



Senior Hunger in Minnesota Current State & Policy Priorities

March 8, 2024



second harvest
HEARTLAND[®]

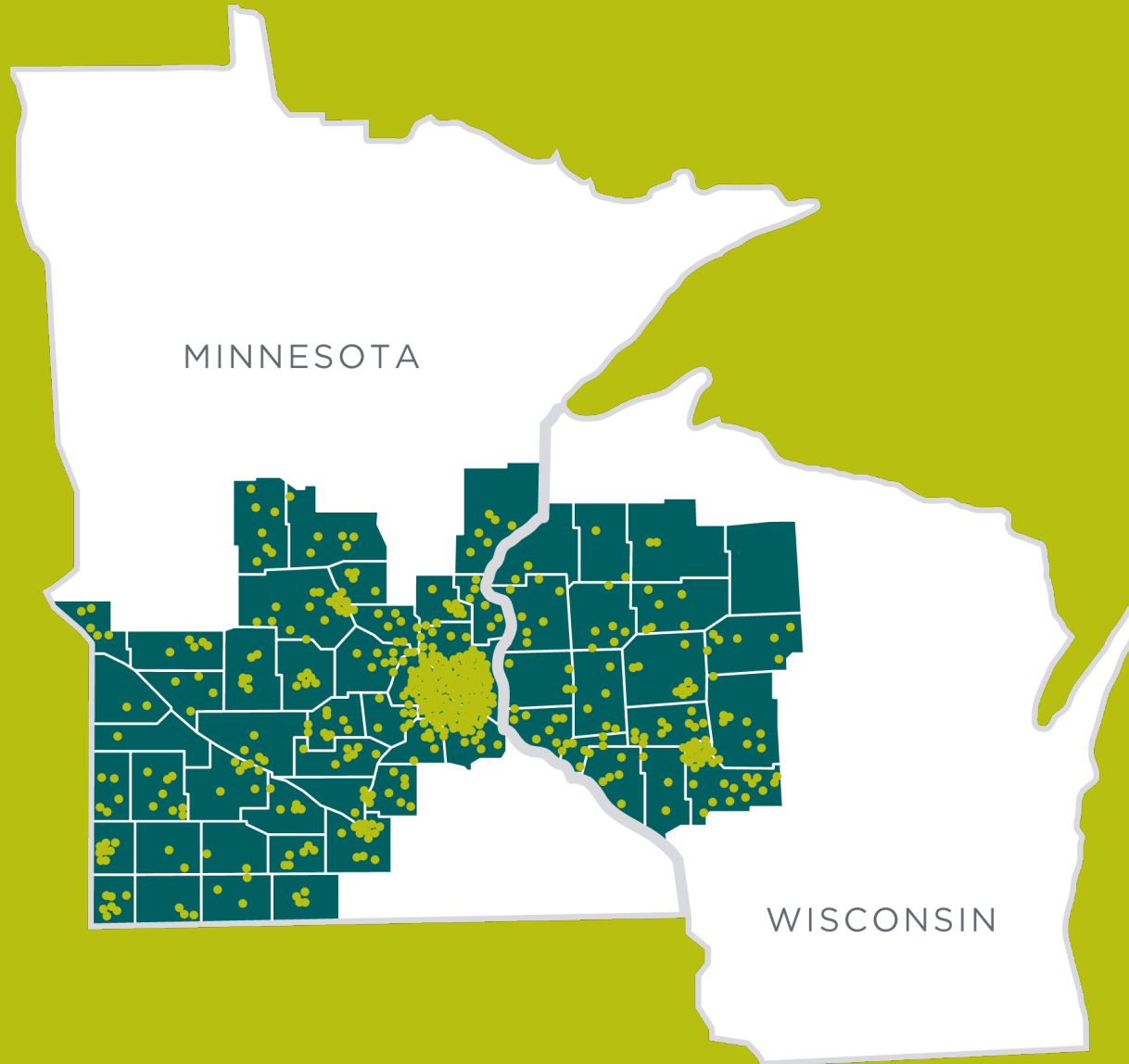


Agenda

- Introductions
- Current state of Senior Hunger in Minnesota
- Existing landscape of food resources for seniors
- Policy Implications: now and in the future



Second Harvest Heartland



- 59 county service area
- 423 food shelf partners
- 1,115 program partners
- Provided nearly 128 million meals last year
- Other Minnesota food banks:
 - Great Plains (Fargo)
 - North Country (EGF)
 - SH Northland (Duluth)
 - Channel One (Rochester)
 - Food Group (New Hope)

Hunger Solutions Minnesota

We bring people together to find real solutions to hunger through partnerships, programs, and public policy because food is a basic human right.



2023: Minnesota's Hungriest Year on Record



KARE11 SUNRISE

State's second-largest food shelf has record-breaking month

US hunger rates rise as pandemic aid ends, data shows

By Leah Douglas

June 28, 2023 3:32 PM CDT · Updated 14 days ago



LOCAL

Minnesota again hits a new record number of food shelf visits

More Minnesotans visited food shelves in 2023 than any year in recent history. More residents are also relying on food stamps than any year since 2016 as stagnant wages and rising costs bust budgets.

