As the only food bank in North Dakota, the Great Plains Food Bank has been working to end hunger since 1983. Through a network of nearly 200 partner food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters in addition to our direct service programs, we recover and distribute millions of pounds of food to those seeking assistance. Our mission to “End Hunger Together” is built upon strong partnerships, programs, and solutions allowing us to increase clients’ access to food while decreasing the barriers they encounter. Working with volunteers, food and financial donors, community champions and advocates, together, we are committed to serving the people in our region each day.

Information is a powerful tool in our mission to end hunger. Research is a foundational part of our ability to identify who experiences food insecurity, understand the reality of hunger, and inform transformational solutions. For over a decade, the Great Plains Food Bank has facilitated large-scale studies independently, in partnership with Feeding America, and with other research institutions. What we learn is integral to our work and an important driver of our strategic direction. This data has led to successful advocacy efforts at the state level, stronger relationships with key partners, and development of emerging or current programs.

This study, Hunger on the Plains (2023), synthesizes insights from two questionnaires including a neighbor experience survey and a survey of our food pantry and meal site partners. Each survey had a unique sample population, sampling protocol, and analysis. Combined, these results shed light on the experience of hunger across our service area.

With this knowledge, we can truly center our efforts in equity, build stronger communities, and effect lasting change for our neighbors facing hunger.

The Great Plains Food Bank partner agencies include a diverse group of nearly 200 hunger relief organizations across North Dakota and Clay County, Minnesota. Through this network, we are working to build capacity and resources so that everyone we serve has equitable access to food that best meets their needs. The partner agency survey focused on the agency’s operations and opportunities for growth. A total of 99 agencies completed the survey, for a response rate of 64%.

This year we were able to offer more culturally relevant foods, assist neighbors one on one with dietary needs, and keep a consistent supply of fruits and vegetables.”

- A Moorhead Area Food Pantry

THE CHARITABLE FEEDING NETWORK IS RESILIENT AND INNOVATIVE
Centering on neighbors, partner agencies are finding creative solutions to help end hunger.

- 50% Host drive-thru distributions
- 48% Offer home delivery
- 47% Provide SNAP application assistance
- 45% Offer client choice
- 40% Support benefit navigation

54% of partner agencies are volunteer-led and volunteers served over 142,080 hours at partner agencies in the last year.

49% Diabetes Friendly
36% Gluten-free
34% Vegetarian/Vegan
32% Heart Healthy
13% Halal or Kosher

OF PARTNER AGENCIES ARE PROVIDING FOOD THAT MEETS THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF NEIGHBORS

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED HIGHLIGHTS THE OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD OF US TO IDENTIFY INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AS WE WORK TO REDUCE FOOD INSECURITY RATES TO 5% BY 2030.
The neighbor experience survey was conducted at food pantries and meal sites across the Great Plains Food Bank network. The survey consisted of 73 questions about household makeup, demographics, financial status, experience utilizing the charitable feeding network, and barriers to access. Surveys were collected primarily through a digital questionnaire on a tablet or by paper where requested. In total, 518 survey were completed from 68 partner or program sites across 44 counties.

Neighbors shared that these social and economic circumstances beyond hunger, present significant challenges. Almost half of those we serve face significant transportation barriers. 27% would find it easier to get food if there was a food pantry closer to their home or if they could receive home delivery.

75% of neighbors report experiencing at least one chronic health condition. These are conditions like diabetes (24%), high blood pressure (32%), and heart disease (10%).

Neighbors are struggling with high rates of chronic disease that are exacerbated by lack of access to enough, nutritious food.

Almost half of those we serve face significant transportation barriers.

The communities we serve struggle to make ends meet and face poverty at deeper levels.

We believe in a future where no one has to choose between paying for food and other bills, children are prepared to learn with full bellies, and older adults have a wholesome meal and the care that supports their health. Together with our partners, we’re working hard to ensure that no one worries where their next meal is coming from.”

-Melissa Sobolik, CEO Great Plains Food Bank

White 68%
Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native 27%
Black or African American 5%
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish 5%
Asian or Asian American 2%
Other race/ethnicity 2%

WHO WE SERVE

The root causes of hunger are complex. Neighbors reported an average income (for a household of 4) of $20,500, 31% lower than the US Poverty Threshold. 74% of households received benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the last year, but 73% reported that benefits lasted 3 weeks or less.

Native American, American Indian, and Alaska Native neighbors face hunger at 7x the rate of other communities.