

Epic-Cure Inc.®

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

POISED FOR STABLE, LONG-TERM GROWTH

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Background Information

A Briefly Description of Epic-Cure® - Its Mission and History

EPIC-CURE® - Background

Fostering a pervasive community ethos of dignity, respect, and cooperation

Formed in 2018, Epic-Cure® is a 100% volunteer non-profit, 501(c)(3), organization with a primary mission of ending food waste and food insecurity, particularly among the most underserved communities in NE Florida. With deep stakes in our community, the Board of Directors and the volunteers at Epic-Cure® are dedicated to urgent and continuous direct action to solve the problems of food waste and food insecurity.

Epic-Cure® targets disadvantaged communities and takes its free food distributions directly into those neighborhoods. Our mobile distributions are done using the Choice Model and not only prevents waste but also enables those shopping for free groceries to maintain a strong sense of dignity and self-worth.

Mobile distributions ensure maximum access to nutritious food for those most in need and has resulted our having rescued and distributed more than 29 million pounds of free, healthy food (primarily fresh produce, meat, and dairy) to the food insecure in the 5.5 years ended December 31, 2024.

We currently operate as both a food pantry (serving families) and as a food bank (serving food pantries, food banks, and nonprofits), all with the goal of expanding our reach and serving more people both directly and indirectly.

Here are some life to date metrics to illustrate the scope and impact of Epic-Cure’s operations.

0 Employees	29.9 million Pounds of food distributed since inception
\$60 million Wholesale value of food distributed since inception	379,856 Number of time families were served since inception

- About 38% of all food produced in the U.S. is wasted (ReFED)
- 1 in 6 people in the US is food insecure (USDA)
 - Among minorities and children, 1 in 5 is food insecure (USDA)

Throw away the solution to food insecurity?

EPIC-CURE® - What We Do

Epic-Cure® is a food charity. We address the twin problems of *food waste* and *food insecurity* by redirecting surplus food (food waste) to positive uses – feeding people (primarily) and animals (when the food is not optimally fit for human consumption).

Epic-Cure® prevents *food waste*, sourcing donations of food that would otherwise have been discarded in landfills where it would slowly decompose, emitting harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Since our inception 6 short years ago, we have prevented nearly 30 million pounds of food from harming the environment.

- Epic-Cure® sources food from Feeding America’s local chapter – Feeding Northeast Florida.
- We also collect food donations from food banks (e.g., FarmShare, Southeastern Food Bank), the USDA, grocery stores, food manufacturers, food distributors, trucking and logistics companies, and local farms.

Epic-Cure® prevents *food insecurity* by distributing recovered food free of charge, both as a Food Bank and as a Food Pantry.

- Our primary function is that of a food pantry, serving individuals that are food insecure. We conduct more than 20 food distributions, the majority of which are held directly in the neighborhoods and with the help of volunteers from those neighborhoods (mobile distributions).
 - Nearly all Epic-Cure® distributions follow the choice model, whereby individuals attend farmers’ market or grocery store styled distributions that allow our patrons to choose only the food they wish to consume, reducing the likelihood of food waste and improving our patrons’ sense of dignity.
 - Epic-Cure requires no identification or other qualifications or screening, improving patron participation and preserving patron dignity.
- Epic-Cure® also acts as a food bank, providing food to other food banks, food pantries, and nonprofits. Our food bank operations represent a great way to materially expand the number of individuals that we ultimately serve.
 - Most food pantries have very limited logistical capacity (refrigerated box trucks, forklifts, etc.) and inadequate cold storage for reaching any real scale.
 - With Epic-Cure’s significant and growing logistical and cold storage capacity, we can provide, in just-in-time fashion, food pantries and others with the food they cannot otherwise accommodate, expanding their effectiveness in serving the food insecure in their local areas.

Epic-Cure® further addresses *food insecurity* with cooking classes for U.S. military veterans and middle- and high school- aged Title-1 school students.

- These free classes are designed to improve self-reliance, as all students are provided valuable life and career skills.

The Letter from the Founders

*A Discussion of the Important Challenges and Accomplishments of Epic-Cure®
in 2024*

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Dear Friends,

We write this Annual Report for 2024 with great optimism for the future of Epic-Cure® and all its partners. Today, Epic-Cure® is stronger and more stable than ever, and our already considerable impact on people and the environment can now grow appreciably and sustainably.

In 2024, we faced enormous operational challenges, and from them, we have emerged **more efficient and viable**.

- We successfully downsized the St. Augustine warehouse in January to reduce costs. This consolidation was financially responsible and created new operational efficiencies, a greater reliance on the Palatka operational processing center, and a more refined and emphatic focus on expanding our food bank operations to reach more people more effectively.
- Despite facing a forced relocation of the Palatka facility, we raised \$100K, secured a new logistics hub, and seamlessly resumed operations – a remarkable feat that was accomplished in but a few short, action-packed months. Our volunteers pulled this Herculean task off, overcoming the formidable challenges, big and small, with the strength, endurance, and determination fueled by their over-sized hearts and endless empathy.
- Nonetheless, we **scaled-up operations dramatically**, increasing food processing approximately by 75% from about 602,000 pounds per month (Jan/Feb) to over 1.02 million pounds per month (Nov/Dec). Again, this colossal undertaking is the good work of Epic-Cure’s volunteers.

We **expanded food bank operations**, too.

- We further built partnerships with local nonprofits, providing them food to help defray their operating costs to allow them to better serve their beneficiaries.
- Epic-Cure® was relentless and innovative in seeking new food sources, enabling us to provide more food to other food pantries and food banks, including Feeding Northeast Florida, itself our largest supplier of food and a brilliant partner.
- We provided 1.1 million pounds of food to other food banks, food pantries, and NE Florida nonprofits in 2024. Expansion in this area is vital to accomplishing our goals, as it represents a highly leverageable way to serve more of the food insecure population in Northeast Florida.
- Here are the top four recipients, from greatest to least amount provided:

• Feeding Northeast Florida	Food Bank	187,052 pounds
• Calvary Life Center	Food Pantry	98,098 pounds
• Southeastern Food Bank	Food Bank	93,468 pounds
• St. Johns Food Pantry	Food Pantry	92,791 pounds

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Our **Sustain U.® cooking classes** continued despite temporarily pausing classes for Veterans.

- Our classes for middle schoolers at Title-1 schools have yielded part time jobs and a real sense that those students can accomplish their goals and escape some of the hardships of their lives.
- The return of our Veterans' cooking classes remains a high priority, and we expect to start again in 2025.

Additionally, we are undertaking new initiatives.

