



# NEWS



## SUSTAINING FAMILIES

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# Meeting the Moment

“Time and time again, the Boston Foundation and their generous donors have been there to support our community in times of crisis. At this time, where a local response is needed to address federal issues, it’s important to have partners like the Boston Foundation who work tirelessly to protect our residents and coordinate all available resources.

—Boston Mayor Michelle Wu

From press conference introducing TBF/City of Boston collaboration, October 31, 2025

Early last year, the Boston Foundation responded to urgent nonprofit needs arising from federal policy and budget changes. As 2025 progressed, we learned through our community contacts and organizational partnerships that further cuts—in particular, to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—threatened Massachusetts food security. To stave off widespread hunger and anxiety, TBF launched **Meeting the Moment**:

## the Moment: Sustaining Families.

That work is ongoing; the following pages share early elements of it.

We’ve now launched the second concentrated **Meeting the Moment effort: Supporting Our Immigrant Neighbors**. This collaboration with civic and community leaders, funders, and our community of donors will provide essential legal protection, rapid relief, and advocacy to help immigrant

## TBF’s APPROACH TO IMPACT



individuals and families stay safe, housed, fed, and on a path to economic security. This work—driven by TBF’s six-step approach to impact—will run alongside Sustaining Families. See page 10 for more.

## Sustaining Families Grantmaking

Assessing the region’s existing food assistance infrastructure, we learned that the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB) is by far the largest player in Eastern Massachusetts. It distributed nearly

**ON THE COVER:**  
Preparing for community food support at Revival Chelsea.

Photo:  
Javier Juarez

111 million pounds of food last year through local pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers, and other organizations.

Fortifying this hub at a time of extraordinary need was essential to keeping the food security wheel turning. Funds from the City of Boston and TBF, plus more than 400 donations of all sizes last fall allowed us to provide GBFB with \$1 million in general operating support. We knew the “spokes” in this wheel also needed reinforcing, so another \$900,000 in grants went to nine other organizations filling various anti-hunger functions (see sidebar).

In November 2025, TBF raised more than \$1 million that was shared with 61 organizations addressing food-related needs across Eastern Massachusetts. On January 29, we gave another \$1 million in grants of \$10,000 to \$50,000 to 51 organizations that help secure some of Greater Boston’s most food-vulnerable populations. Counting that latest round, TBF and its partners have distributed \$6.7 million to respond to pressing food security needs, protect critical systems, and reimagine our work moving forward.

These grants provided vital emergency assistance but cannot entirely fill the gap left by massive funding cuts to federal programs. The acute threat of hunger has not ended, nor has our mission to sustain families and the support systems that serve them, even as we address parallel adversities. Meeting the Moment: Supporting Our Immigrant Neighbors has a strong focus on legal assistance, basic needs, preservation of rights, and sharing factual information. Learn more at [tbfb.org/meetingthemoment](https://tbfb.org/meetingthemoment).

## Thank You, Catherine D’Amato

This story would be incomplete if we didn’t recognize the remarkable career of Catherine D’Amato, who recently retired as CEO of the Greater Boston Food Bank. As TBF President and CEO Lee Pelton told the *Boston Globe*, “Catherine is not just a Boston treasure, she’s a national treasure. She has expanded and grown a food bank and distribution network that is the national model.” She was also a co-founder and early board member of the Equality Fund at the Boston Foundation, the largest philanthropic fund exclusively dedicated to supporting the LGBTQ+ community in Massachusetts. Equality Fund Executive Director Scott Knox calls her “the consummate builder, entrepreneur, and visionary,” and says, “Her leadership at the Greater Boston Food Bank stands in its own category—with 30 years of investing in an institution, its people, and of course community. Thank you to Catherine for being a mentor to multiple generations, myself included, inside and outside of GBFB.”



Photo: Craig Bailey

## SUPPORTING FOOD SECURITY FROM ALL ANGLES

The Boston Foundation gave nine grants of \$100,000 each to organizations across the food production and delivery system.

