



THE **ROUNDTABLE**

ALLIES FOR FOOD ACCESS

Annual Report 2022

Prepared by **KK&P**

October 2023

Roundtable Members



Funders



Strategic & Coordinating Partner



Advocacy Partner



Letter from Chef Greg Silverman

Time keeps marching on, and sadly, so does hunger. We all welcomed an end to the pandemic, especially those in New York City's anti-hunger sector. But frontline organizations have been sounding the alarm, knowing from historical precedent that the aftermath of an emergency such as COVID had the potential to persist, making an already difficult situation for hungry New Yorkers even worse.

But none of us could have imagined how bad it would be. In the last year, inflation continued to rise, healthy food costs skyrocketed, our most impactful federal supports such as SNAP became more restrictive, and many frontline organizations were impacted by city and state funding cuts. Additionally, a migrant crisis led tens of thousands of new New Yorkers to seek out support from frontline emergency feeding organizations.

Our teams continue to innovate, just like they did at the beginning of the pandemic. Our forward-thinking, community-focused organizations are investing in capacity building efforts such as new warehouses, distribution centers, and vehicles. Across the Roundtable, our network is growing to meet the long term needs of our communities.

The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access has been on the front lines across NYC working together to make change and help support organizations to achieve their missions. It was five years ago that we started calling up other leaders in our sector to discuss an idea that to many seemed radical: that we could work together, as frontline food providers, to make sure our organizations had better food at better prices. This was a simple idea that as a chef and restaurateur I learned years ago in my restaurants, that manifests in a few key reminders:

- Never trust a price
- Buy better food in bigger quantities
- Always work together

The Roundtable is constantly evolving, through years of fundraising, collaborating with program partners, collecting data, and engaging in dialogue and advocacy. But mostly it has been five years of



working together so we can all achieve our missions, even amidst a global pandemic. We are grateful to all of our funders who have supported our journey over the years: Robin Hood, Sea Change Capital, New York Health Foundation, UJA Federation of NY, and New York Community Trust.

The Roundtable is a dedicated network of emergency food providers collaborating to bring more resources to communities, so none of our neighbors go hungry. It truly is a communal table, focused on not simply disrupting an inefficient emergency feeding system, but reimagining and revamping our work and holding each other accountable in the process.

Five years ago we started out talking about the price of chickens, onions and apples, and now we are not only buying truckloads of oats, milk, and beans but are also sharing warehouse designs, advocating for changing food and funding systems at the city and state levels, and making our voices heard. Thanks to everyone for all your support, collaboration, and engagement, and as always for taking a seat at the Roundtable.

Chef Greg Silverman
CEO/Executive Director, West Side Campaign
Against Hunger
Founder/Director, The Roundtable

The Roundtable: 2022 By the Numbers

The reach and impact of Roundtable member organizations

52 million

meals served to
New Yorkers in need
by Roundtable
member organizations

28 million

pounds of produce
distributed

1,239

distribution sites
across all five NYC boroughs

4 million

visits by households
to Roundtable organizations'
food pantries and soup
kitchens