- Innovative food sourcing strategies – the **Rejected Pallet App**:
 - Rejected truckload donations to Epic-Cure® grew nearly eight times (8x), from 113,000 pounds in the first half of 2024 to 818,000 pounds its second half.
 - We collaborated with FoodRecovery.org on an Uber-like app for rejected truckload tracking in real time and believe the Rejected Pallet App will be a game-changer, increasing efficiency and reducing waste.
 - Currently, entire semi-tractor trailer truckloads of food are regularly rejected and sent to landfills. This app tackles that problem head-on.
- **Epic-Med**: In 2024, Epic Cure® and Wildflower Healthcare joined forces to launch a non-profit that collects and distributes donated medical supplies to those in need. Epic-Med collects overstock medical supplies and durable medical equipment from local healthcare facilities, clinics, and individuals. Medical missionaries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and medical clinics providing free health care and dental care now have access to shop in the Epic-Cure® operational facility in St. Augustine to collect the items they need.
 - The items collected by Epic-Med are distributed free of charge to medical missionaries, NGOs, and clinics.
 - This new initiative expands Epic-Cure's reach beyond food insecurity.
- **Food as Medicine** – a work in progress:
 - While partnerships were formed, the initiative has lacked consistency and measurable impact. We intend to address these shortcomings in 2025 but expect this initiative to require significant foundation-building, including partnerships with like-minded and effective healthcare concerns.
 - We plan to implement this goal when the St. Augustine facility is built. The facility will include two commercial teaching kitchens – strong, permanent infrastructure for a future "Food as Medicine" program.

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Epic-Cure® is building a **new logistics center** in St. Augustine.

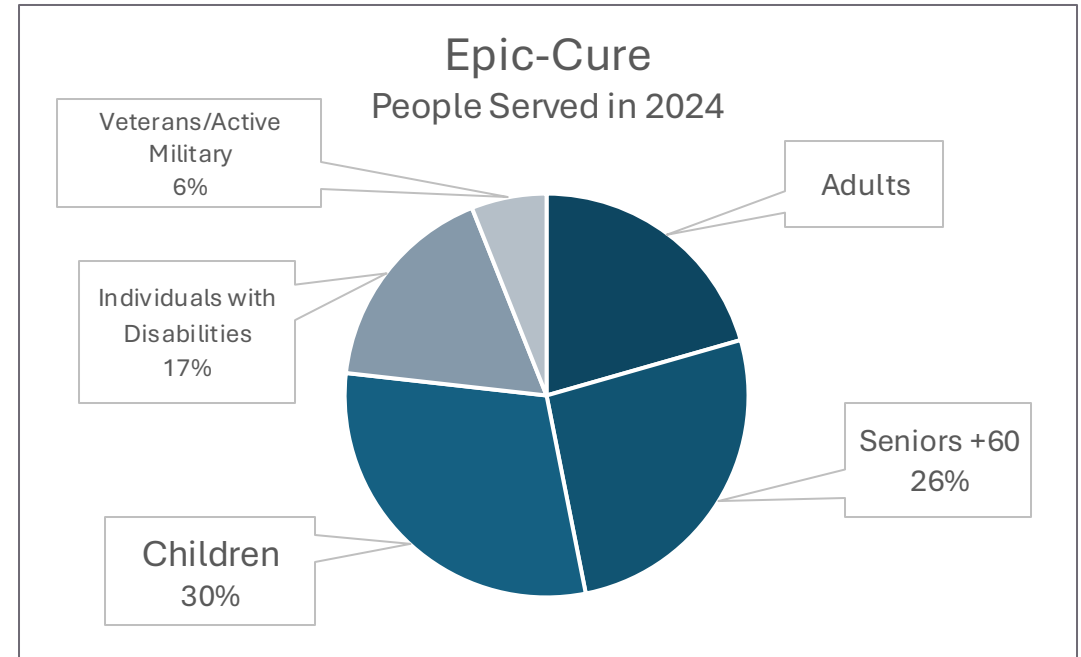
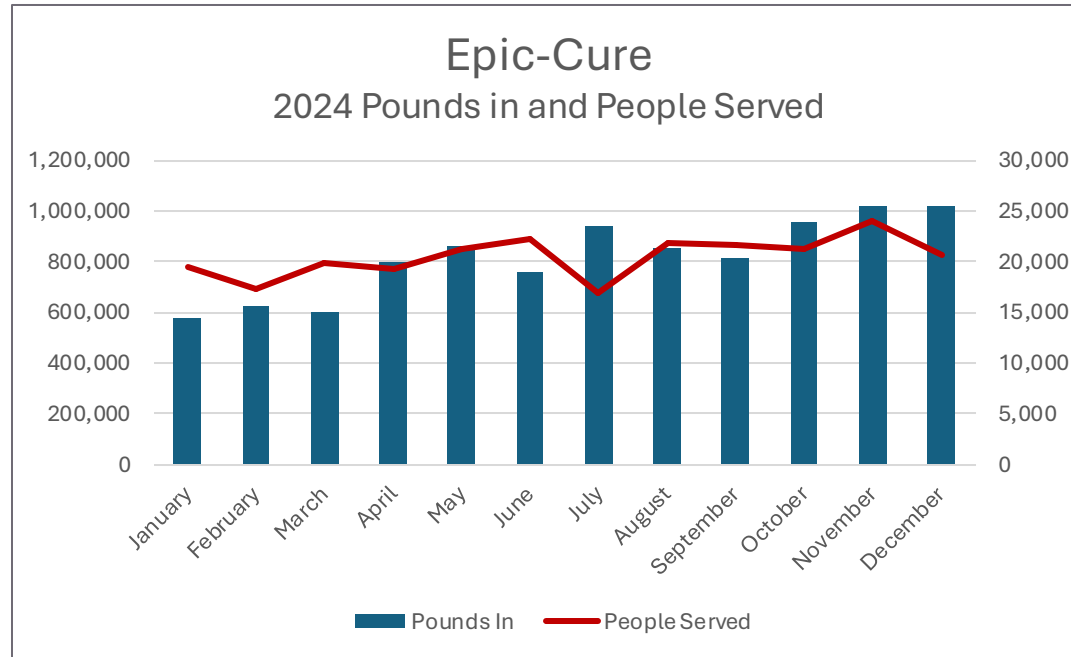
- Signed into law in June 2024, the Florida State legislature awarded us a \$1.5 million appropriation to build the Epic-Cure® Food Security Distribution Center in St. Augustine, Florida.
- The facility will:
 - comprise approximately 10,000 square feet and have raised loading docks to accommodate semi-tractor trailer trucks for larger and more efficient food intake and outgo logistics;
 - contain material, commercial refrigeration and freezing capacity to ensure the safe handling of significant amounts of food (primarily produce, dairy, and meat); and
 - include two commercial teaching kitchens for use by Sustain U.® in cooking classes and by Epic-Cure® for the Food as Medicine initiative
- Located at 450 South Holmes Boulevard in St. Augustine, the new facility is located just adjacent to the new SR-312 connector, affording excellent access for refrigerated box trucks and semi-tractor trailers.
- The property is appropriately entitled (i.e., it has the right zoning), and we expect to break ground for construction in the final quarter of 2025.

As you can see, we are not content to rest. With recent inflation wreaking havoc in our community, too much need remains. We cannot accept that 38% of the food produced in the US is thrown away while one in six people is food insecure, and so we will continue to build on our food rescue and distribution track record. Here are some key life to date (May 2019 to year-end 2024) **Performance Metrics** for Epic-Cure®:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Total food rescued and distributed: | 29.9 million pounds | \$60.0 million (wholesale value) | \$3.77 cost per family served |
| • Wholesale value of food, by County: | Putnam - \$34 million | St. Johns - \$25 million | Other - \$1 million |
| • Agencies, Pantries, and Food Banks: | 1.1 million pounds | (since January 1, 2024) | |
| • Families served (number of times served): | 379,856 | | |

On the following page, we narrow down those key statistics to look graphically at Epic-Cure's 2024 accomplishments.