### Advocacy and Networks

Project Bread

### Distributors

Greater Boston Food Access Hub

Merrimack Valley Food Bank

Spoonfuls

### Food Pantries and Deliveries

Brockton Area Hunger Network Cooperative

Community Servings

### Suppliers

Boston Area Cleaners

The Food Project

Gaining Ground



## A Full Table with Mesa Llana

**Top left:**  
Revival Chelsea  
was a key player  
in the *Mesa  
Llana* effort.

Photo: Javier  
Juarez

**Inset:**  
Shop and  
Compare  
manager holds  
*Mesa Llana*  
gift cards.

**Top right:**  
Marc and Vivian  
Iannotti

Photos:  
Darlene DeVita

In the days ahead of the November 1 suspension of SNAP benefits, the Latino Equity Fund (LEF) at the Boston Foundation acted swiftly to support vulnerable families in our area.

Research from the Gastón Institute at UMass Boston and Boston Indicators had identified neighborhoods likely to feel the SNAP cuts most keenly. Greater Boston's Latino communities—whose residents already feared capricious ICE activity and abuse when they ventured out for groceries—topped the list. So LEF Executive Director Javier Juarez and Community Impact Officer Carlos Muñoz-Cadilla jumped into action.

With the Boston Foundation's **Food, Fuel, and Shelter Fund** and a generous gift from the Latino-owned local grocery chain **Stop and Compare**, they raised more than \$100,000 in a matter of days. Then, rallying a trusted network of more than 40 community partners and churches in Chelsea, East Boston, and Lynn, in one weekend the team delivered food and grocery gift cards to 667 households affected by the pause and reduction in benefits. Those hectic 72 hours showed “what is possible when data, philanthropy, community, and local business come together with urgency and purpose,” says Juarez.

“We named this effort *Operación Mesa Llana* [Operation Full Table] because every family deserves a seat at a table filled with nourishment and dignity,” he notes, and emphasizes his gratitude for the participating community partners.

### Community Connection

Elaine Mendes, founder of Revival Chelsea, one of those partners, has run the community organization's food pantry for 13 years, through economic downturn, pandemic, and today's challenges. With rumors of SNAP benefits being delayed by government shutdown or cut altogether, the food lines suddenly doubled, and

she feared she couldn't provide for everyone. She saw desperation among the people in the growing lines.

"Then Javier sent me a message," she recalls. "He said he was planning to give grocery gift cards to folks to help with anxieties about SNAP. It was like a miracle for me when I heard that. And then Javier came with the cards. I thought they would be for \$30 or maybe \$50—it was \$150!"

Mendes smiles recalling the amazement and relief her beneficiaries expressed when they saw the value of the cards. And she was able to turn attention to seeking grants and redoubling efforts to deliver Thanksgiving staples for the holiday. With her volunteers, she provided meals for 600 people.

## Operational Support

The *Mesa Llena* gift cards came from Stop and Compare, a chain of three grocery stores in Chelsea and Lynn known informally as *Compare*. Mendes calls that choice meaningful because the store and its owners are part of the community, and the founders are Latino—they understand their customers. "This is important because they sell food that people can afford, and it's cultural food," she says.

Vivian and Marc Iannotti run the business founded by CEO Vivian's parents, who had emigrated from Cuba. "Our employees are about 80 percent Latino, with a smattering of other nationalities. Everything that's going on has hit them pretty hard too," says Marc, the COO. "We'd been wanting to do something, feeling this is our community... *Mesa Llena* was a home run for us. Javier made it really easy."

Their trusted friend and advisor Juan Carlos Morales, an LEF co-founder and advisory board member, connected them to the Latino Equity Fund.

Juarez spoke passionately about the effort with the Iannottis and encouraged them to match LEF's \$50,000 grant with their own resources. After consulting with their CFO, Guillermo Fernandez, they determined they could contribute the \$50,000 match, and got to work.