Roundtable purchasing activities

115,710

pounds of food
ordered through
coordinated bulk
purchasing

over

\$55,000

saved
in bulk purchasing,
62% savings over
distributor pricing

nearly

2,500

data points
in the Roundtable's
price tracking database

Roundtable participation

8

participating member
organizations

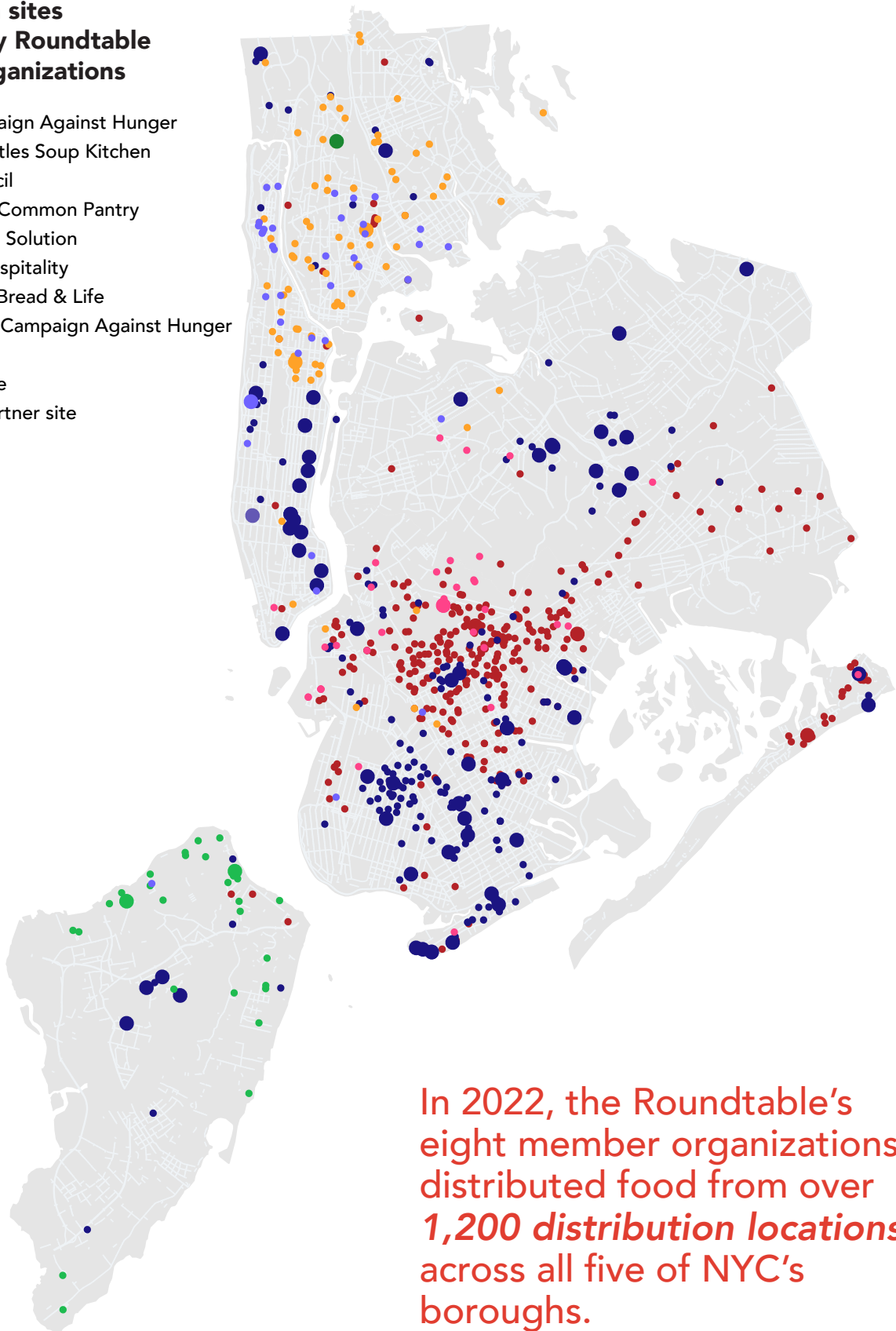
385

hours of in-kind staff time
contributed by Roundtable
member organizations

The Roundtable: Our Reach in 2022

Distribution sites operated by Roundtable member organizations

- The Campaign Against Hunger
 - Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen
 - Met Council
 - New York Common Pantry
 - Part of the Solution
 - Project Hospitality
 - St. John's Bread & Life
 - West Side Campaign Against Hunger
-
- Anchor site
 - Mobile/Partner site



In 2022, the Roundtable's eight member organizations distributed food from over **1,200 distribution locations** across all five of NYC's boroughs.



St. John's Bread & Life

“We’ve been able to bring a whole new meaning to collaboration. Whether it be through group purchasing, collective advocacy, or collaborative funding opportunities, the Roundtable ensures we all have a seat at the table.”

***- Michael Ottley
Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen
and Food Pantry***

Overview and Background

The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access was founded in 2018 to research and pursue opportunities for bulk and collective purchasing by four of NYC’s largest emergency food providers: New York Common Pantry (NYCP), Project Hospitality (PH), St. John’s Bread & Life (SJBL), and led by West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH). The coalition partnered with food systems consultancy KK&P to conduct research and coordinate the activities of the coalition. After an initial research phase, the group launched a purchasing pilot that ran for several months in 2019 and tested new and expanded relationships with six participating vendors, and documented average savings of nearly 20% on food costs across the collective. The initial success of the pilot included not just the fiscal savings achieved by the organizations on their bottom lines, but also the open communication and collaborative spirit fostered among the participating organizations.

