

Sib Pab (shee-pah) Program Report

Culturally Relevant Food Security



History

Sib Pab (Helping Hands) was started in 2020 by Cap Services Hmong Uplift program as a response to covid-19. They received a grant from United Way to run a free 12 week hot, culturally relevant meal program for elderly/disabled Hmong residents. The 12 week period was catered from the 2 Hmong restaurants in Stevens Point. Upon completion of the grant, Central Rivers Farmshed was asked if they would like to partner with Hmong Uplift to continue the programming. Through the support from Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and other organizations, this program continued as is for the next year.

Culturally Relevant Meals

In the summer of 2021, Ann Vang was hired on as the Sib Pab Lead. Instead of going to the farmer's market, she went straight to the gardens of Hmong growers and purchased locally grown, culturally relevant produce. From there, her relationship with the farmers grew and a trust was formed. Sib pab meals used produce grown by Hmong farmers who have been using their knowledge in the fields and expertise in cooking the best dishes.

Elderly/disabled meals were being served twice a week with the help of volunteers (prep, cook and delivery), but was eventually scaled back to once per week due to funding. It was important to be able to recreate home meals as this wasn't just about food, but quality of life. Rice was cooked by soaking in the morning, then steamed and packaged. It was vital that each meal included "zaub tsuag", bland vegetable broth, properly cooked jasmine rice and a nutritiously packed entree. The majority of the recipes used went through a vigorous nutrition



analysis that met the requirements of Meals on Wheels. This program ended the summer of 2023 due to funding.

Although Ann was happy and excited to see Hmong meals being made and catered to elderly and/or disabled Hmong community members of Portage County, she had a crazy and wild dream; bring Hmong meals into the schools. By the fall of 2021, Ann and Farmshed was able to secure over \$10,000 to create and serve Hmong/Southeast Asian lunches to 30 Stevens Point Area Senior High (SPASH) once per week at no charge (Sib Pab In Our School). At the end of 2021, more students expressed that they wanted these meals. Additional funds were secured through private donors and additional grants and 50 meals were being served once per week at the high school. This program continued until the end of the 2024 school year.

The 2022 Food for All report can be found here: [Food For All 2022 \(farmshed.org\)](https://farmshed.org/food-for-all-2022)

Food Security

Although Farmshed was not a food pantry, we volunteered to be a distribution sight for Badger Boxes. These boxes were designed and provided by The Hunger Task Force in 2022; boxes included products that were local to the state of Wisconsin.

November 2023, a grant, Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) was introduced to local farmers. With just 2 weeks remaining to apply for funds, Farmshed connected with Hmong Uplift and did outreach to their families regarding this grant. The grant was designed to support local farmers by purchasing their produce at a wholesale price and quantity then given to Wisconsin pantries to distribute. Although Farmshed was not a traditional food pantry, we were chosen as an “end user”. An end user was typically a pantry, however; due to our capacity, we were able to work with 9 farmers from Portage and Marathon county to secure products. This is how the Farm, Fresh & Free (FFF) produce program started.



Overall; in 2023, Portage County secured the most dollars in the state of Wisconsin (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6568e241f8d288235b676fcd/t/65d4edde8eaa2e7917e97ab3/1708453349082/2023+WI+LFPA+IMPACTS+FLYER.pdf>)

In 2024; a new track of the LFPA grant was introduced as the Community Partner Grant (CPG). This grant was available to organizations to apply and work directly with farmers and producers to purchase products. Farmshed was awarded and committed over \$120,000 to purchase locally grown and minimally processed products from farmers and producers. Farmshed is currently still running this grant and working with food pantries in Portage, Waushara, Marquette, South Wood and Bayfield Counties.

We understand the importance of having culturally relevant products, even if that means the cost is higher. Staff worked with community members who identify as Sudanese, Congolese, Latinx and Afghani to identify produce that was missing from stores, markets and even from food pantries. Upon receiving this list, Farmshed worked with producers to see if this was a product that would be possible to be grown in Wisconsin. Working with 16 producers (some of which are Hmong, Indigenous & women); FFF's main focus was to obtain culturally relevant products to minimize the barriers with food need.