The biggest hurdle was physically generating the gift cards. They had never loaded so many at once, so their credit card processor temporarily froze the account. They had to load cards in small batches over several days at all three stores to hit the deadline.

The Iannottis call the whole experience an amazing success, enabling them to support their community in a way customized to what they had to offer. "This was such a great idea," says Marc, "but we wouldn't have known where to start." Vivian adds, "We also learned that we can do this. We're always trying to... keep our prices low and pay our employees well, so it's easy to worry, how much can you push?" Working with LEF and partners made it possible for them to move quickly. Vivian concludes, "They say that action cures worry, and it's true. Javier was moving fast and needed support! We said, 'OK, let's do it!' We're so glad we did."



**Stop and Compare cashier**

Photo: Darlene DeVita

## HUNGER-FIGHTING FELLOWSHIP

**O**n a mid-January weekend, as area food pantries and suppliers prepared for a coming polar vortex amid expanding need, a different kind of activity was taking shape at Essex Woods, a retreat center in Essex, Mass. Twelve nonprofit leaders—people who use their ingenuity and grit daily to address food insecurity and hunger—sat together in a rare moment of pause. They were there not to respond to a crisis, but to breathe, reflect, and connect, and to begin a nine-month journey designed to strengthen them as they hold up the region's food system infrastructure.

The group is the 2026 cohort of **Leadership Longevity Fellows**. Developed by the Boston Foundation, the Cambridge Community Foundation, and New Sector Alliance, and building on successful pilots in 2023 and 2025, the program harnesses New Sector's science-backed national curriculum to

combat burnout among nonprofit professionals. Because mid-career leaders often navigate high workloads, limited resources, and complex community needs, the fellowship provides them with tools to enhance personal well-being, manage organizational barriers, and develop broader systems-level perspectives. By building their individual capacity, the fellowship aims to cultivate leaders who can more effectively respond to community concerns and create lasting positive change.

The program's mission for 2026 is to equip the leaders of Greater Boston's food systems with the skills, networks, and resilience they need to sustain their service to the community. The choice to focus on food systems reflects both the urgency of the moment and the critical role these nonprofit leaders play in preserving stability for households facing hunger and food insecurity.



Photo: Marcel Mensah

Leadership Longevity Fellows kicked off their nine-month fellowship in January.

“ Nonprofit work tends to be very siloed, and too often we are put into competition with other groups seeking the same grants and resources. It’s incredibly refreshing to have time and space for real, honest conversations with others in the field about the common challenges we’re all facing.

Recent federal disruptions demonstrated how suddenly essential supports can be jeopardized. Families were left uncertain about benefits, states scrambled to interpret shifting guidance, and local organizations had to quickly absorb increased need. Although Congress restored temporary stability, the crisis underscored how political gridlock can strain the local organizations that step in when benefits fall short. (A recent survey of nonprofits on the impact of federal policies over the last year shows that food programs are the most common new or expanded service nonprofits have added.) SNAP remains vulnerable to future policy shifts and debate at the state and federal levels, which reinforces the need for well-supported, well-prepared advocates and leaders in the food system.

The Leadership Longevity Fellowship offers just that preparation. Over nine months, fellows participate in a blend of in-person and virtual workshops, individualized coaching, peer learning circles, and a culminating capstone project (all fully funded and including a \$1,000 stipend per fellow to offset transportation and other costs associated with attending sessions). This structure provides them with space for reflection, skill-building, and collaborative problem-solving, and helps them form professional networks that they can tap into well beyond the program. Fellows leave the program not just with practical strategies for navigating organizational and systemic hurdles, but also with renewed energy and clarity of purpose.

As the challenges to food security—and the nonprofits that address them—continue to evolve, the 2026 Leadership Longevity Fellowship represents a strategic investment in the people working tirelessly to ensure every household in Greater Boston has consistent access to healthy, affordable food.