Reflecting upon the project’s initial success, the four organizations decided to continue the collaboration and expand the group by bringing on additional coalition partners. However, as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the City in early 2020, the group re-oriented its activities to respond to the rapidly shifting context and challenges brought on by the pandemic, even as they worked to continue strengthening ties between coalition members and bring new allies into the fold. In mid-2020, two new organizations joined the coalition: Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry (HASK) and the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council). Since then, two additional organizations—Part of the Solution (POTS) and The Campaign Against Hunger (TCAH)—have joined the group as members, bringing the coalition to a total of 8 participating organizations.

In early 2021, the group adopted the name The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access, as well as the following mission statement: *The Roundtable collaborates to bring more resources to communities, so none of our neighbors go hungry.* Since formalizing its structure and mission and working to develop its own organizational capacity, the group’s work has coalesced around three main program areas: strategic, collective, and bulk purchasing; advocacy and organizing; and embracing collaboration through open communication, technical assistance, and mutual support.

This report summarizes the Roundtable’s activities throughout 2022 and early 2023.

THE ROUNDTABLE 2018-2022: Key Accomplishments

2018-2019

- Roundtable launches with 4 founding members
- Purchasing pilot demonstrates savings of nearly 20%
- Proof of concept leads to additional funding for continued collaboration

2020-2021

- Two new members join
- Mutual support and advocacy emerge as new focus areas as Covid-19 creates new challenges
- Roundtable successfully advocates for early vaccine access for emergency food workers

2022

- Two new members join, bringing membership to 8
- Bulk purchasing activities demonstrate average savings of 62% compared to distributor pricing
- Advocacy agenda is developed with Equity Advocates

“One of the greatest successes of the Roundtable this year was the formation of our advocacy agenda. It has helped WSCAH and our partners to not only be successful frontline food providers, but also champions for food justice.”

***- Alyson Rosenthal
West Side Campaign Against
Hunger***

Activities and Accomplishments

While 2022 brought somewhat reduced urgency around the Covid-19 pandemic, Roundtable member organizations nevertheless saw ever-growing need among the communities they serve, and new challenges in the form of food supply chain disruptions and a growing migrant crisis that has brought nearly 100,000 migrants to NYC since the Spring of 2022. The Roundtable’s guiding principle—that collaboration among its members will help them better respond to the need in their communities—has been proven in numerous ways as they have worked together to navigate the challenges of the past year. Whether through innovative bulk purchasing efforts that saved over \$55,000, or advocacy actions that have helped to improve NYC’s rollout of its new Community Food Connections program, the Roundtable continues to demonstrate that embracing collaboration, rather than competition, will benefit both its member organizations and the communities they serve.

Advocacy

The Roundtable deepened its commitment to advocacy in 2022, largely by working in partnership with Equity Advocates, a nonprofit focused on food equity advocacy, to develop a clear advocacy agenda and implementation plan to guide the group’s advocacy work in the months and years ahead. Over the course of spring and summer 2022, Equity Advocates facilitated a dedicated working group of the Roundtable to identify policy priorities that align with the Roundtable’s mission, the missions of its member organizations, and that are within the Roundtable’s greatest spheres of potential influence, primarily city and state policy. The group ultimately organized its issues and actions under four broad public policy goals, phrased here as visions for the emergency food system:

1. Emergency food programs have greater capacity and autonomy to choose the food they want to serve to meet their communities’ needs.
2. NYC & NYS government grant programs that support the emergency food system are redesigned to reduce administrative burden, streamline reporting between programs, and allow potential grantees more flexibility and multiple pathways to access public funding.
3. NYC & NYS food systems policy and funding decision making is more equitable and inclusive.
4. NYC & NYS invests in innovation in the Emergency Food Sector.

Even as the Roundtable was still finalizing its agenda and plan, it began to pursue new advocacy efforts. When the City began to



West Side Campaign Against Hunger

“Our shared goal is to ensure that we can meet the needs of the community we serve and together we can advocate for the resources and the policies that make a difference in New Yorkers’ lives.”

