



**NEIGHBORS.
EMPOWERED.**

2026-2030

STRATEGIC PLAN THRIVE





AN INVITATION FROM OUR CEO

EMPOWERING TOMORROW: INNOVATE. PARTNER. THRIVE.

At Northern Illinois Food Bank, **we believe in people.** We believe that every person has value, with unique purpose and gifts. We know that “unexpected life” happens, such as job loss, a health crisis, or other circumstances beyond our control, which lead to seasons in which we don’t have enough and we need help.

And that is why we are here, to help. We are obsessed with creating an exceptional charitable food system, in which every person in every community has access to fresh, nutritious groceries and meals, distributed with dignity, equity and convenience. This happens when our work is rooted in collaboration, through partnerships and programs in which all voices are heard and respected. **When we come together, we lead the way to better tomorrows.**

Strategic Plan THRIVE is a continuation of our commitment to serve our neighbors and communities, and our relentless pursuit of our vision of “for everyone in Northern Illinois to have the food they need to thrive”. It compels us to work better, together with our member agencies, stakeholders, communities and neighbors.

Because we need YOU. Your voice, your talents, and your investment to make our 2030 vision become a reality: more than 450M meals distributed; 30M visits to our agency partners and programs; and more than \$200M invested in our neighbors and communities.

Northern Illinois Food Bank: **We all belong. We are better together. We are Neighbors. Empowered.**

With gratitude,
Julie

Julie Yurko
President and CEO

WORKING TOGETHER WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

Like Strategic Plan UNITE, this plan is led by our commitment to our neighbors; not just what we do for our neighbors, but the way we work with our neighbors to design solutions, improve processes and measure our success.

WE ENSURE HOPE



OUR MISSION



To provide nutritious food and resources for our neighbors, with dignity, equity and convenience, through partnerships and innovation.

OUR VISION



For everyone in Northern Illinois to have the food they need to thrive.

OUR VALUES



Community
Humility
Transparency
Empowerment
Accountability
Impact
Innovation

ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

We began planning during a time of high demand, growing need, and increasing food costs, but also with an unwavering commitment to finding a path forward that honors our mission and the communities we serve.

The past five years have brought significant change to the Food Bank, our partners and neighbors. ***We are experiencing the highest increase in need for food assistance since 2008***, resulting in unprecedented visits to our network.

In response we are providing more meals than ever before. And, most importantly, we have changed the ways we serve to honor our neighbors and address barriers such as understanding, access and stigma, together with our members agencies and partners.

But still, we can't keep up. We are terrified and saddened by the need for help. This is why Strategic Plan THRIVE is so important. ***It's a road map so that, together, we can continue to grow and change for the better for our neighbors, communities and us all.***



A SUSTAINABLE MODEL INTO THE FUTURE

Drive To Meet

Rising Need / Rising Demand

More than 560,000 visits to the pantry network each month.

Our Vision

For everyone in Northern Illinois to have the food they need to thrive.

Commitment To Our Neighbors

Increasing requests for nutritious foods: proteins, dairy and produce.

Responsibility For Equitable Access

High access in 90+% of the region.



STRATEGIC PLAN THRIVE GOALS

Goal #1

Provide **HELP AND HOPE TODAY** by providing fresh, nutritious groceries to our neighbors.



NEIGHBORS. EMPOWERED.

Goal #2

Help our neighbors **THRIVE TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE** through innovative partnerships in hunger, healthcare and advocacy.

Goal #3

EVOLVE the Food Bank to meet the needs of **2030**.

STRATEGIC PLAN THRIVE STRATEGIES

Goal #1 - Provide **HELP AND HOPE TODAY** by providing fresh, nutritious groceries to our neighbors.



Volume:

Innovate with our network and donors to effectively respond to the current record-setting levels of demand.



Equitable Access:

Champion equitable access across our 13 county region, ensuring that no matter the zip code, people have the help they need.



Neighbor Experience:

Transform the charitable food system to meet the unique and diverse needs of our neighbors, by working together with our network to promote convenience and dignity.



Nutritious and Desirable:

Expand the supply of highly sought-after foods, with a focus on fresh, nutritious groceries that nourish and uplift our neighbors.

Goal #2 - Help our neighbors **THRIVE TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE** through innovative partnerships in hunger, healthcare and advocacy.

Health: Partner with healthcare organizations to improve our neighbors' health by providing access to fresh, nutritious food.

Advocacy: Amplify our advocacy efforts in collaboration with our neighbors and network, championing their voices and needs.

Connections: Empower neighbors by connecting them with resources from trusted partners.

WE ALL THRIVE



STRATEGIES CONTINUED

Goal #3 - EVOLVE the Food Bank to meet the needs of 2030.

To best serve our neighbors and partner with communities, we will enhance our expertise, operational excellence, and integration across critical domains.

Fundraising

Reimagine fundraising to inspire transformational investments in the Food Bank to support our neighbors and communities.

Data

Advance our use of data to make neighbor-centered decisions that we trust.

IT

Strengthen our IT backbone to ensure security, continuity, and effectiveness. Improve the technology experience for neighbors, volunteers, donors and staff.

Agency Network

Match our agency network support and structure to neighbor-centered, equitable access, and volume strategies.

Team Structure and Support

Mature our organizational structure and staff expertise to deliver our next generation of strategies.

Food Sourcing

Continue to evolve food sourcing and distribution towards cost effective approaches to nutritious and desirable food.



HOW WE'LL MEASURE OUR PROGRESS

An Exceptional Charitable Food System 2026 – 2030:



Provide
450M
meals



Invest more than
\$200M in our
neighbors and
communities



30M visits
to our agency
partners and
programs



Ensure that **75%** of food purchases meet high nutritional standards

Our Commitment To Our Neighbors:

Provide fresh, nutritious food for **1 in 10** neighbors facing food insecurity.

Accelerate equity by increasing meals and improving access in more than **80** priority underserved communities.

Our Food Bank and agencies are making a difference with **80%** of our neighbors reporting a positive experience.

Triple the number of people served annually through health and benefit partnerships.

As Seen By Our Neighbors:



It is easier for me to get the food I need,
no matter my zip code.



The food I receive nourishes my and my family's
health and wellness.



I feel respected and welcomed when at a
Food Bank program or Food Pantry.

WE ALL BELONG

