Foundations making change together
“Food is our common ground, a universal experience.”

James Beard, chef and educator
It’s hard to find an issue more universal—or more personal—than food. Health, climate change, community development, water quality, racial equity, urban and rural economics—the food system encompasses them all. Food system vitality translates to healthier people, land, and communities—and a better future. Simply put, when you change the food system, the broader community and environment change.

At Fresh Taste, improving the Chicago region’s future through food is our collective priority. Few of us consider ourselves “food funders.” We come to food from diverse entry points. As a group of foundations large and small, urban and rural, we’ve joined together in the belief that collaboration—both in learning and doing—produces greater impact than individual action alone.

Through learning, networking, aligned funding, and access to grantmaking expertise, we enhance our individual and group work. Join us if we can help you advance yours.

**A Sampling of Members’ Work**

Our members focus on many issues with connections to the food system:

- Conservation
- Urban agriculture
- Health and hunger
- Rural communities
- Climate crisis and regenerative agriculture
- Community development
- Entrepreneurship
- Food justice
- New economy
- Land access and farmer training
ABOUT FRESH TASTE
Connect, learn, and collaborate

As a group, Fresh Taste members learn and work together to build stronger grantmaking initiatives, advance our work, and increase impact. Members:

- **Connect and collaborate** with local, regional, national, and international peers and initiatives.
- Engage in **learning opportunities** through site-based and issue-focused experiences.
- Participate in **working groups** on key areas of shared interest.
- Access the **grantmaking expertise** of Fresh Taste members and staff.
- **Align grantmaking** to support shared priorities.

But Fresh Taste goes beyond shared learning. Members and staff stimulate innovation that builds the field, breathing life into ideas and initiatives that can change the food system for the better. Through that change, members amplify their impact broadly beyond the food system. Fresh Taste members have awarded more than $37 million for food system work through their individual foundations since 2009.
STRENGTHEN YOUR WORK
Through membership in Fresh Taste, you and your foundation can:

Learn
Learn about effective and innovative work in the Chicago region—and how your work can advance and contribute to existing and new initiatives.

Contribute
Share your funding approaches with others and, where purpose is shared, align grantmaking.

Connect
Build your professional network through connection to a vibrant peer group of funders, locally and nationally.

Strengthen
Gain access to grantmaking expertise to strengthen your funding strategies.

Consider joining Fresh Taste if you are:
- Interested in joining a community of like-minded donors.
- Starting a new program area in which food could be a key element.
- New to grantmaking.
- A foundation without staff.
- Excited about building the movement for green, healthy, fair, and affordable food.
- Looking for systemic approaches to issues like climate change and racial equity.
Aligned Grantmaking

Fresh Taste members align grants to support organizations addressing issues of hunger, land protection, climate change, urban agriculture, community development, entrepreneurship, and health. They have also awarded funds collaboratively through Fresh Taste’s Good Food Fund to amplify their reach.

Catalytic Initiatives

Fresh Taste’s catalytic initiatives advance key developments in the field or spur innovation to address some of the food system’s most pressing challenges and also reflect member direction and priorities. Here are three examples:
▪ **Food System Finance**

Recognizing that most foundations do not have the staff capacity to invest in mission-related food system businesses, Fresh Taste convened and incubated a group of five investors interested in food. These investors launched the Sustainable Local Food Investment Group (SLoFIG), which has grown to 25 members, has invested more than $3.8 million in Fresh Taste’s target region, and has provided due diligence for foundation investments.

▪ **Climate Change**

Today’s climate conversations focus predominantly on reducing carbon dioxide emissions. There is a huge opportunity, however, to pull carbon out of the atmosphere through the soil. In 2014, Fresh Taste began convening foundations and practitioners in the Upper Midwest to explore land-based solutions to climate change. To promote the diversified agriculture necessary to effect change, Fresh Taste mobilized a team of farmers, millers, bakers, university researchers, distributors, and nonprofits to create the Artisan Grain Collaborative. The collaborative has expanded to four Upper Midwest states to build a regenerative grain sector. Fresh Taste subsequently played a key role in the formation of Funders for Regenerative Agriculture (FORA), a new national initiative to build soil health as a means to mitigate climate change, enhance water quality, support human health, and build healthy communities.

▪ **Wasted Food**

Forty percent of the food in the world is wasted. Yet, there are opportunities to divert wasted food to feed hungry people or to build soil health through compost. In Illinois, strong networks were organized around both strategies to utilize wasted food as a resource—but they weren’t working with each other. Along with partners in each network, Fresh Taste convened a group that became the Wasted Food Action Alliance, a network of over 35 statewide organizations including food banks, school food service providers, solid waste agencies, and farmers. Together, the Alliance is influencing state and county policy as well as practices in schools, hospitals, and at public events.

To learn more about Fresh Taste’s work, visit [www.freshtaste.org](http://www.freshtaste.org).
“Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel, and our shelter and surround us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it.”

Vedas, Sanskrit Scripture, 1500 BC

HOW TO JOIN
Learn more about how membership can advance your work in areas that matter to you and your foundation. Reach out to our staff or member co-chairs for more information.

CONNECT
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