



# A BOLD ROADMAP TO ENSURE THRIVING COMMUNITIES

THE FOOD BANK'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2023-2028

**OUR VISION:**  
Nourishing food and good health—  
for everyone,  
every day.

**OUR MISSION:**  
We aim to improve  
food security through  
equitable access to  
good nutrition and the  
resources that support  
health and well-being.



## Thriving communities begin with nourishing food.

Imagine what your neighborhood would be like if every child, every mother, every father, every senior, every neighbor had the food they need to thrive.

That future is possible with your help. Together, we can make life better for the children, seniors, families, and hard-working individuals in central and western Virginia who do not have the food they need to live active, healthy lives.

After more than 40 years of food banking in our corner of Virginia, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank charted a bold, new strategic direction, **with and for our neighbors.**

At the center of our work are the people we serve (our guests) and the people we seek to serve (missing guests), bolstered by passionate support from our dedicated partners and generous donors. **Thank you for joining us.**



**Blue Ridge Area**  
**FOOD BANK**



# What our neighbors WANT and NEED

In 2023, we identified our 5-year strategic direction based on what our guests, neighbors, and partners told us was most important or difficult related to charitable food assistance.

Nearly half of surveyed guests reported hurdles that include transportation or finding an open food pantry at convenient times. About half of our guests reported special dietary needs in their household, often caused by a chronic health condition. Language can often limit

peoples' understanding of where and how to access help (more than 50 languages are represented in the region). Fewer than one-third of guest households have SNAP benefits, the government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

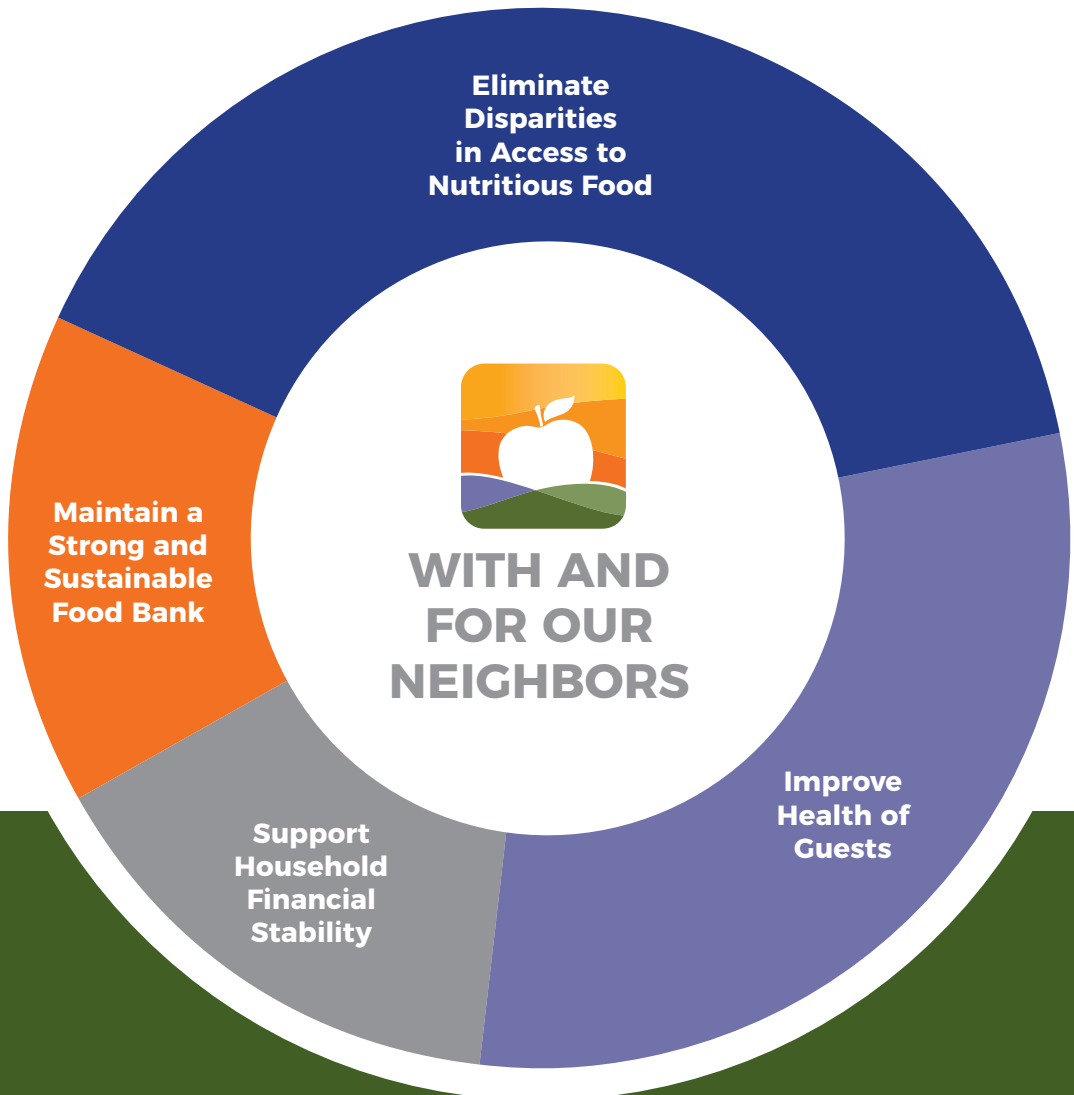
These and other insights gained from Food Bank-hosted listening sessions, other research, plus our decades of food banking experience guided the development of a bold roadmap that will deepen our impact in the years ahead.