- Christina Hanson
POTS Bronx

roll out its new Community Food Connections (CFC) program, the Roundtable communicated early-stage implementation concerns to NYC’s Department of Social Services (DSS), and DSS held monthly calls with several Roundtable members as they sought to iron out the challenges. The Roundtable’s advocacy helped CFC become a more responsive and effective program, to the benefit of hundreds of emergency food programs across the city.

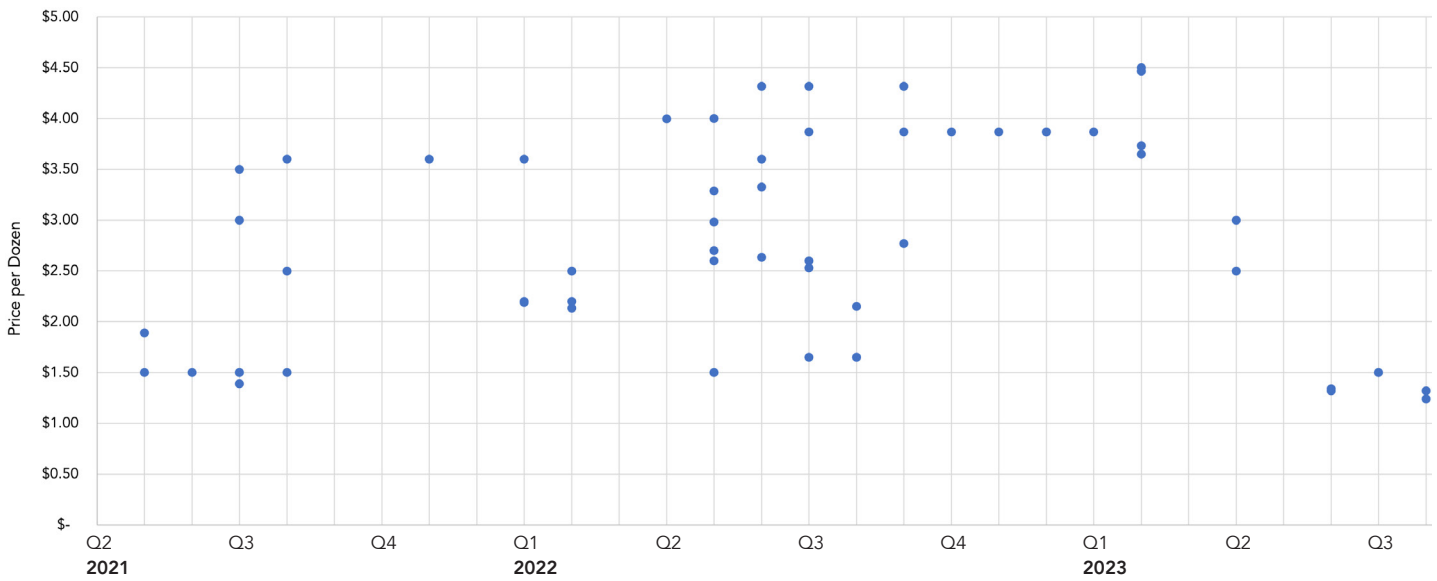
The Roundtable also continues to elevate its public profile and strengthen its advocacy voice. In June 2022, the Roundtable organized a series of recorded conversations, which were then compiled into a virtual convening video. The conversations included perspectives from clients of Roundtable members, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, representatives of Roundtable funders and partners, and several Roundtable members. This video can be viewed on the Roundtable website at theroundtablenyc.org.

Strategic Purchasing

Ongoing Purchasing Work

Over the course of 2022, the Roundtable worked diligently to broaden and deepen the scope of purchasing information shared among coalition members. The group has used this data to continue to refine the selection process for products that member organizations purchase, and as a point of leverage when selecting and negotiating with vendors. Building upon the purchasing

Individual Product Price Tracking: Eggs 2021-2023



Roundtable member organizations share vendor pricing for a wide range of products on an ongoing basis, and KK&P aggregates and analyzes this price data, then distributes a price tracking tool back to Roundtable members. This allows Roundtable members to have broad visibility into available prices, and make strategic decisions about what products to purchase, when, and from which vendors. In the chart above, the impacts of fuel price spikes and driver shortages (May-July 2022) and avian flu (Oct. 2022-Feb. 2023) can be seen in the price of eggs. The Roundtable's price database currently has nearly 2,500 individual data points.

