



IOWA CITY
Free Lunch Program

STRATEGIC PLAN

MAY 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Free Lunch Program began in 1983 with a simple but powerful idea: offer a free meal to anyone who needs it—no questions asked.

What started as an occasional act of generosity has grown into a six-day-a-week operation (312 days a year), serving more than 40,000 meals annually. Two part-time directors oversee a program powered by nearly 12,500 volunteer hours from more than 900 dedicated volunteers. Our strong community partnerships—including support from over 30 religious, neighborhood, and social teams and collaborations with other nonprofits—help us provide nutritionally dense meals for an estimated \$4 each.

At the heart of our work is a deep belief that we belong to one another—that everyone deserves a seat at the table. This strategic plan reflects our values and offers a roadmap for the future. Rising food costs, a shifting volunteer base, and growing community need call us to adapt while staying rooted in our mission. With energy, creativity, and purpose, we are expanding our reach, strengthening our foundation, and making space for the next generation of changemakers.

Together, we can ensure that the Free Lunch Program remains a reliable source of nourishment, dignity, and connection—for today and for years to come.



MISSION

The Free Lunch Program (FLP) strives to do one thing well: unconditionally provide a free, filling and healthy lunch to anyone who comes to us, 6 days a week, offering an open door, a full plate, no questions asked.

VISION

Maintain community-based meal service while accommodating rising food costs and our increasing guest numbers.

SWOT ANALYSIS

- **Strengths** – volunteer network, food donations, dedicated facility, community partnerships, collaboration with other social service agencies, consistent leadership, safe space
- **Weaknesses** – uncertainty of continued financial and volunteer resources, indefinite future demand
- **Opportunities** – active civic, faith based and nonprofit organizations in community
- **Threats** – federal and local funding reductions, increased demand for meals, aging volunteer base



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal : Diversify income stream

Strategies:

- Increasing awareness of FLP through website, social media, giving days/lists
- Expand fundraising outreach to individuals, local businesses and civic organizations (Lions, Rotary, Eagles, Homebuilders, etc.) Ask to be included on yearly budgets/agendas for consideration.
- Explore additional grant opportunities
- Explore other giving day opportunities

Goal: Diversify volunteer base

Strategies:

- Expand outreach to additional community businesses and service organizations. Balance increased number of volunteers while maintaining some open days (currently 4 on odd and 5 on even months). Define and clarify the purpose of service days/one time group volunteers.
- Developing alternative methods for volunteers to participate

Goal: Develop and annually update a 5 year projected budget and include non-financial reporting

Strategies:

- Continue to work with CommUnity to budget effectively for equipment/facility repair and/or replacement

