



The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access

Annual Report
2020-2021



REPORT PREPARED BY

KarenKarp&Partners

P.O. Box 515
Southold, NY 11971

T: 212.260.1070
F: 917.591.5104

kkandp.com

Roundtable Members



HOLY APOSTLES
Soup Kitchen



MET COUNCIL
The Largest Jewish Communal Social Safety Net in America



Project
Hospitality



ST. JOHN'S
bread&life



WEST SIDE
CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNGER

Funders



Strategic & Coordinating Partner

KarenKarp&Partners



Letter from Chef Greg Silverman

Seems so long ago, March 2020. The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access, which is now the official name of our collective purchasing group, was adding new members, meeting with prospective partners and hosting in-person support meetings. Then as we all know, Covid-19 took hold and the Collective took on a whole new meaning.

Within days of the onset of the pandemic in NYC, the group began meeting a couple times a week, placing bulk orders for over a thousand KN95 masks, reviewing standard operating procedures, confirming best practices on safety and streetside outdoor distribution, advocating for our staff and community members, and discussing how, as some of the largest emergency food providers in NYC, we could meet the ever increasing need of food insecurity that swept across our city.

Covid-19 has been incredibly difficult.

Sitting together as The Roundtable has been transformational.

Originally led by West Side Campaign Against Hunger, alongside New York Common Pantry, Project Hospitality, and St. John's Bread and Life, and with more recent partners Met Council and Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, together we are changing the face of emergency feeding for our city and providing a blueprint for collaboration across organizations, across sectors, and across our country.

Now over a year into the pandemic and three years into our journey into greater collective action across the emergency feeding network of NYC, our organizations have collectively served more people than ever - over 600,000 individuals in 2020, and during just four months last year, we served over 10.5 million meals, more than double the meals we served during the same period in 2019. And thanks to the amazing members of this collective we are able to leverage each other's talents and resources for citywide changemaking.

Over the course of the history of The Roundtable, our group has been supported by an amazing array of funders who see the power in our collaboration and partnership. We thank Robinhood, Sea Change Capital, NYS Health Foundation, NY Community Trust, and UJA-Federation of New York for their support of the pilot and ongoing efforts of this impact group.

Thanks all for your support, engagement, and taking a seat with us at **The Roundtable.**

Chef Greg Silverman
CEO/Executive Director
West Side Campaign Against Hunger



Project Background

PHASE 1: RESEARCH

Aug. 2018 - March 2019

The Roundtable's four founding members conduct a detailed analysis on past purchasing to identify opportunities for strategic and coordinated purchasing in order to achieve meaningful savings.

PHASE 2: PILOT

April 2019 - October 2019

The Roundtable pilots a range of new vendor relationships, documenting savings of nearly 20% across the four participating organizations.

PHASE 3: COVID RESPONSE, ADVOCACY, & CONTINUED COLLABORATION

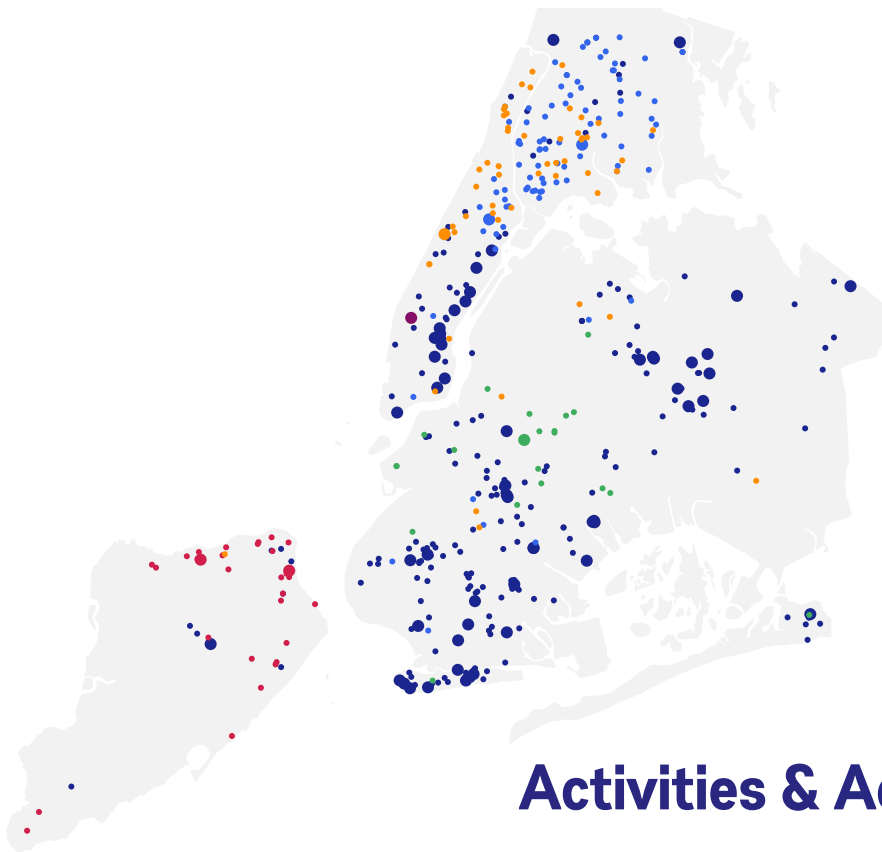
March 2020 - April 2021

With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Roundtable expands to include two additional members, and broadens its scope to advocacy and ongoing mutual support and collaboration.