*"We pick up for seven different families. Some of them are older and disabled and they can't get out. So, this is an important place."*

— Carmen, grandmother raising grandkids, guest at Mobile Food Pantry

## Our Strategic Goals

(2023-2028)



# With our neighbors at the center, our strategic goals are to:

## GOAL

### Eliminate Disparities in Access to Nutritious Food

**CORE STRATEGY:** Strengthen and diversify our partnerships to provide effective and equitable food assistance

To make sure we're reaching neighbors most in need of food, we will:

- Expand the Food Bank network by partnering with previously untapped organizations who also serve our target populations
- Invest in existing partners to increase their capacity and our collective impact
- Develop innovative models of food distribution to reach people who need free groceries, no matter who they are or where they live
- Connect people with food and other resources through inclusive community outreach and education
- Find ways to learn from our guests and get real-time feedback about the Food Bank's work

## GOAL

### Improve Health of Guests

**CORE STRATEGY:** Prioritize and expand access to nutritious and desirable foods

We recognize that food is health, and that the Food Bank is a regular source of food for many households. So we will:

- Increase access to nutritious foods for guests who live with chronic disease
- Empower guests and partners by providing the tools they need to make healthy choices when it comes to food and nutrition
- Provide a variety of nutritious foods that meet the cultural and religious needs of our guests
- Engage strategically with statewide efforts designed to improve food security and health equity

## GOAL

### Support Household Financial Stability

**CORE STRATEGY:** Connect neighbors with resources that support their food security and health

For long-lasting impact, we will do our best to help our guests lift themselves out of poverty. Our focus will include:

- Encouraging and educating guests to apply for available, public benefits like SNAP and other resources
- Leveraging our vast network of community partnerships to connect neighbors and guests with wraparound resources
- Advocating at the state and national level for systemic change to improve local communities and life for all

## GOAL

### Maintain a Strong and Sustainable Organization

The Food Bank and our partners already operate with great efficiency and impact. In fact, 94 cents of every \$1 the Food Bank spends is directed to food and programs to distribute food. However, this plan's success will require continued investment and improvement in data and insights, human resources, communications, infrastructure, technology, revenue, and equipment.



Because of generous community support we've been able to better understand the challenges our neighbors face and think deeply about how we can better respond. We know it's not enough to focus on today. This is a moment that calls on us to adapt to tomorrow's needs. This is a time to innovate and transform. Your generosity enables us to do so. **Thank you for standing with us!**



# What does success look like?

We set measurable goals each year and track our progress toward these long-term outcomes:



Everyone who needs food has access to pantries and other food assistance programs when and where they need it.



The amount and quality of food we provide meets the needs of the neighbors we serve.



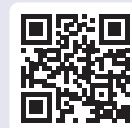
Healthy food is widely available and meets the cultural and religious needs of our neighbors.



The households we serve are more financially stable.

## Learn more about our strategic direction.

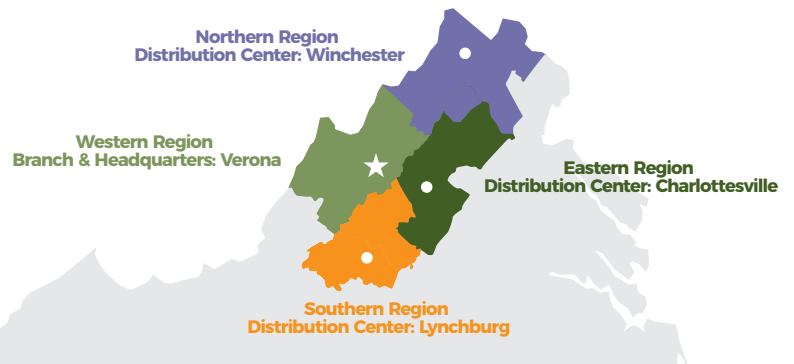
Visit [brafb.org/our-story](https://brafb.org/our-story)



Blue Ridge Area  
**FOOD BANK**



PO Box 937 | 96 Laurel Hill Road | Verona, VA 24482  
540-248-3663 | [info@brafb.org](mailto:info@brafb.org) | [www.brafb.org](http://www.brafb.org)



We serve your community through four distribution centers and a network of partners.