### THE FOOD SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP LONGEVITY COHORT

Briana Acosta  
*Project Manager; Vital CxNs*

Carlos Añez Morales  
*Director of Food Access;  
La Colaborativa*

Nicholas Bruning  
*Director of Packaging Operations;  
Community Servings*

Emily Fidanza  
*Network Manager; Massachusetts  
Food System Collaborative*

Zach Goldhammer  
*Director of Community Engagement  
and Strategic Partnerships;  
Cambridge Community Center*

Phoebe Heyman  
*Food Pantry Manager; Margaret  
Fuller Neighborhood House*

Christina Jarboe  
*SNAP-Ed (Nutrition Education)  
Program Manager;  
YMCA of Greater Boston*

Ryan Montbleau  
*Senior Director of Community  
Programs; East End House*

Jennifer Pectol  
*Operations Manager; Food For Free*

Lisa Ugalde Smith  
*Senior Director of Food and Nutrition;  
West End House*

Isa Walsh  
*Senior Director of Equity &  
Accountability; Eastie Farm*

Emily Yerby  
*Director, Programs; Spoonfuls*

# Catching Up with Movement Leaders

Photo: Annelly Camargo



Dwaigh Tyndal (left in photo) leads Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), a neighborhood-based environmental justice and transit-oriented development nonprofit. ACE has defended the rights of Roxbury residents for over 25 years. By mobilizing residents and working with other community organizers at local, state, and national levels, ACE helps generate policy and resources that address systemic injustice.

In April 2024, the Boston Foundation invited six ambitious, engaged nonprofit leaders to participate in a three-year **Movement Leaders** program developed by our Shifting Power and Advancing Justice focus area team. Investing more than \$4 million in these leaders and their organizations through multiyear funding and other resources, the initiative helps them advance their collective work to transform communities, drive systemic change, and foster innovation. As the final year of this collaboration begins, we checked in to see how the work is unfolding. So far, the group has met collectively eight times, held nearly 70 one-on-one meetings, and exchanged countless emails and calls. Each organization has received \$125,000 annually for general operating support, and the leaders have used the option to request additional grants of up to \$90,000 per year for wellness, technical assistance, or capacity building, and \$10,00 grants for emergencies.

These funds have unleashed tremendous potential. Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), for example, headed by Dwaigh Tyndal, recently used a \$16,443 technical assistance grant to enlist the fundraising consultancy Progressive Multiplier. “This grant highlights the back-end support many nonprofits need because of philanthropy’s historical lack of investment in infrastructure, as well as the needs of this current moment where many nonprofits are having to pivot or reevaluate their finances and fundraising strategies,” says TBF Program Manager Juliana Brandão.

Indeed, ACE was part of a group that lost a grant for \$60 million over three years that it had been awarded by the federal Environ-

mental Protection Agency, Tyndal says. A partnership of ACE, Health Resources in Action, and New England Grassroots Environment Fund had received the award through the Thriving Communities Grantmaking program, for distributing across EPA Region 1 (New England) to strengthen local environmental justice action. ACE itself was due to receive around \$2.6 million.

“But the director of the EPA did an illegal claw-back,” Tyndal says. “Sixty million, gone. We put in 15 months of work on the grant.” While angry, he is not disheartened, and says, “On the positive side, our organization is stronger for all the effort. We also made real, powerful contacts across Region 1. And if nothing else, we are persistent. We expect that in 2028, we will get that money back and implement the plan.”

Meanwhile, ACE has a full schedule in its Roxbury neighborhood and beyond, including event planning. Last year ACE hosted three major convenings: one at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, one co-hosted with the NAACP, and another in partnership with two other Movement Leaders that gathered grassroots peers from across the state. “Convenings are where we put our policy stake in the ground,” says Tyndal. “That neighborhoods and communities should be at the table in the planning process, through implementation, and in the watchdog phase of enforcement.” Next up: a summit with technology and energy companies—renewable and traditional—to bring a neighborhood-centered agenda to issues evolving in the age of data centers, AI, and an aging power grid.

