



DATCP's 2024 Tribal Elder Community Food Box Grants Support Thousands of Tribal Elders and Their Families

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MADISON, Wis. – In its inaugural year, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP's) Tribal Elder Community Food Box Program distributed \$1.5 million to nonprofit food assistance organizations to help purchase and distribute healthy, high-quality, and culturally traditional food to thousands of Tribal elders and their families, supporting Indigenous-based food producers in the process.

The Tribal Elder Community Food Box Program Grants were funded in the 2023-2025 state budget for the purpose of purchasing and distributing food to Tribal elders and supporting the growth and operations of food producers and processors from Tribal nations in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Iowa as well as all Wisconsin food producers/processors. The recipients were selected through a competitive review process.

"Every Wisconsinite should have the basic necessities they need to live and thrive, but we know that food insecurity is all too common across Wisconsin, including in our Native Nations. That's a reality we're working hard to change," said Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers. "I'm really excited about our Tribal Elder Food Box Program, which is helping expand access to food as we work to make sure folks and families in every corner of our state do not have to go hungry."

"DATCP recognizes the significance of food sovereignty to the Tribal nations," said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. "Due to the leadership of the Governor and legislature, this program supports food recipients, producers, and processors from Tribal nations and Wisconsin as a whole."

The 2024 grant recipient organizations— Feeding America and Hunger Task Force, in partnership with Tribal nation food system leaders—reported the impacts of the grant program's funding.

Feeding America with Great Lakes Intertribal Food Coalition: Program Impacts

- Coordinated the distribution of over 31,230 healthy food boxes representative of traditional diets.
- Supported 40 small local producers, including 22 Tribal producers from Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota and 18 non-Tribal Wisconsin producers that included women-owned farm businesses, organic farms and cooperatives, and farm businesses owned by Hmong and Hispanic farmers.
- Program participants reported appreciating the food quality, variety, and healthy options, as well as the help making food affordable; they also reported feeling more connected to community.
- Comments received from participating Tribal elders include:
 - "Has helped our diet so much! I have Graves' disease, and my husband has high blood pressure and high cholesterol. We have learned to be so creative in our diet, eating things we normally would not buy due to expense or not being able to find it."
 - "As an Elder, I feel connected to my historical foods and community."

- "I feel like I've received a special gift of beautiful food that I love. I feel loved and honored. I love all of it. Miigwech."

Hunger Task Force: Program Impacts

- Provided healthy, culturally relevant foods along with monthly menus to 815 low-income Tribal elders in southeastern Wisconsin.
- Collaborated with Ho-Chunk Milwaukee Branch Office, Southeastern Oneida Tribal Services, Indian Council of the Elderly, Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center, and the Indian Community School.
- Supported Tribal food producers such as the Oneida Nation Farm and Cannery, Bodwéwadmí Ktëgan Potawatomi Farm, and Red Lake Nation Foods.

For more information on the Tribal Elder Community Food Box Program, visit <https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/AgDevelopment/TribalElderCommunityFoodBoxProgram.aspx>.

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