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS



In 2024, we served an average of 20,492 people a month. This value was steady, varying between 17,000 and 24,000 per month. While our food intake increased materially (from about 600,000 to just over 1,000,000 pounds monthly by year end, a 75% increase), the number of food distributions remained steady at 20 per week (approx. 86 per month) due to limited capacity for safely transporting food to create new, regular free mobile distributions. Put simply, our refrigerated trucks were used to their maximum capacity in 2024, and unless and until we can secure new refrigerated trucks, we must rely exclusively on supplying food to food banks, food pantries, and other nonprofits to experience growth in the number of people we help.

Our total collections in 2024 amounted to 9.8 million pounds of food, our biggest volume since inception!

We also display data on the basic demographics of those we serve, with children under 18 years old and seniors of at least 60 years of age leading the tally.

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

We are proud of our accomplishments in 2024. More precisely, we are proud of our volunteers' accomplishments in 2024. It was a truly challenging year in which the entire Epic-Cure® team rallied alongside our community partners throughout Northeast Florida to create a stronger and more viable enterprise with significant capacity to expand the good we do for the environment (mitigating food waste), the people we serve (mitigating food insecurity), and our Veterans and children (Sustain U.® cooking classes). We also look forward to substantially increasing our efforts as a food bank that will allow us to serve many more of the food insecure in Northeast Florida as we increase our logistical capacity: the new processing facility in Palatka, the coming new facility in St. Augustine, and the addition of refrigerated transportation (of paramount importance in 2025).

We thank our Board members, volunteers, food sourcing and distribution partners, and donors and grantors. We know well that, because of every one of you, the thousands of people we serve with great regularity, week in and week out, are happier, healthier, and less insecure than they might otherwise have been. This wonderful Epic-Cure® ecosystem raises spirits, dignity, and self worth.

We, the Founders of Epic-cure®, are grateful beyond expression. We are awed and humbled to stand on the shoulders of giants – your shoulders. Thank you!

With Gratitude,

The Founders:

Sunny Mulford, Executive Director



Ken Mulford, Managing Director



Hanna Layton, Director



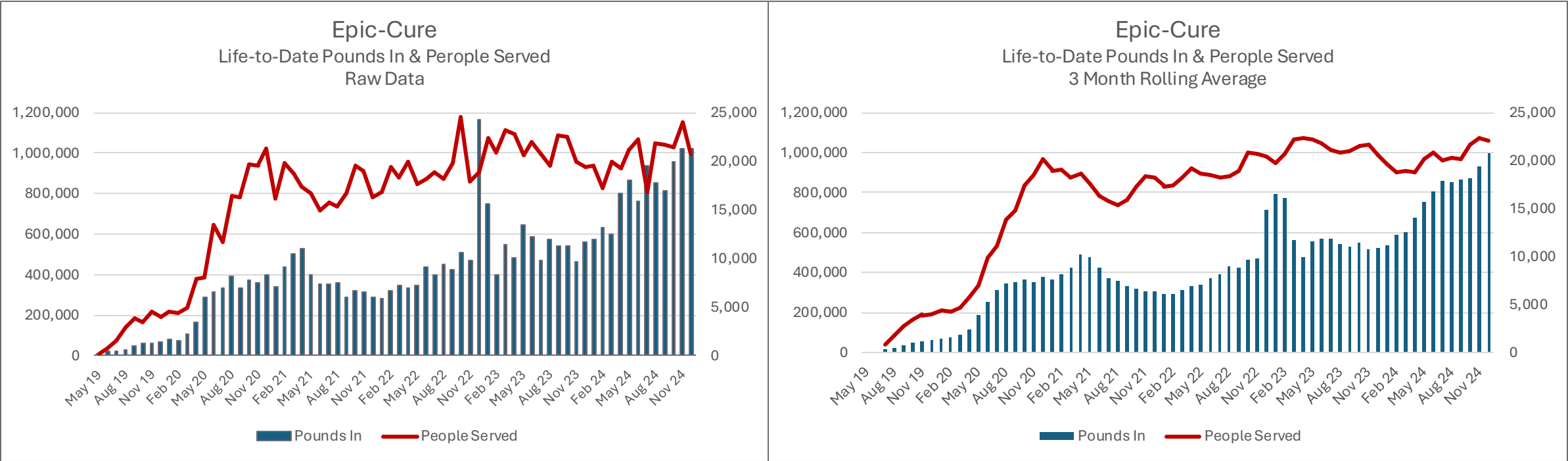
EPIC-CURE'S PERFORMANCE METRICS

Since Inception

What did we achieve, and how did we measure up to our goals for 2024?

Epic-Cure® - Life-to-Date Performance Metrics

Here is what our food rescue and food distribution activities have yielded from our first distribution in May 2019 until the end of the year 2024:



The chart on the left shows the absolute data covering the monthly pound-in (collected food donations, left scale) and the number of times families were served each month (right scale). To smooth the data, we employ a simple moving average covering 3 months of data for the same performance measures: pounds in (left scale) and the number of times people were served (right scale). Note: The large increase in food and household goods recovery at the end of 2022 was the result of large donations from FEMA.

Because of logistical constraints, primarily, the need for more refrigerated box trucks to move food for distributions in the neighborhoods where the need resides, the number of times that we serve families has leveled off. We accommodated the large increase in food distributed by (a) increasing our Food Bank operations (the continuation of this upward path is a major objective for 2025) and (b) providing greater amounts of food to the families that we serve.

Epic-Cure® - 2024 Goals Assessed

Our 2024 goals and the results are summarized below along with an answer to the question: “Were they achieved?”

1. Purchase the Palatka Warehouse (\$1.5 million)
 - a. We did not achieve this goal.
 - b. In 2024, the owner of the Palatka facility terminated our lease early, forcing us to find a new and sizeable operations facility.
 - c. With extraordinary effort, Epic-Cure® secured a new operational facility in Palatka. We agreed to a 15 year lease with a lower rental rate, ensuring a long term presence in the area.
 - d. We consider this outcome to be a win!
2. Purchase a new 10,550 square foot warehouse in St. Augustine: \$2,100,000.
 - a. We have secured \$1.5 million in financing for the new St. Augustine operations facility, which we now expect to cost between \$2.3- and \$2.5 million (inflation, labor shortages, and the rising costs of permitting).
 - b. On January 10, 2025, after a holiday driven two-week delay in closing, we purchased the land for this facility: 450 S. Holmes Boulevard in St. Augustine.
 - c. We consider this outcome to be a win!
3. We will continue to seek food sources outside of the normal channels, including sourcing food from trucking and logistics companies when they experience rejected food deliveries.
 - a. Our food sourcing growth from 550,000 pounds to just over 1 million pounds was largely driven by new food sources.
 - b. We consider this outcome to be a win!
4. Serving more people by enhancing our food bank operations.
 - a. We provided more than 1.1 million pounds of food to food banks, food pantries, and nonprofits.
 - b. We consider this outcome to be a win!
5. Food as Medicine – we did not achieve this goal.