Tyndal says collaborating with other Movement Leaders and TBF staff has been invaluable. “It gives us opportunities to create new ways of thinking about our work through the eyes of partners,” he says, be they funders or other community organizations. He adds, “This community of powerful leaders that crosses disciplines and service areas and geography gives you a center to hear different perspectives from. And since we are all in frontlines work and usually balancing multiple issues, it gives us space to think a little clearer, a little bigger, and use the imagination.” The cross-collaboration leads to innovation, he notes, and reminds supporters and philanthropists that they are thinking about the future and “not just, ‘This is what we have been doing for the past 10 years.’”

## UNIFIED MOVEMENT

Tyndal’s fellow **Movement Leaders** also value the Shifting Power and Advancing Justice collaboration. Massachusetts Voter Table’s Shanique Rodriguez says, “This funding and partnership allowed me to have a relationship ... that is deeper and that allows us to be thought partners.” And Noemi Ramos of New England Community Project notes, “The emergency funds for our members had huge impact, and ... went to funeral support, transportation needs, or improving physical spaces.”



Photo: Annielly Camargo

# We Persist



Photos above: Craig Bailey



Photo: Mayor's Office photo by Mike Mejia

## Nonprofit Well-Being

On March 5, TBF hosted **One Year In**, a public gathering to share and discuss results of the second survey (conducted in partnership with Massachusetts Nonprofit Network and MassINC Polling) of nonprofit leaders about the impact of federal policies and practices on their work and well-being. The first survey in February 2025 asked about anticipated impacts and the January 2026 survey followed up to ask about realized impacts and future concerns. Findings were unsurprising, but important to quantify. In short, nonprofits need funding; we all need fortitude. Read more on [TBF.org/events](https://www.tbf.org/events).

## Supporting Our Immigrant Neighbors

On March 10, the Boston Foundation again joined the City of Boston and others to announce a united position to support our community. Partnerships have been cemented to coordinate resources and programs to defend immigrants from extrajudicial threats and assist them through a challenging time.

TBF President and CEO Lee Pelton said, “We stand proudly with Mayor Wu, our nonprofit and philanthropic partners, and all those who recognize that just as we all reap the rewards when we welcome and protect our immigrant neighbors, we all pay the price when shortsighted and cruel federal actions seek to rip apart the fabric of our communities. Through our own Meeting the Moment: Supporting Our Immigrant Neighbors program, and our collective partnership with the Mayor, we can and will meet current needs, push back against lies and misinformation, and build a strong base to resist the unjust treatment of anyone in our city and Commonwealth.”

TBF is starting with immediate grants to organizations protecting immigrants’ legal rights and due process. This spring approximately \$1.4 million in new grants for immigrant-supporting organizations serving our most vulnerable communities will be awarded through a community-led process. All the while, we will collect and share data and stories that illuminate the real experiences and contributions of immigrants in Greater Boston.

# From President and CEO M. Lee Pelton

**T**his issue describes some of TBF's responses to the atmosphere of threat and precarity facing our neighbors. **Within challenging times also come moments when institutions are tested. We are in one now.**

You may have seen reporting about the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and decisions by Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard, and other donor advised fund providers to stop processing grants to SPLC following the Trump administration's indictment of the organization on fraud charges.

The Boston Foundation has made no such decision. We continue to process grants to SPLC. An indictment is an allegation, not a conviction. It does not invalidate an organization's nonprofit status, nor should it compel institutions to prejudge the outcome of a legal process still unfolding. We recognize SPLC's longstanding role in advancing civil rights and combating hate and extremism, and we believe it would be irresponsible to reach conclusions before the courts do.

This moment makes clear that donor advised funds are more than financial tools. They are instruments for civic leadership and positive social change. Thank you for partnering with TBF and our ongoing mission to improve lives and strengthen communities.

“  
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