In 2018, four of NYC's largest emergency food providers – New York Common Pantry (NYCP), Project Hospitality (PH), St. John's Bread & Life (SJBL), led by West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) – embarked on a new collaborative initiative to explore and pursue opportunities for collective purchasing. The year prior, the organizations collectively served over 5.7 million meals, and spent about \$1.2 million on food, exclusive of government grants. With the project coordination and research support of food systems consultancy Karen Karp & Partners (KK&P), the group conducted a deep dive analysis of their purchasing patterns and potential savings opportunities (Phase 1). A subsequent pilot phase (Phase 2), which ran for several months in 2019, tested new and expanded vendor relationships with six participating vendors, and documented average savings of nearly 20% across the collective.

While savings was the lead objective for the project, a secondary objective was to support more effective collaboration and communication among the participating organizations; and indeed, in feedback throughout and after the first two project phases, each of the four organizations emphasized the tremendous value of this new shared platform for information sharing, peer-to-peer support, and strategy development. All four organizations therefore wanted to continue the collaboration and expand the group with additional members. WSCAH secured funding from New York Community Trust to support an additional year-long phase of work (Phase 3), which would focus on expanding the group and identifying additional collaboration opportunities, while continuing the efforts focused on purchasing strategy.

Phase 3 was set to launch with a project kick-off on March 16, 2020 – the same day the Covid-19 pandemic led to the first school closures in NYC. While the kick-off was delayed, the group convened for a brief check-in call that morning to share information on how each organization was planning to navigate the uncertain days ahead. In the months since, the work of the collective has looked very different than we planned or expected; but if anything, the crisis and challenges of the past year have underscored not only the profound importance of these organizations in ensuring the food security of New Yorkers, but also the value and benefit of this collaboration.



*In 2020, the six Roundtable members distributed **more than 28 million meals from over 500 sites** across all five NYC boroughs.*

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

Activities & Accomplishments

While the pandemic significantly altered the course of the collective's work together in Phase 3, the group maintained its commitment to collaborating throughout the year. Key activities and accomplishments are summarized below.

Meals Distributed in 2020 by Roundtable Organizations' Pantry and Soup Kitchen Programs

HASK	1,190,979
MC	16,251,345
NYCP	3,597,807
PH	2,508,014
SJBL	2,656,419
WCAH	2,490,906
TOTAL	28,695,470

"Especially during Covid, it was helpful to have a peer group of trusted connections to touch base with as we all struggled with the impact of increased food insecurity in NYC."

- Judy Secon, NYCP

The early days of Covid-19

From mid-March through June, the group held weekly calls on Monday mornings to address the ongoing and rapidly shifting challenges posed by the escalating pandemic. During these calls, members of the group discussed operational adjustments, such as how to shift to outdoor curbside distribution models; sources for hard-to-find PPE; volunteer program adjustments; and the changing landscape of government funding resources for hunger relief as pandemic and unemployment-related need escalated. These weekly calls became a vital resource for the participating organizations: a space where the ingenuity of the group and its collaborative spirit helped all members better meet the growing needs of their communities, while maintaining health and safety as a top priority.

Additional member organizations

The group also welcomed and onboarded two additional organizations in 2020. Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen (HASK) in Manhattan is the largest soup kitchen in New York State. Met Council (MC) has the largest kosher food pantry system in the U.S., with over 100 pantries in its network. With the addition of these two organizations, the group has not only expanded its reach and impact in the city, it has also deepened the expertise and creativity that are core to the group's activities. Both Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen and Met Council have greatly contributed to the direction and successes of the group over the past year.

PRESS IN 2020-2021

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

March 26, 2020

Help Us Feed the Hungry Now

"We didn't need the COVID-19 pandemic to understand that food is essential, especially for the food insecure. We have learned that equally essential are those that serve it."

POLITICO

May 6, 2020

Food pantries, soup kitchens say they haven't seen \$25M in city aid

"Not only are we concerned to not be included in the initial distribution of these much-needed resources, but also for the lack of transparency in the process. These funding allocations were made without broad front line community input and without recognition of the critical role that direct service organizations like ours play in nourishing food insecure New Yorkers."

- Letter signed on by NYCP, HASK, SJBL, WSCAH

THE NEW YORK TIMES

January 24, 2021

America's Other Front Line

"As we look ahead to the vaccine rollout, we know it will still be many months before New York City's economy has any hope of full recovery – especially for those who work in the service sector, where we have seen profound levels of need and precarity."

CITY LIMITS

March 1, 2021

Workers at Pantries & Soup Kitchens Pressed Cuomo for Vaccine Access

"We're being asked by the state to feed hungry people and given money to do that. So on some level we're essential, but at the same time we aren't being given the opportunity to have our staff vaccinated as we're doing those efforts."