Epic-Cure® - 2025 Goals

Our 2025 goals are:

1. Begin construction on the St. Augustine operational facility
 - a. Engage consultants and complete the permitting process.
 - b. Clear the land; install the utilities infrastructure; build roads, curbs, and gutters; and prepare the land for constructing the building.
 - c. “Reach” goal: begin the construction of the building.
2. Secure logistical equipment needed to materially expand Epic-Cure’s reach to the food insecure.
 - a. Purchase or lease a new or recently used refrigerated, non-CDL box truck with lift gate.
 - b. Purchase two (2) or more 40-foot, walk-in cooler/freezer containers.
 - c. Purchas a 36-foot mobile dock ramp.
 - d. Secure funding for operating the equipment listed above.
3. Continue to seek food sources outside of the normal channels, including sourcing food from trucking and logistics companies w hen they experience rejected food deliveries (i.e., the Rejected Pallet App).
4. Expand the Epic-Cure® Board of Directors, creating two seats for local Board members with significant experience in the food waste and food insecurity realm.
5. With the aim to improve participation and funding, continue to raise awareness of the harmful impacts of (a) food waste on the environment and (b) food insecurity for our neighbors, our economy, our health, and our social wellbeing.

EPIC-CURE[®] & FOOD WASTE

A Detailed Survey of the State of the Union for Food Waste

Food Waste & Epic-Cure®

Epic-Cure® is dedicated to reducing food waste in Northeast Florida. This effort not only produces good environmental results by reducing greenhouse gases, particularly methane, in the environment but also provides fresh and nutritious food to the food insecure. Let's look at the current state of food waste in the U.S.

According to ReFED (2025 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report), the problem of food waste continues, with:

- About “one-third of all food lost or wasted as it makes its way from farms to our plates.”
- 73.9 million total tons of surplus food generated in 2023. That is 442 pounds of surplus food for each person in the U.S.
 - Surplus food: All food that goes unsold or unused by a business or that goes uneaten at home or restaurants.
 - Food waste: Uneaten food and inedible parts that go to one of the following destinations: composting, anaerobic digestion, landfills, combustion, sewer, dumping, spread over land, or unharvested.
- \$382 billion of surplus food produced in 2023.

Eighty-five percent **(85%) of surplus food** ends up in waste destinations – **landfills**.

Only 2% of surplus food is donated!

What is all this wasted food doing to us?

- Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions: It is the equivalent of 54 million cars driven for a year.
- Water wasted: 16% of our freshwater resources.
- Missed opportunity to feed the food insecure: 120 billion lost meals, enough to feed 33.3% of the U.S. for a year.

According to ReFED, implementing all their recommended solutions could achieve the following:

- \$61 billion in net financial benefit annually.
- 18 million tons of waste reduced annually.
- 50,000 jobs created over ten years.

Food Waste & Epic-Cure®

Food waste remains too high, and after a brief dip during the COVID pandemic response (2020 to 2022), we appear to have returned to pre-pandemic levels of food waste.

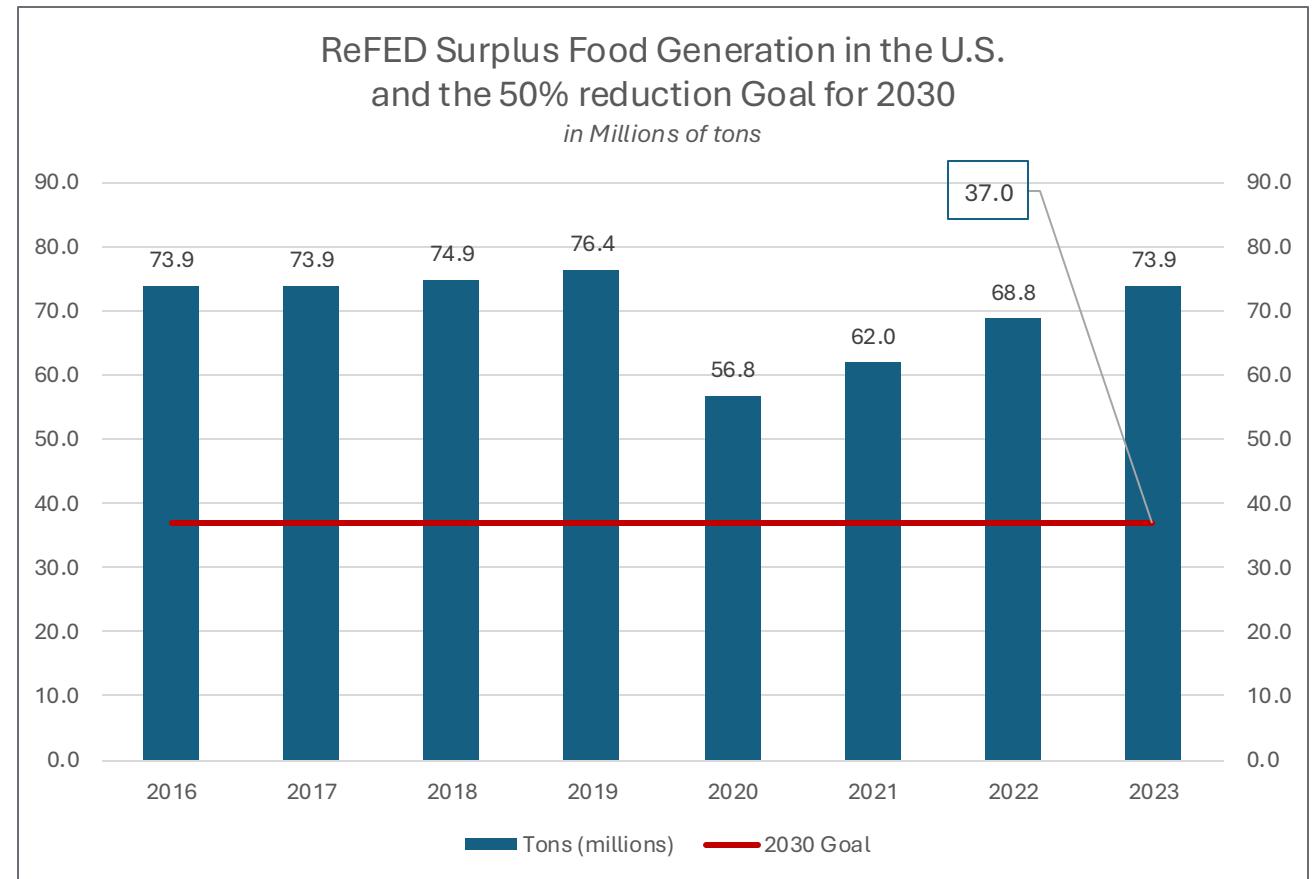
ReFED writes, “We are still far off from meeting the 2030 food waste reduction goal, and it’s becoming increasingly difficult to see how we will reach it.”

From where does food waste originate?

- Residential: 35.2%
- Farm: 23.8%
- Manufacturing: 17.8%
- Foodservice: 17.2%
- Retail: 6.0%

How is food waste broken out by food type?

