



REGION NINE
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

Regional Food Rescue

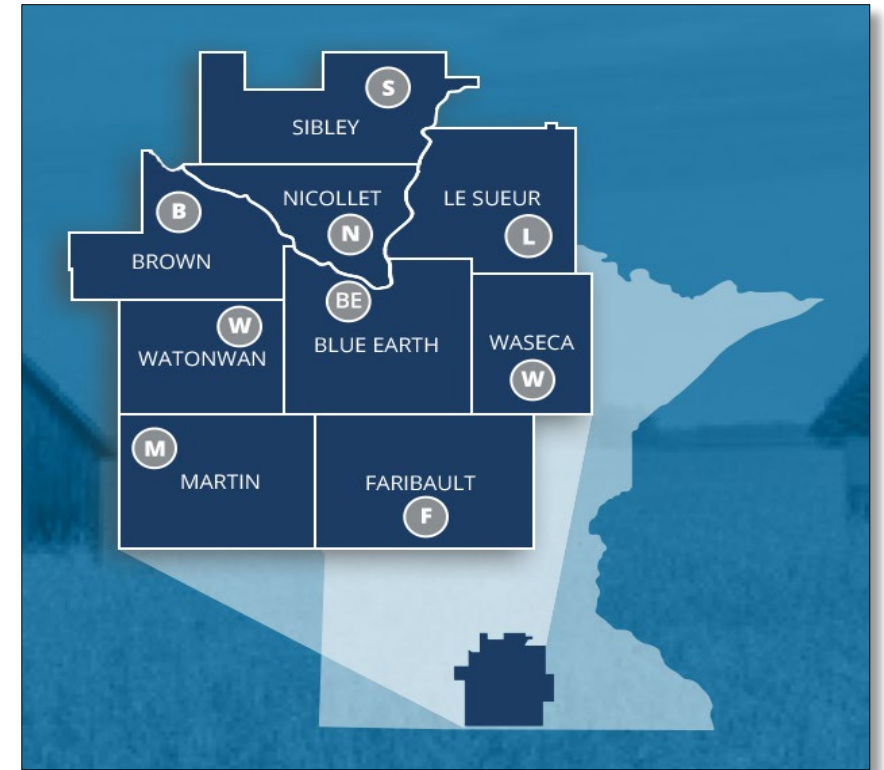
*A Pathway for Development Organizations to
Help Solve Food Insecurity*

Presented by
Tom Polich

Region Nine Development Commission

About Region Nine

- **Our Economic Development District represents Nine Counties, 33 School Districts, 72 Cities, and 147 townships in South Central Minnesota**
 - Largest Community and Regional Center: Mankato, Minnesota
 - Our region includes the scenic and historic Minnesota River Valley, prime agricultural production areas and many lakes and Rivers
 - Region Nine is comprised of a diversified economy including strong agricultural industry, manufacturing, health care, higher education, service, and retail sectors
- **Region Nine Development Commission**
 - Was established in 1972 following Minnesota State Legislation for Regional Development Districts
 - Our Mission is to promote the development of the region through intergovernmental cooperation, community and human development, long-range planning, and technical assistance.
 - We work to Bridge Relationships, Empower Communities and Drive Progress
 - We are governed by a group of 40 Commission Members from counties, cities, school districts, townships and public interest group representatives outlined in our bylaws



www.rndc.org

Food Rescue Research & Report

A planning process was developed at the request of local partners who saw an opportunity for a stronger food rescue ecosystem in the region.

Funded jointly through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) by the four offices covering south central Minnesota.

Goal: To assess the current food rescue landscape and identify opportunities to rescue additional healthy food for communities in need.



Food Rescue Background

Rescuable Food Definition:

"Food that is edible but is otherwise going to be composted or landfilled"

Examples of Rescuable Food:

- Over ordered food by restaurants, LTO offers, catering
- Food that is unsold at grocery stores
- Food that has been denied delivery by a food distributor
- Unharvested items from a local farmer
- Extra products from a food manufacturer



Initial Regional Partners:

Mankato Area Foundation
Taylor Family Farms Foundation
Wooden Spoon
ECHO Food Shelf
South Central MN Food Recovery
New Ulm Food Shelf
University of Minnesota Extension
Maverick Food Pantry
Lutheran Social Service Mankato
St. Peter Area Food Shelf
Feeding Our Communities Partners