By Kelly Smith Star Tribune | JANUARY 24, 2024 — 5:00AM



Senior Food Insecurity | Current State



Minnesota Rates (2021 estimates)

5.3%

Older adult (age 50-59) food insecurity rate

41,669 Older Adult Minnesotans

3.8%

Senior (age 60+) food insecurity rate

47,362 Senior Minnesotans

Exacerbating Factors (at a national level)

- **Worse for seniors and older adults who are Black** (3.8x as likely to be food insecure) **and Latino** (3x as likely)
- **Worse for seniors and older adults who have a disability**: 2x among seniors, 3x among older adults
- Food insecure seniors and older adults are **more likely to have chronic health conditions** and limitations in daily activity
- **Multigenerational households** experience elevated rates of food insecurity

Senior Food Support | Current State



- Meals on Wheels
- For people age 60+
- Hot meals
- Delivered
- Biggest supplier of senior nutrition in MN

SNAP

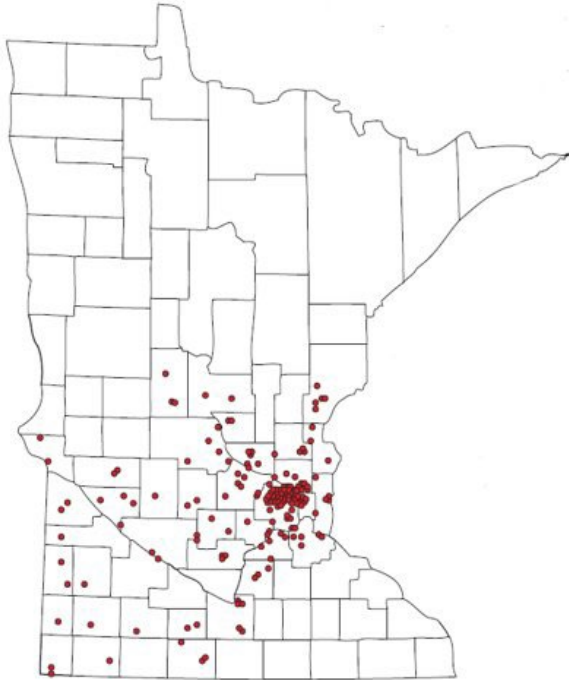
- Current minimum benefit level is \$23/month
- Funds that can be used to purchase staples
- Cannot be used for prepared food

CSFP

- Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- For people age 60+
- One box of shelf-stable food per month
- Primarily must be picked up at a distribution site



Second Harvest Heartland | CSFP Distribution



- CSFP is our **biggest direct-to-neighbor program**
- Minnesota adults who are age **60 or older** and whose **income is at or below 130% of the Federal poverty level** are eligible to receive one box of shelf-stable food/month
- We serve **5,000 seniors/month** through 230 distribution sites in our 41 counties – including at our HQ
- Most people come to a site to pick up their boxes, but we have a small **partnership with DoorDash to fund deliveries** to homes



Second Harvest Heartland | CSFP Trends



Monthly, pre-packed box, along with a two pound block of American cheese

Box includes: canned fruits and vegetables, juice, shelf-stable milk, canned protein, grains, and cereal

- We have seen a **steady decrease in the number of people using CSFP**. Before the pandemic, we were serving around 9,000 seniors per month
- We believe this is for three primary reasons:
 - It has been **difficult to do outreach** to people who turned 60 during the pandemic
 - People are **less likely to leave their homes** than before
 - The food is not culturally relevant, and **we see many people choosing not to take a box because it is not food that they eat**



Policy Implications

Increase the SNAP Minimum Benefit for Seniors

- Current minimum benefit level is \$23/month
- The loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments
 - Many saw a drop in benefits from \$280 to \$23
- Food shelves alone cannot fill the gap
- Solution: Lift the current minimum benefit to \$50 for seniors

Two other current policy priorities that would help seniors and older adults



Minnesota Food Bank Program HF4150 / SF4185

- After years of record-breaking demand for emergency food, Minnesota food banks are stretched thin
- This bill would create a long-term, reliable source of funding specifically for food purchasing and distribution – providing an **infusion of much-needed food at no cost to MN's food shelves**
- The program would **disproportionately benefit communities in Greater Minnesota, which are aging faster**

SNAP Restaurant Meals Program HF3855 / SF4135

- SNAP benefits cannot currently be used to purchase prepared food
- This bill would change that and **allow people to use SNAP funds to purchase prepared meals at approved EBT vendors**
- Older adults and seniors who use SNAP would be **able to purchase food that does not require them to cook**





Future Considerations

Areas of focus

- Support for rural communities, which are aging faster and are harder to serve
- Funding for delivery, especially to support older adults with disabilities
- Access to more culturally relevant food, including in CSFP boxes
- Increased support for prepared food

Thank you



second harvest
HEARTLAND®