- Produce: 43.7%
- Prepared foods: 20.2%
- Dairy & Eggs: 12.7%
- Dry Goods: 9.5%
- Fresh Meat/Seafood: 4.6%
- Beverages: 3.8%
- Breads/Bakery: 3.2%
- Frozen: 2.3%



Among the reasons that food is wasted: trimmings and byproducts (30.4%), excess (23.6%), not harvested (19.7%), spoiled (12.1%), date label concerns (5.8%), food safety (2.4%), Buyer rejections (2.2%), mistakes and malfunctions (1.8%), and other (2%).

About 74% of food waste occurs in the production and processing of it!

Food Waste & Epic-Cure®

The graphic at right demonstrates the Wasted Food Scale. Because it is so informative, we have shown this graphic before and will certainly show it again. Let's discuss it.

The most preferred method of reducing food waste is to simply not produce more than is **needed**.

- Because of the uncertainties of weather, disease, and consumer tastes, this concept is difficult to effectively implement. It can even be dangerous, as the experiences of China under Mao and Russia under Stalin so clearly demonstrate. In both examples, millions of people died from famine resulting from central planning of those economies
 - To produce nearly the amount of food **needed**, food policy planners must predict the future, accounting for the vagaries of weather, disease, and consumer tastes. Throughout history, this goal has proven perfectly elusive.
 - And market forces are subject to the same problems plus the problem of the possibility of perverse incentives created by, and the inevitable favoritism granted by, central planners.
- Thus, Epic-Cure® operates in the next two areas of the graphic as we move from most to least preferred: Donations and Feeding Animals.
 - We collect food donations from food banks, farms, manufacturers, distributors, logistics companies, and farms.
 - With great care and attention to the safe handling and storage of all this food (9.8 million pounds in 2024), substantially all of it was distributed to food insecure people.
 - A small portion of the food collected was not optimal for human consumption (for instance, produce that was too ripe or meat that was not stored continuously at safe temperatures). We donated this small remainder to feed animals.
 - Historically, Epic-Cure® has not logged the amount of food donated to feed animals. The amounts were negligible. Now, however, we are processing about 1 million pounds of food a month and have begun to track this metric, which we will provide in our Almost Monthly Epic-Cure® Newsletter's Report Cards.



As ReFED states in its 2025 report:

*“Importantly, **preventing** food from being wasted in the first place is the most effective approach to ... reduce planet-warming greenhouse gas (GHG) levels with the added benefit of conserving water, land, biodiversity, and inputs like fertilizer.”*

Food Waste & Epic-Cure®

Public policy is an important lever in the fight against food waste, and Epic-Cure® has been active in this realm.

- We are members of the Zero Food Waste Coalition and have supported their efforts to advocate for legislation at the national level, including sending our Executive Director Sunny Mulford to Washington D.C. to help raise awareness.

Food waste reduction is a nonpartisan issue: benefits range from cost savings to hunger relief. And as ReFED reports: “Importantly, a federal commitment and collaboration to food waste reduction has existed through the last three administrations.”

The key Federal policy issues are (a) waste management, (b) ***funding for infrastructure and innovation***, (c) ***improvements to food date labels***, (d) ***expanded food donation policies***, and (e) consumer education.

- The items listed above – (b) through (d) – have obvious connections to Epic-Cure®, and we have engaged in lobbying and grassroots lobbying to support those issues.
- Consumer education is an important area for attention and should produce results that will materially exceed those of imperfect policy planners.
- In 2023-2024, the 118th Congress introduced 16 federal bills primarily to shape the omnibus Farm Bill which governs much of our food and agricultural systems. That Congress failed to pass the Farm Bill, and such constituent bills as the No Time to Waste Act, the COMPOST Act, the Food Date and Labeling Act, and the Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act must be reintroduced.
 - Epic-Cure® remains hopeful that, with the support of our community and communities like ours throughout the nation, policy makers will develop the legislative package again.

It is at the State level, however, that most action regulating food waste occurs. That is where the regulatory authority is greatest. In 2024, 100 state level bills were introduced related to the same key areas noted for the Federal level (above).

- 18 of these were passed, seven failed, and the rest were pending as 2024 closed out.

Epic-Cure® will remain active in the effort to amplify common sense policy options aimed at reducing food waste. We invite you to join us.

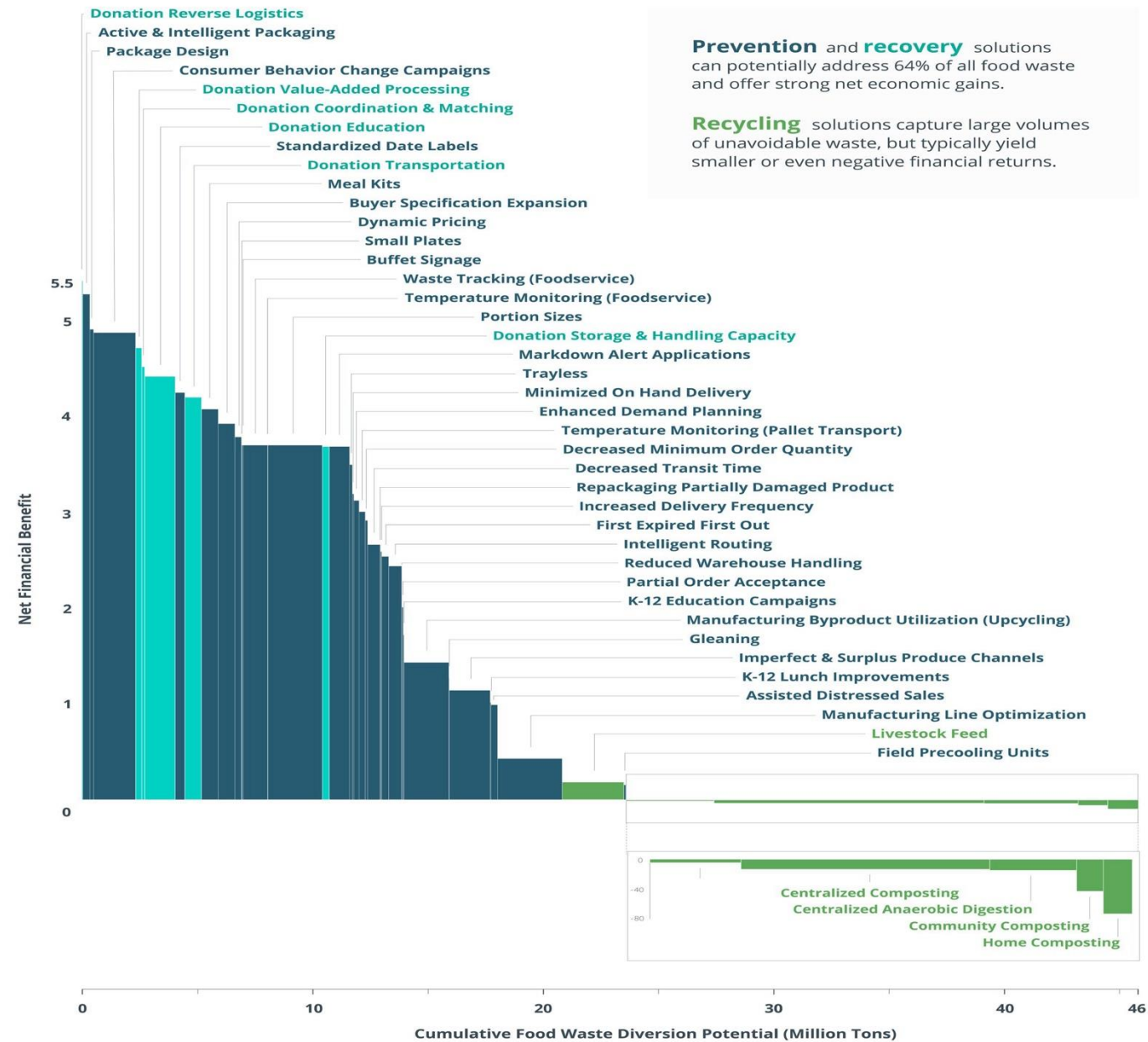
Food Waste & Epic-Cure®

This graphic from ReFED’s 2025 report provides an overview of the Marginal Food Waste Abatement Cost Curve.

