition, LCFB integrates hands-on nutrition education with communities to empower more than 300 individuals each year with the skills and confidence to make the best food choices for their overall health. We also assist current partner agencies with creating environments that empower an individual's food choices for their health and well-being.

The efforts of LCFB's Food for Health Initiative aims to alleviate barriers to food security, which is important for improving health outcomes, reducing health care costs, and improving longstanding disparities in health and health care.





## Lowcountry Food Bank Garden Project

In partnership with local non-profit Green Heart Project (GHP), LCFB staff and volunteers gathered at Carolina Youth Development Center's Callen-Lacey Center (CYDC) recently to build a garden. After months of planning, staff and volunteers from LCFB, GHP, and CYDC worked side-by-side, and within hours, this LCFB Garden Project came to fruition.

CYDC is a residential facility for children and young adults, ages birth to 21 and is a longtime LCFB partner. Placement and length of stay at CYDC is typically determined by SC Department of Social Services, with children coming from food-insecure homes where they have often faced emotional and/or physical trauma. CYDC provides a safe and consistent environment focused on development.

While the LCFB Garden Project directly addresses food insecurity by creating a source for food, it just as importantly deals indirectly with the developmental, cultural, emotional, and social challenges many people face. We have come to understand that by addressing these broader underlying issues and connecting people to gardens and the act of gardening, we have an opportunity to tackle the root causes and impacts of hunger and "nip" the cycle of food insecurity "in the bud".

As more gardens are implemented, each will be unique to the partner and the communities they serve.



### Fleet Management System Fuels Efficiency

Food delivery can be complex, and with multiple weekday deliveries that cover our 9,000 square-mile service area, our fleet management system helps us plan for loading and delivery of dry goods and perishables to ensure our neighbors have access to healthy food. Our fleet management system helps us schedule our drivers and routes economically and efficiently and enables us to manage route capacity while factoring in the quantity of product in our trucks and the distance they travel. The system allows us to flexibly adjust if a truck is unexpectedly out of commission or delayed. Our drivers traveled more than 320,000 miles in 2021, and this system helps us save about \$15,000 per year in fuel costs.



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