Food Rescue Research Phases

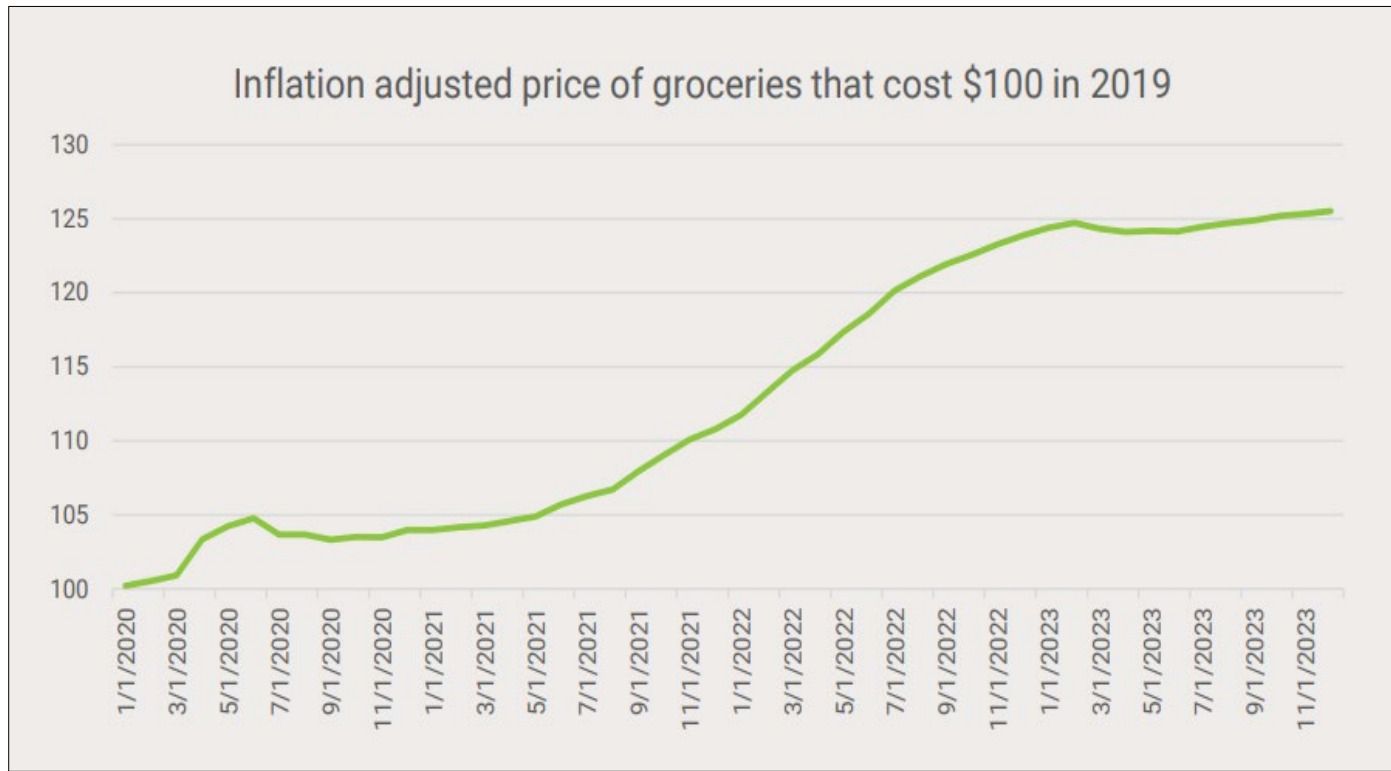
Phase 1	Phase 2
Conducted interviews food access partners across the region	Conducted interviews with retail and commercial food sources
- Food Shelves - Churches - Transit Services - Healthcare Facilities - Non-profits	- Distributors (Walmart DC) - Truck Stops & Gas Stations - Trucking Companies - Food Manufacturers - Local Kitchens