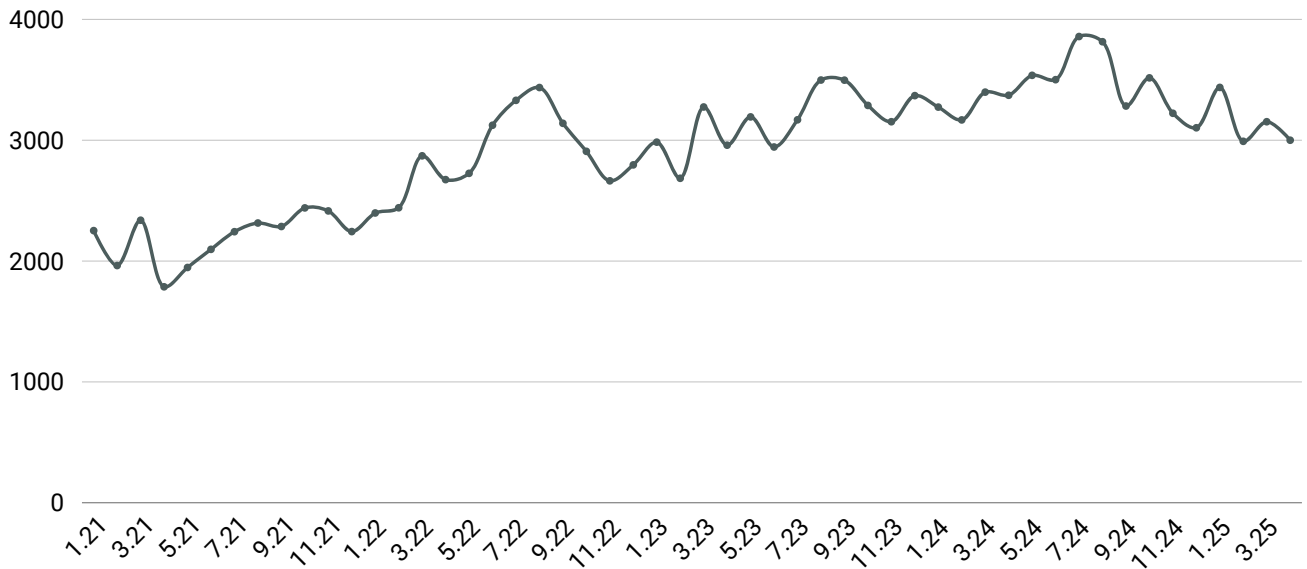


METRICS

Performance Metrics: Goals and strategies will be assessed on an ongoing basis.

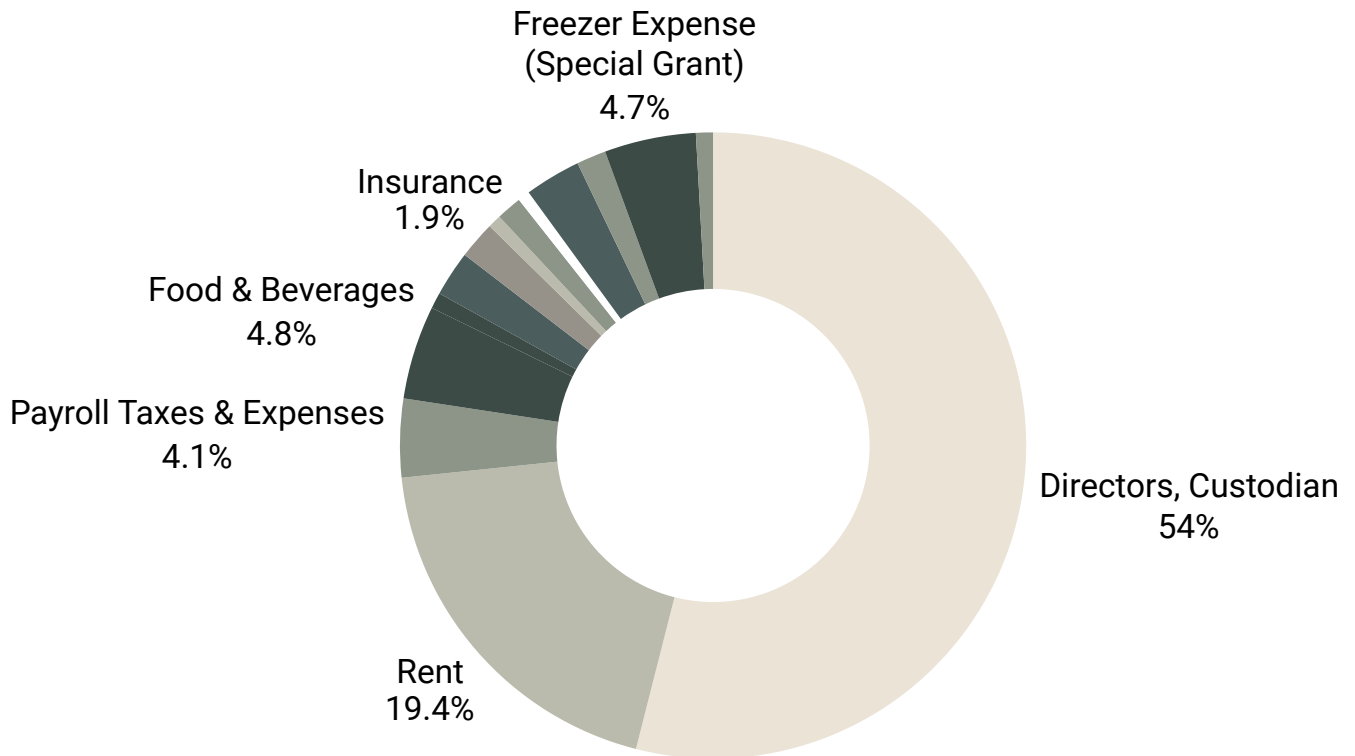


Monthly Meal Count 2021-2025:



BUDGET PROJECTIONS - 1

Projected Expenses **FY25**: \$142,598



Directors, Custodian

- \$78,137

Rent

- \$28,080

Food & Beverages

- \$7,000

Payroll Taxes & Expenses

- \$5868

Kitchen Supplies & Equipment

- \$4,200

Facility Supplies, Composting

- \$3,400

Commercial Insurance

- \$2,800

Workers Compensation Insurance

- \$1,200

Accounting Fees

- \$1,000

Office Supplies & Equipment, Software, Postage

- \$1,900

Freezer Expense (Special Grant)