- It describes to potential for food waste diversion, mapping the financial benefit that ReFED estimates could be achieved against the amount of food it assumes can be productively diverted from waste.
- The wider bars on this bar chart represent methods of food recovery that have more potential impact – i.e., more tonnage of food to work with. This is measured along the horizontal axis (the X-axis) of the chart. See the “Portion Sizes” bar for one of the widest (most food recovery, by volume) examples.
- The higher bars represent ReFED’s estimates of the greatest to least financial benefit for each category.

For instance, notice that “Donation Reverse Logistics” (the first category in the graph) has the highest financial benefit (highest level on the vertical axis (y-axis).

- However, it has a relatively narrow y-axis presence, implying that while the economic benefit is high, it has one of the smaller volume impacts.



Food Waste & Epic-Cure®

For our final final food waste topic, we turn to the future. Solutions to food waste are evolving, and we hope that what we have learned from ReFED on this topic will be as interesting to you as it is important and interesting to us.

Emerging technologies:

- In our data driven world, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning can create important efficiency improvements in the food supply chain.
- Cold storage providers are integrating smart technologies (real-time monitoring) and robotics to improve planning and decision making for estimating demand and the best destinations for food allocation across the economy.
- Prices can be changed predictively to incentivize consumption – markdown alerts – and to drive inventory turnover, providing value to consumers and reducing costs (primarily, the costs of wasting food), which maintains revenues and profits for business.
- Much of this advanced technology can be implemented seamlessly, without requiring additional hardware.

Retail store level implementation issues are employee shortages and rising labor costs.

Consumer trends:

- Technologies like markdown alerts and food purchasing management apps are helping consumers to make informed purchasing decisions, but more work needs to be done at the retail level to educate consumers. This effort would be enhanced by better date labels, a subject of legislation (see the discussion on the previous page).
- Household appliances that grind or dehydrate table scraps, a big contributor to food waste in landfills, are gaining in popularity. The problem with these technologies is that they remain expensive, limiting their adoption. Their electricity use is too high, resulting in more net harmful greenhouse gas emissions than are saved by the resulting reduction in food in landfills. Rental programs and partnerships with waste haulers may be helpful and are under exploration by private companies.

High -value recycling can help stem food waste. Here is an interesting note from the ReFED report (2025):

- “In the fashion industry ... there is a growing demand for sustainable textiles that are more environmentally friendly than traditional textile production. In response to this demand, companies are transforming food waste into bio-based leather alternatives, offering a sustainable substitute for animal and synthetic leathers.”
- We think that is interesting and look forward to hearing more on this unexpected topic!

EPIC-CURE[®] & FOOD INSECURITY

An In-Depth Discussion of the Implications of Food Insecurity on the Health and Wellbeing of the People and Communities We Serve

Food Insecurity & Epic-Cure®

Epic-Cure® is dedicated to reducing food insecurity in Northeast Florida. At a time when this nation wastes 38% of the food produced here, food insecurity affects at least 1 in 6 people. We find this situation to be unacceptable. It is worth a deep dive, so don your scuba gear.

What is food insecurity?

- Food insecurity means not having reliable access to enough food to live a healthy, active life. It's not just about going hungry all the time – it can also mean worrying about where your next meal will come from, stretching what little you have, or eating cheap, unhealthy stuff because it's all you can afford.
- It is like living with a constant, nagging question: “Will there be enough today?”

From an everyday perspective, food insecurity shows up in different ways. Some days you might have enough, but other days you may be scraping by. It could mean choosing between paying rent or buying groceries, feeding your kids but not yourself, or relying on fast food because fresh fruits and vegetables are too expensive or hard to get.

- It's not always starvation – it is more like a constant tightrope walk, where you are one paycheck or one bad day away from running out.
- For children, it might mean smaller lunches or no snacks. For children and adults, it could be feeling tired or sick more often because the food you can do get cannot keep you strong.

Examples of people likely to suffer from food insecurity:

- **A single mother with young children:** Picture a woman raising two children on her own. She works a low-paying job, and her paycheck barely covers rent and daycare. She might skip her own meals to make sure her children eat, She might buy cheap noodles and hot dogs because they are filling and affordable. Statistics show single mother households have a 34.7% chance of food insecurity (USDA 2023)—that's over 1 in 3 struggling like this.
- **An elderly person on a fixed income:** Think of a retiree living off Social Security, maybe a grandfather in a small apartment. His check covers the basics, but rising prices for groceries or medications means he must cut back. He might eat less meat or fresh produce, sticking to canned foods. He might skip meals to stretch his budget. Older folks in rural areas (15.4% food insecurity rate) often face these trade-offs, especially if they cannot drive to a store.

Food Insecurity & Epic-Cure®

Examples of people likely to suffer from food insecurity (continued):

- **A college student far from home:** Imagine a 20 year old at a community college, working parttime at a coffee shop. Tuition and books eat up her cash, and she is not on a meal plan. She might live off ramen, peanut butter, or whatever is free at campus events. If her family cannot send money, she is stuck – young people in urban areas (15.9% insecurity rate) sometimes fall into this trap.
- **A farmworker in a rural area:** Consider someone picking crops for a living, ironically surrounded by food he cannot take home. His wages are low, and the nearest grocery is miles away. He may have no car to get to the store. He might go without food when work dries up. Rural residents and Hispanic households (21.9% insecurity rate) often suffer this plight.

With a good understanding of food insecurity in hand, let's explore the extent of it in the United States. Here are some important facts about food insecurity.

The latest USDA data on food insecurity comes from the *"Household Food Security in the United States in 2023"* report, released in September 2024:

- **Overall Food Insecurity:** 13.5% of U.S. households (18.0 million households) were food insecure at some point in 2023, meaning they had difficulty providing enough food for all members due to insufficient resources. This is a statistically significant increase from 12.8% (17.0 million households) in 2022.
- **Very Low Food Security:** 5.1% of households (6.8 million) experienced very low food security in 2023, where food intake was reduced and eating patterns disrupted due to lack of resources. This rate remained statistically unchanged from 2022.
- **Households with Children:** 17.9% of households with children (6.5 million) were food insecure. In 8.9% of these (3.2 million households), both adults and children were affected, while in 1.0% (374,000 households), children experienced very low food security.
- **Population Affected:** Approximately 47.4 million people lived in food-insecure households in 2023, including 13.8 million children.
- **Demographic Disparities:** Food insecurity rates were higher for Black (23.3%) and Hispanic (21.9%) households compared to White, non-Hispanic households (9.9%). Single-parent households also saw elevated rates: 34.7% for single mothers and 22.6% for single fathers.
- **Geographic Trends:** Food insecurity was highest in rural areas (15.4%), large cities (15.9%), and the South (14.7%).