- Greg Silverman, WSCAH CEO/Executive Director



Advocacy and visibility

The unprecedented challenges of the pandemic – and the important role of government entities in responding to crises like Covid-19 – created opportunities for the group to step into a more robust advocacy role: speaking for the needs of direct service food access organizations and holding city and state policymakers to their duty to shore up supports and resources for the most vulnerable and impacted New Yorkers. The group elevated the visibility of pandemic-related food insecurity through press visibility (with quotes, mentions, or op-ed appearances in publications including the NY Daily News, Politico, and the NY Times), and advocated to state and city policymakers for increased and sustained food security resources. Advocacy wins included:

- Reduced administrative burden for pandemic-related government grants
- Increased funding for member organizations
- Additional rounds of pandemic funding for hunger relief organizations across the city and state
- Vaccine eligibility for food pantry/soup kitchen workers

Perhaps the most significant learning and success for the group over the past year has been discovering the power of its shared voice for advocacy. There has been a significant gap and need for effective advocacy on behalf of direct service food access organizations in NYC, and this group is well-situated to meet that need and be the leading voice for food pantry and soup kitchen organizations across the city.



The Roundtable maintains a purchasing and price database with over 1,200 entries, and uses this database to inform our purchasing strategies.

"I've been very fortunate to be a member of the collaborative and have found the group to be so supportive of one another in our desire to make change in the way we provide services to our neighbors in need."

- Sister Caroline Tweedy, SJBL

"I definitely credit this collective for helping to build our relationships and trust for doing work like this in collaboration."

- Alyson Rosenthal, WSCAH

Purchasing opportunities

Coordinated group purchasing was different than expected over the past year due to Covid-19. In the early months of the pandemic, organizations received large quantities of donated food, and in later months, organizations had to meet the purchasing requirements and guidelines of various government grant programs. Significant bottlenecks and shortages were rippling through the U.S. and global food systems, causing additional challenges for the group's food purchases. KK&P continued to field and vet purchasing opportunities as they arose, running analysis on potential sources for food and non-food items. The group also served to share information about new vendor relationships well-suited to meeting the new grant requirements, such as Riviera Produce, which served several participating organizations via the Nourish NY grant.

Mutual support and offshoot collaborations

In addition to the specific activities and collaborations described above, the group continues to provide fertile ground for a range of other opportunities for mutual support and offshoot collaborations. Every team call begins with an "open space" round robin conversation, with time for each organization to ask questions or share successes and challenges with the rest of the group. These conversations and explorations have led to tangible collaborations, including nearly all organizations exploring new directions for next-gen technology platforms and home delivery opportunities, and WSCAH and NYCP collaborating on both food rescue (with a shared truck and driver) and the potential for shared warehousing space.



Name & Mission

.....
"There are very few tables where we can come together and work out ideas and share challenges, and this forum provides that. We can then each return to our funders, partners, and stakeholders with a more well-rounded narrative about the importance of policy changes and funding needed for the system. Breaking down these silos between our organizations helps strengthen us each individually but also collectively."

- Jessica Chait, Met Council

.....

As the group has evolved from a one-off purchasing pilot to an established coalition of food access organizations collaborating in multiple areas, we began to realize the importance and value of having a name, brand identity, and mission statement, all of which can support greater visibility for the group's members and our work together.

We enlisted the support of Ivy Newman of the Viney Group, who led a collaborative process to develop a name and mission. Through a series of facilitated conversations, the group has adopted the following name and mission:

The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access

The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access collaborates to bring more resources to communities, so none of our neighbors go hungry.

In the coming months, the Roundtable will adopt a logo and launch a simple website that will aggregate updates on our activities and provide an accessible platform for the public to learn more about our work.



Next Steps

.....
"Our goal is not just to impact the customers who we directly serve, but to also to change the system so that all New Yorkers have access to healthy food and supportive services. This Collective is hopefully the beginning of accomplishing a great many things."

- Alyson Rosenthal, WSCAH
.....

With additional funding provided by New York Community Trust, the group is looking forward to another year of collaboration. In the year ahead, we plan to expand the group with 2-3 additional members, while also providing technical assistance and support to smaller organizations who can benefit from purchasing analysis and new vendor relationships. At the same time, the group also plans to return some of our focus to ongoing purchasing analysis and opportunities, while further embracing the group's growing role in advocacy on behalf of the city's direct service food access organizations. This group set out with a simple goal: to maximize resources through collaboration, in order to best achieve our mission of making sure that no New Yorker goes hungry. Through our early successes, and the additional challenges and accomplishments of the past year, our work has proven the model, demonstrating that the power of our collaboration is greater than the sum of its parts. We look forward with great hope and optimism for what we can accomplish in the months and years ahead, on behalf of our organizations, our peers, and our communities.



For more information, contact:

Ben Kerrick
Senior Consultant, KK&P
ben@kkandp.com

Photos credits:

Cover: NYCP, WSCAH, SJBL. P3: WSCAH. P4: NYCP. P6: NYCP. P7: MC. P8: MC. P9: HASK. This page: PH, HASK, HASK, NYCP, PH, WSCAH.