“The bulk purchasing program is allowing us to stretch our funding resources in a time when emergency food providers are experiencing rising food costs accompanied by rising need. Pooling together purchasing power and streamlining logistics of deliveries and storage has been very helpful.”

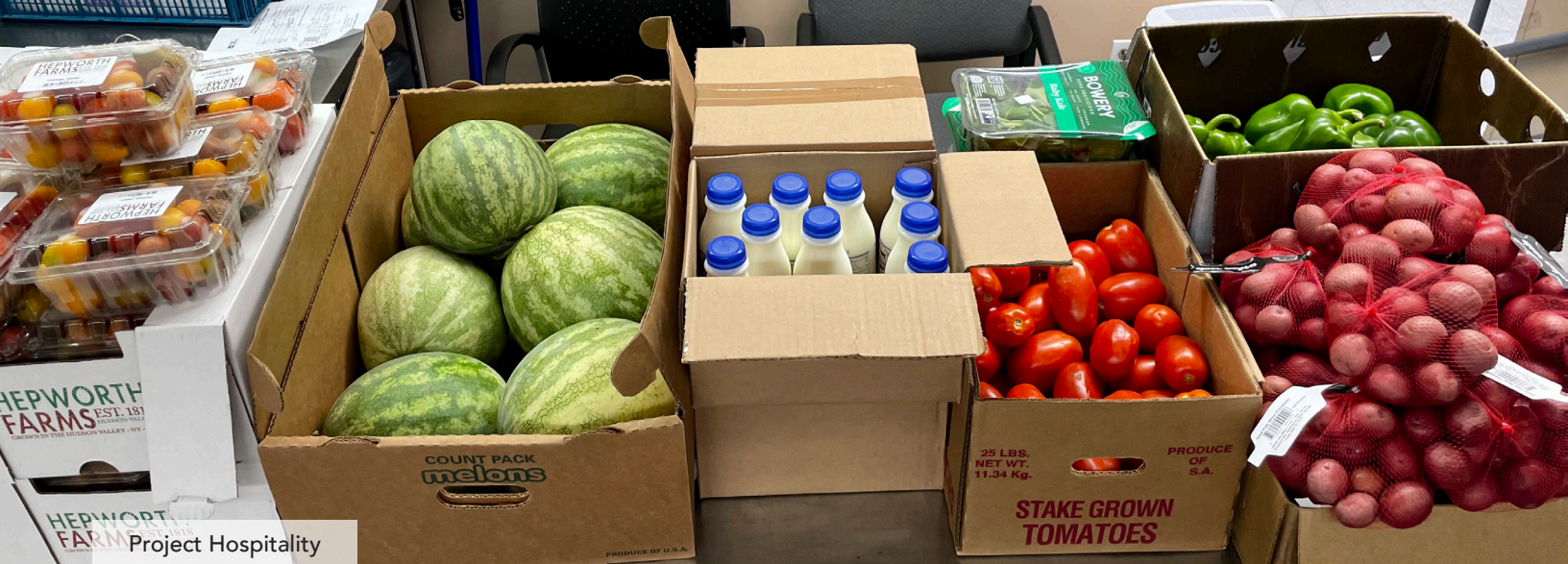
**- Alex Hughes
Project Hospitality**

database and tracking system that the group launched at the end of 2021, the group was able to use its increasingly efficient processes and robust dataset to help members navigate the year's volatile purchasing landscape. 2022 was dominated by rampant inflation, as well as price and supply shocks caused by outbreaks of avian flu, labor shortages, and the war in Ukraine. The group's data sharing and price transparency allowed its members to navigate this shifting landscape armed with more knowledge and awareness than if each organization was acting independently.

Heading into 2023, the group is working to maintain its focus on strengthening the comprehensiveness of its purchasing database, and continuing to use it to allow group members to make strategic, informed, and timely purchasing decisions.

Bulk Purchasing

In addition to its continued price tracking and data sharing work, the group made ambitious, tangible strides in its bulk purchasing program over the course of the year. Encouraged by the success of the pilot order of nearly 38,000 lbs. of quick oats from the New Jersey-based manufacturer Unipak in February 2022, the group moved forward with a second order of the same product later on in the summer. The group subsequently negotiated pricing and set up a standing order regimen for 19,000 quarts of shelf-stable milk



BULK PURCHASING IN 2022

75,000 pounds
of quick oats

19,000 quarts
of shelf-stable milk

over \$55,000 saved

62% average savings
compared to distributor pricing for
equivalent quantities

“We have found it helpful to reach out to Roundtable members to discuss HR policies, safety policies, and other topics. The Roundtable allowed relationships between member organizations to grow which has proven valuable in so many ways.”