As we know and as ReFED highlights, much of the wasted food in the US is edible and could address the needs of the 47 million food-insecure individuals reported in 2023. They estimate that redirecting just 25% of surplus food could significantly reduce food insecurity.

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Here are some more important facts about food insecurity:

Feeding America's most recent comprehensive data is tied to the USDA's 2023 report and their "*Map the Meal Gap*" study, updated in May 2024, with some projections and insights extending into 2025:

- **2023 Food Insecurity:** Feeding America aligns with the USDA, reporting 47 million people (including nearly 14 million children) in food-insecure households in 2023, the highest since 2014.
- **Local Variations:** The "Map the Meal Gap" study estimates food insecurity rates by county, ranging from 6% in Renville County, North Dakota, to 29% in Oglala Lakota County, South Dakota, based on 2022 data adjusted for 2023 trends. Child food insecurity rates reached up to 48% in some counties (e.g., East Carroll Parish, Louisiana).
- **Racial Disparities:** Black (23%) and Latino (21%) individuals faced food insecurity at more than double the rate of White individuals (10%).
- **2025 Projections:** Feeding America has not released specific 2025 statistics yet, but their 2024 reports note a persistent trend of elevated demand at food banks into 2024 (e.g., 65% of food banks reported increased demand in June 2024 vs. June 2023). Without significant policy changes, they suggest food insecurity could remain above pre-pandemic levels (10.5% in 2019) into 2025, potentially affecting 44-47 million people, depending on economic conditions and federal nutrition program funding.
- **Food Distribution:** In 2023, Feeding America's network distributed 5.3 billion meals, reflecting ongoing high need.

Food insecurity does not just affect nutrition; it ripples through physical and psychological well-being. Here is what stands out based on evidence and mechanisms:

- **Physical health conditions:**
 - *Malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies:*
 - **Mechanism:** Inconsistent food access leads to inadequate intake of essential nutrients (e.g., vitamins, minerals, protein).
 - **Conditions:** Iron-deficiency anemia (fatigue, weakness), vitamin D deficiency (bone health issues), and scurvy (rare but possible with severe vitamin C shortage).
 - **Evidence:** The USDA's 2023 data shows 5.1% of food-insecure households had very low food security, often linked to reduced food intake, increasing deficiency risks.
 - *Obesity and related metabolic disorders:*
 - **Mechanism:** Paradoxically, food insecurity often correlates with obesity due to reliance on cheap, calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods (e.g., fast food, processed snacks). Cycles of food scarcity can also trigger overeating when food is available, disrupting metabolism.
 - **Conditions:** Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.
 - **Evidence:** Studies (e.g., from the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition) consistently show higher BMI and diabetes rates in food-insecure populations, with Feeding America noting racial disparities (e.g., 23% food insecurity in Black households) aligning with higher obesity prevalence.

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- **Physical Health Conditions** (continued):

- *Chronic diseases:*

- **Mechanism:** Poor diet quality and stress from food insecurity exacerbate conditions requiring consistent management.
 - **Conditions:** Worsened asthma, kidney disease, and heart failure.
 - **Evidence:** Research from the CDC and NIH links food insecurity to a 50% higher risk of asthma exacerbations and a 20-30% increased likelihood of chronic disease complications.

- *Weakened immune function:*

- **Mechanism:** Lack of adequate protein, zinc, and vitamins A and C impairs immune response.
 - **Conditions:** Increased susceptibility to infections (e.g., respiratory illnesses, gastroenteritis).
 - **Evidence:** A 2023 study in Public Health Nutrition found food-insecure children had 1.5 times higher odds of frequent infections.

- *Developmental issues in children:*

- **Mechanism:** Insufficient nutrition during critical growth periods affects physical development.
 - **Conditions:** Stunting (low height-for-age), underweight status, and developmental delays.
 - **Evidence:** Feeding America's 2023 data highlights 13.8 million food-insecure children, with UNICEF and WHO noting stunting in up to 7% of U.S. kids in low-income settings.

- **Mental Health Conditions:**

- *Anxiety and stress:*

- **Mechanism:** Uncertainty about food access triggers chronic stress, activating the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and elevating cortisol levels.
 - **Conditions:** Generalized anxiety disorder, acute stress reactions.
 - **Evidence:** A 2024 meta-analysis in JAMA Psychiatry found food-insecure adults were 2.5 times more likely to report anxiety symptoms, with 34.7% of single-mother households (USDA 2023) showing heightened stress markers.

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- **Mental health conditions** (continued):
 - *Depression:*
 - **Mechanism:** Food insecurity erodes self-efficacy and hope, while nutritional deficits (e.g., low omega-3s, B vitamins) impair neurotransmitter balance (serotonin, dopamine).
 - **Conditions:** Major depressive disorder, dysthymia.
 - **Evidence:** The American Psychological Association (APA) reports a 30-40% higher depression prevalence among food-insecure adults, with children in affected households showing twice the rate of depressive symptoms.
 - *Behavioral disorders in children:*
 - **Mechanism:** Hunger and nutrient gaps disrupt emotional regulation and brain development (e.g., prefrontal cortex, amygdala).
 - **Conditions:** Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).
 - **Evidence:** A 2023 Pediatrics study linked food insecurity to a 20% higher ADHD diagnosis rate in kids, with 1% of U.S. children (374,000) in very low food security (USDA 2023) at particular risk.
 - *Substance use disorders:*
 - **Mechanism:** Coping with food insecurity's stress may drive reliance on alcohol, tobacco, or drugs as maladaptive relief.
 - **Conditions:** Alcohol dependency, nicotine addiction.
 - **Evidence:** Research from Addiction journal (2024) shows a 15-25% increased likelihood of substance use in food-insecure adults, particularly in rural areas (15.4% insecurity rate, USDA 2023).
 - *Sleep disorders:*
 - **Mechanism:** Hunger disrupts sleep patterns, while stress and poor nutrition (e.g., low magnesium) compound insomnia.
 - **Conditions:** Insomnia, fragmented sleep.
 - **Evidence:** A 2024 Sleep Medicine study found food-insecure individuals reported 30% more sleep disturbances, aligning with higher cortisol levels.

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Summing up, food insecurity is more than just hunger. It affects anyone that may struggle to find or afford nutritious food. Stress accompanies it, and the implications for one’s health are harmful. This table summarizes the health issues associated with food insecurity:

Physical Conditions		Mental Conditions
Diabetes (Type 2)	Stunting	Depression
Obesity	Asthma	Anxiety
Heart disease	Kidney Disease	ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)
High Blood Pressure	Frequent Infections	Sleep Problems (Insomnia)
Anemia		Substance Abuse Problems

There are both economic and social impacts to food insecurity, and these are the costs that are reduced by the work of Epic-Cure® and other food banks and food pantries.