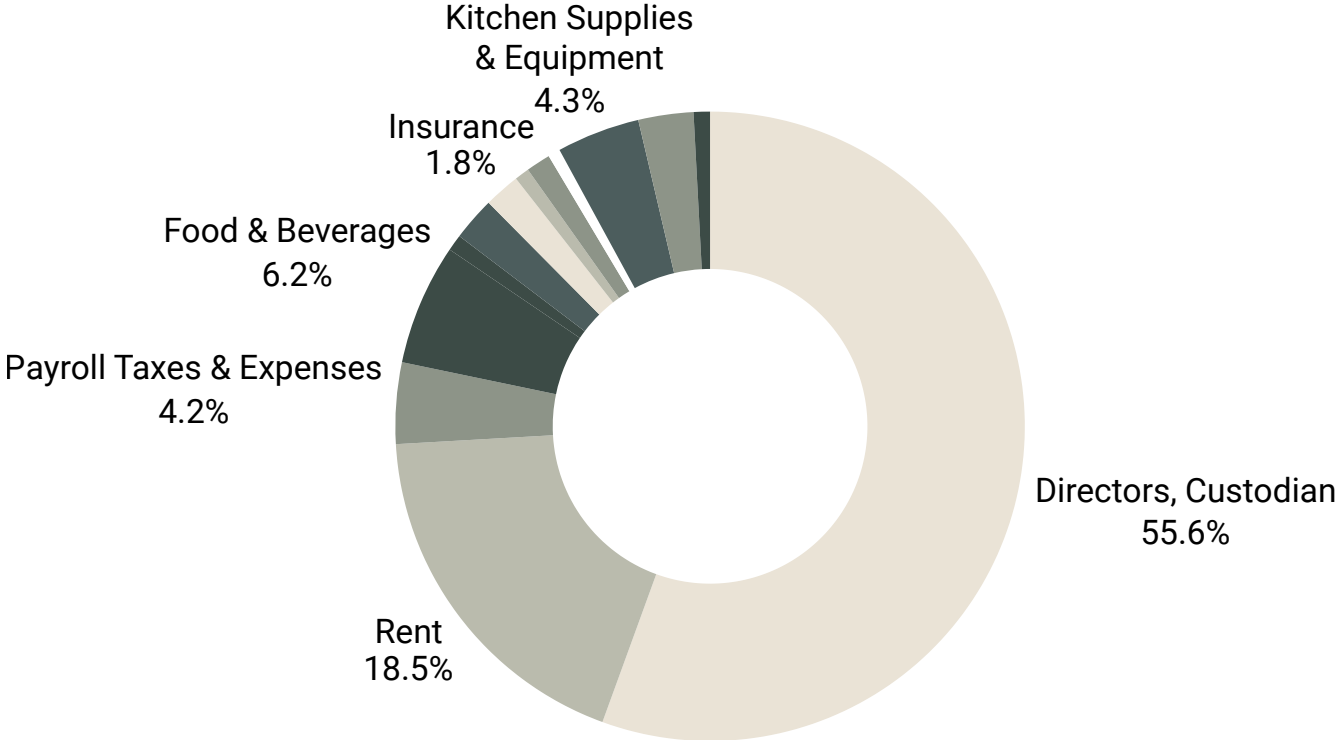
- \$6,842

Other (Membership Fees, Training)

- \$1,271

BUDGET PROJECTIONS - 2

Projected Expenses **FY30**: \$158,354



- Directors, Custodian
 - \$88,405
- Rent
 - \$29,500
- Food & Beverages
 - \$9,900
- Payroll Taxes & Expenses
 - \$6,639
- Kitchen Supplies & Equipment
 - \$6,800
- Facility Supplies, Composting
 - \$4,500

- Commercial Insurance
 - \$2,940
- Workers Compensation Insurance
 - \$1,356
- Accounting Fees
 - \$1,200
- Office Supplies & Equipment, Software, Postage
 - \$2,000
- Other (Membership Fees, Training)
 - \$1,335

BY THE NUMBERS

How FLP directors leveraged funds in FY25:

Market vs. actual cost
of food onsite at FLP

12X

Volunteer hours in
one year

12,480

In-kind donations of
food from FLP teams

\$71,380

Increase in sources of
funding over one year

73.9%



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