Common Themes

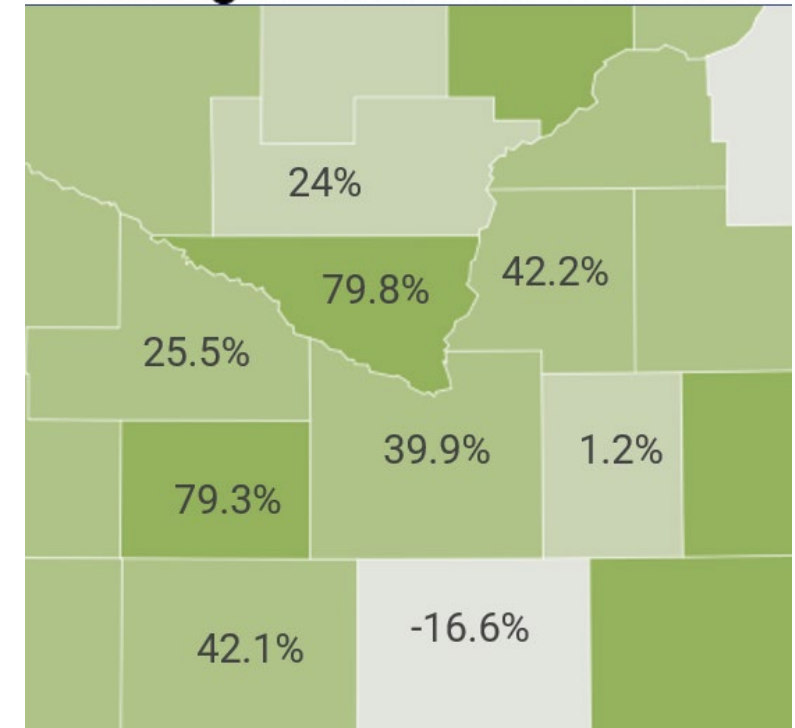
- Increased need for rescued food
- New equipment and more space is needed
- More volunteers
- More collaboration between all food access partners

Increasing Needs

A clear opportunity was identified that food could be rescued and better utilized in our region to meet the growing needs of the local food shelves and keep foods out of landfills



% change in visits 2022 to 2023



Community Partnerships & Philanthropic Support



As part of the published plan, a new position, Regional Food Rescue Coordinator, was created to help make regional food rescue a reality.



Tom Polich,
Regional Food Rescue
Coordinator

Implementation

Step 1	Visits were made to over 20 area food access partners to get insight on what their current situation is	
Step 2	Set up notification chains and create an alert directory	Create a tracking system for RNDC food rescues
Step 3	Research and seek out transportation solutions	
Step 4	Expand the local food access network through programs such as Produce Place and St. James' Make Hunger History Initiative	



The Impact

Rescued Food Since February

- 78 successful rescues
- 62,436 lbs of food rescued
- \$92,915 of savings to local food access partners

Produce Place, Mankato Clinic

- Weekly deliveries to local clinics with nutritious produce
- Over 700 lbs of food in just the first month of the program

South Central Minnesota Food Recovery (SCMNFR)

- Local food recovery kitchen through Wooden Spoon
- Over 18,000 servings produced this year

St. James Make Hunger History Partnership

- Over 1,600 lbs of food rescued and sent to the Watonwan Co Food Shelf
- Has been the largest recipient of culturally specific foods

Total Food Rescue Received	
ECHO	26,837 lbs
SCMNFR	14,422 lbs
St. Peter Food Shelf	5,676 lbs
Waseca Area Food Shelf	3,752 lbs
U of M Ext Refrigerators	2,015 lbs
Crossroads Campus Pantry	1,641 lbs
Watonwan Co Food Shelf	1,601 lbs
FOCP	1,328 lbs
Sibley Co Food Share	1,172 lbs
Janesville Food Shelf	820 lbs
LSS—Meals On Wheels	788 lbs
Mankato Clinic Produce Place	714 lbs
Maverick Pantry	595 lbs
New Ulm Food Shelf	520 lbs
Le Sueur Foods Shelf	296 lbs
M.Y. Place	139 lbs
SCC Campus Pantry	120 lbs

The Stories



- **Environmental Success**

- 1.4 standard semi-truck loads worth of food that would've otherwise gone to the landfill, went towards feeding people.

- **Community Engagement: St. Peter Food Shelf**

- Over 5,500 lbs of food from food rescue just this year!
- Food rescue has resulted in nearly \$8,000 worth of savings that can be used to purchase more food, offset renovation costs, pay for outreach materials, etc.

- **Individual Impact**

- Economic impact of around 600 trips to the grocery store
- Nearly all the food has been highly nutritious items
- Both physical & mental health improvements

“When folks make the decision to come to the food shelf, they are already going through a very heavy part of their life. Our goal is to not add to the trauma of that experience”

- Cindy Farve, St. Peter Food Shelf Director

What's Next?

- Continue to capture more food from ending up in the landfill (2025 goal of 75,000 lbs rescued)
- Enable more food access partners to grow their overall capabilities and capacity
- Bring awareness of food waste prevention to the community through education.
- Guide other RDO's and non-profits to start regional food rescues throughout the state and elsewhere.



Questions and Discussion