Farmshed offered halal meat, ground beef, chicken sausage, bitter melon, striped gourd, mustard greens, Korean melons, Hmong sticky corn, amaranth and so much more along with pantry staples.

From the very beginning, the FFF was designed to reduce and/or eliminate as many barriers as possible. FFF did not require proof of identification, home address, household size or income; however recipients were asked to self declare all of this information. Because FFF did not have an intake process, staff was able to spend more time talking to recipients to better understand what was missing, overlooked and how to better serve the community in need. The distribution of products has always been set up as a "market" where recipients are encouraged to take as many products as they could use, whether fresh or frozen/canned so that they'd have it readily available.

A conversation between a father and a 4 or 5 year old:

Child: I want to try this

Father: I don't think you will like that, it is a beet

Child: I want to try this

Father: Ok, but just a little one

They came back during the next distribution and the father mentioned that the child loved the beet and wanted to try different recipes.

FFF was designed specifically so staff would have more time for conversations, providing a safe space for recipients to talk amongst themselves and build a normalcy around having fresh, healthy food options from a food pantry.

Data, Data, Data

Sib Pab Elderly/Disabled Meals

2020: 3100 hot meals served

2021: 5200 hot meals served

2022: 2600 hot meals served

Sib Pab In Our School

2021: 450 hot meals served

2022: 1000 hot meals served

2023: 1750 hot meals served

Badger Boxes

2022-2023: 3544 boxes distributed

Farm, Fresh & Free

2023: 1223 households served, Portage County received \$142k of products, Farmshed secured 92% of those

2024*: 1249 households served

Food + Farm Exploration Center

2024: 5500 pounds of produce

Partnerships & Collaborations

The Hunger Task Force

Farmshed was given a brand new, refrigerated truck, coolers, freezers and a forklift from The Hunger Task Force. As a member of the Hunger Relief Federation of Wisconsin, Farmshed has been invited to be the opening presenter at the 2024 annual Hunger Relief Federation Summit and through their generosity, Farmshed has grown their collaborations with the Wisconsin LFPA program.

LFPA (Local Food Purchasing Assistance)

Because of the increased capacity in cold storage (made possible by The Hunger Task Force) Farmshed was working with LFPA as an end user for 2023. We were a non profit organization that had proper storage for produce and had experience with distribution that made us a strong candidate for this program. We also built relationships with Hmong farmers and provided technical assistance to them throughout the 2023 LFPA season.

DPI (Department of Public Institutions)

Sib Pab In Our Schools caught the attention of DPI and Farmshed was offered a short term collaboration contract to provide support and assistance to create a Southeast Asian Foods Toolkit that would be available to school districts in Wisconsin. This is important because we wanted to ensure that meals in schools would be authentic as possible while meeting nutritional school requirements.

DaTCP (Department of Agriculture Trade Consumer Protection)

Through funding from DaTCP, Farmshed was given the opportunity to collaborate with a Hmong owned videography business, Filmtoverse and a Hmong owned farm, School Road

Farm to film a Farm to School video.

📺 Farm to School: Central Rivers Farmshed, School Road Farm, DaTCP & Filmtroverse

WFHC (Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative)

Working with WFHC to transport LFPA products from farms to the WFHC warehouse.
Currently running 2 routes per week.

Food + Farm Exploration Center

Receiving products from the education fields,
wash, package and provide to pantries.



Farmshed Goals

Transportation

- Paint a traveling mural (Local Artists: Kiba Freeman and Dondi Bueno) on the box truck. This will be a one of kind design that stands out as a food security/farm to school truck of Farmshed. Will need to secure funds for this project.
- Work with other food security and/or farm to school organizations for transportation needs.



Food Security Support & Farm to School

- Work as partners to provide support services for programs running or looking to include culturally relevant products
- Support producers to grow their access to food security programs
- Provide processing, packaging and transportation needs (including coordination of pickup/delivery)

Commercial Kitchen

- Increase capacity of production for processing needs of clients
- Increase capacity of production for users of Farmshed
- Provide pop up opportunities for food entrepreneurs

Student Focused Programming

- Create and sustain agricultural and food science programs
- Work with school districts in collaboration with local farms