- Judy Secon
New York Common Pantry

from Global Foods Inc., a national food and dry goods broker. The standing order, which was initiated in December 2022, brings a full trailer load of milk for the group each month, delivered directly to each participating organization at consistently competitive pricing.

All told, the three successfully executed bulk purchases made in 2022 saved the group more than \$55K relative to the case pricing available through the New York State government’s negotiated contract with Driscoll, a broadline distributor, and savings of nearly \$19K relative to comparable items available through the Food Bank for NYC. Moreover, by moving towards a standing order structure with its vendors, the group has been able to significantly ramp up the frequency with which it makes such purchases, and by June 2023 had already purchased and distributed seven such trailer loads of product.

As the coalition works to meet growing demand for food and basic goods—including helping recent arrivals and asylum seekers—and as public and government funding for such work remains unpredictable, the group is investigating the possibility of broadening the collective purchasing work to include non-food items such as paper goods, toilet paper, baby diapers, and other necessary hygiene products.

Mutual Support

Collaboration and communication among Roundtable members is not limited to just advocacy and purchasing, however. The group’s regular monthly calls and other conversations provide a platform for ongoing information sharing, troubleshooting, and peer support on a range of topics. In 2022, Roundtable members compared notes and freely exchanged information on warehouse design and construction (as all Roundtable members have been engaged in infrastructure improvements), technology platforms, and funding, to name just a few examples. The collaborative mutual support enabled by the Roundtable’s structure is core to the coalition’s functions.



Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry

“The Roundtable has increased its focus on collective advocacy and collaboration to address the salient drivers of food insecurity across vulnerable communities. The Roundtable’s advocacy and partnership must be sustained and supported as there is much work to be done to build the emergency network’s capacity to respond to the current and emerging needs across NYC.”

***- Dr. Melony Samuels
The Campaign Against Hunger***

Next Steps

As the Roundtable looks ahead to the remainder of 2023 and beyond, it is energized by the opportunities to broaden and deepen its impact. The group’s advocacy work continues, particularly as the public funding landscape seems increasingly uncertain, even while need across the city grows. The Roundtable intends to be deeply engaged in advocating for greater transparency in state allocations of anti-hunger funds, and to help push more funds directly to frontline providers. It is these providers who are best-positioned to ensure that higher levels of healthful food are getting into the hands of community members in need.

The Roundtable will also be engaging in new endeavors, including supporting a new cohort of emergency food organizations through a pilot program that will launch this fall. This program will offer operational consulting, targeted purchasing analysis, and peer support through engagement with the broader Roundtable membership over the course of a year. The Roundtable has also kicked off a strategic planning process that will guide its work in the years ahead, and has taken on leadership of the City’s Innovative Capacity Building project, disbursing half a million dollars in funding over the course of two years to expand reach and impact.

And the group’s purchasing work continues to grow and evolve, particularly in the arena of bulk purchasing. As of summer 2023, the Roundtable has already completed more than triple the number of bulk purchases completed in all of 2022, with savings in excess of \$150K compared to standard distributor pricing.

Throughout all of this work, the Roundtable remains committed to its guiding principle: that collaboration is essential to achieving our vision of a food system where none of our neighbors go hungry.



“The ability to get together and share best practices, listen, and learn from one another is what we value most about the Roundtable.”

- Sr. Caroline Tweedy
St. John’s Bread & Life

“We find it immensely valuable to be able to gather with a group of colleagues working on areas of overlapping interest and talk through challenges and ideas together.”

- Jessica Chait
Met Council



Learn more at
theroundtablenyc.org

PHOTOS

- COVER (from top left):**
- New York Common Pantry
 - West Side Campaign Against Hunger
 - Dickran Jebejian (Met Council) and Jorge Negron (NYCP) at National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference
 - Bulk purchase handoff from Met Council to WSCAH

- THIS PAGE (from top):**
- Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry
 - Met Council
 - New York Common Pantry
 - The Campaign Against Hunger
 - West Side Campaign Against Hunger