Economic Costs:

- *Healthcare Costs:* Food insecurity drives up medical bills—millions more spent on diabetes, heart disease, and depression tied to poor diets and stress. In 2023, with 47 million Americans affected (USDA), those extra doctor visits and hospitalizations strain public and private budgets.
- *Lost Productivity:* Hungry or sick workers (and kids missing school) means less output. Tired adults cannot focus, and children with stunting or ADHD fall behind, cutting future earning potential. It is a drag on GDP – billions of dollars are lost to it yearly.
- *Food System Strain:* When people rely on aid like SNAP or food banks (8.2 million meals from Epic-Cure® in 2024), it pulls resources from other areas. Plus, the 60 million tons of wasted food (ReFED) could have eased the burden if redirected, but that inefficiency costs money.

Social Costs:

- *Inequality Grows:* Food insecurity hits harder in already struggling groups—23% of Black households, 21.9% Hispanic, 34.7% of single moms (USDA 2023). It widens gaps in health, education, and opportunity, locking in poverty cycles.
- *Community Stress:* Families skipping meals or fighting over scraps face more tension—higher rates of anxiety, depression, even domestic strain. Neighborhoods with high food insecurity (up to 29% in some counties, according to Feeding America) feel the ripple: less trust, more isolation.
- *Children Suffer Long-Term:* The 13.8 million food insecure kids in 2023 deal with stunting, learning struggles, and behavioral issues. That is a generation at risk of falling behind in school and life, hitting society with weaker future workers and leaders.

EPIC-CURE® & SUSTAIN U.®

The Third Pillar of our Mission: Self-Reliance

Sustain U.®

Sustain U.® is Epic-Cure's cooking and nutrition school. Its objective is to instill a strong sense of self-reliance as well as useful skills to both middle- and high- school aged students that attend Title-1 schools and U.S. armed forces veterans, particularly those who may suffer from the aftereffects of their service.

Our students are exposed to a wide variety of fresh ingredients which will have the immediate benefit of improved nutrition and longterm health benefits when they know how to use food that is in season (peak freshness and nutritional value). There is also the immediate social and economic benefit of taking a healthy meal home to feed their families.

The skills we teach our students help them to make healthy food choices and equip them with valuable life- and career- skills.

We intend to continue to provide free cooking classes for veterans and Title-1 school students and want to provide fee-based cooking classes to other students, the revenues from which will be used to underwrite the costs of the free classes.

- Our new St. Augustine facility will, upon completion, have two commercial teaching kitchens for these expanded classroom sessions.
- Sustain U.® will continue to provide limited free classes to veterans and young students at the existing venues.
- We will seek grant and donor funding for operational needs that are not met through revenues provided by the paid cooking classes.
 - Key among these operational costs will be salaries for needed teaching and administrative staff.
 - Other operational requirements will include insurance, small equipment costs, and food purchases, as we cannot use donated food for the paid classes.

By showing our students what they can accomplish and exposing them to a world outside their own, we expect to set the pace in Northeastern Florida for empowering the people in our community to improve their own lives themselves.

APPENDICES

Our Core Values

2024 Donors

2024 Financial Statements

Epic-Cure® - Our Commitment to the Individual

The Epic-Cure Pledge of Dignity, Respect, and Non-Discrimination

NON-DISCRIMINATION: Epic-Cure believes that every human being deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. We pledge to serve every individual, group and community with dignity and respect, and without regard to race, color, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, sex and/or gender, gender identity and/or expression, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran.

INTEGRITY: We will identify and continuously do what is right and good for our planet and our good people.

RESPECT: We will preserve and enhance the dignity of our volunteers and those we serve – our good people.

APOLITICAL: We have no interest or involvement in, and remain silent on, political affairs and debates and will never recruit someone to join any political, ideological, or sociopolitical cause.

Areligious: We have no interest or involvement in, and remain silent on, religious affairs and debates and will never recruit someone to join one's faith or cause.

DIVERSITY: We embrace diversity and professionally deliver the utmost value to our volunteers and those we serve.

Epic-Cure® Donors & Grantors in 2024

Epic-Cure Inc. 2024 Donors & Grantors

1st Coast Metal Roofing Supply	Claude & Erika Rumsey	Glacier HVAC	Kathi Tragh	Mike McGee	TD Bank
Aaron Robinson	Clay Electric Foundation	Glenda Rickettes	Kathleen Johnson	Nanci Smith	Teresa Veach
AD Davis Construction Corp	Colin Turner	Gloria Jean Lefaidier	Kay Ackland	Nancy & Roger Kline	Terri Faulk
Al & Peggy Dematteis Family Foundation	Colorado Gives Foundation	Gloria Young	Kath DeMatteis	New Mt. Moriah Christian Ministry	The Art House
Alice Carter	Community Foundation	Gobo Enterprises	Kelly Delucia	Nicole Pangle	The Christine B. Doyle Trust
Althea Englund	Connie Raybuck	Grace Chapter 124	Kelly Franklin	Norbert Tuseo	The Elks Club of St. Augustine Inc.
Alvah Sewell	Cookiebird Ice Cream Bar LLC	Gregory Barbour	Ken & Sunny Mulford	Patricia Cassidy	Theresa Veach
Amanda Gray	Cortnie Sproul	Gregory Read	Kevin & Kimberly Leonardi	Patricia High	Thomas Verma
Amvets Post 45 Ladies Auxiliary	Dan Nadler	Gwen Nichols	Kim Daley	Paul MacManus	Tim & Lori Tooker
Amy Johnston	Dana Winkler	H Brent & Patsy Beasley	Kristen Giese	Pauline Humphreys	Tim Buckley
Anastasia Baptist Church	Daniel Mantini	Hanna Layton	Kyle Hutchison	Peggy Bliss	Timothy Jennings
Anne Russell	Daniel Villa	HCA Hospital	Lauren Lantz	PGA Tour	Trinisha Austin
Anonymous	David Landis	Henry Lombardi	Lauren Peterson	Porte Vedra High School	Tura Cundiff
Art Beck	Dean McQuiddy	Holly Carboni	Laurie Dowdy	Priscilla Durkin	Vera Gallagher
Ashlin Calabiano	Deanna Wood	Hopeful Handbags Inc.	Laurie Schiavone	Pulnam Community Medical Center Volunteer	VFW Post 3349
Awaken City Church	Deanne Grayson	Howard Altarecu	Leola Wilkinson	RaeFord Wallace	Vicki MacDonald
Azalea City Brewing Company LLC	Deborah Holton	Howard Crum	Leslie Coleman	Randall Dunn	Wawa Foundation
Barbara Stafford	DeMatteis Family	Hugh Brache	Lia Dixon	Randy Hudgins	Wendy Lantz
Barwick Banking Company	Democratic Women's Club of St. Johns	Hugg's Muffins	Linda Lee	Rebar Capital LLC	West End Avenue LLC
Baymeadows Movers	Diana Peterson	Hunt Bowman	Linda McDonald	Rebar Capital Partners	William Jenness
Becky Lancaster	Diane Battle	Jacklyn Dube	Linda Mushinski	Richard & Linda Brandenburg	William Platt
Betty Lesuer	Diane Dyal	James & Colleen O'Brien	Lisa Lay	Richard Clute	William Russell
Beulah Baptist Church of Fruitland Inc.	Diane Northrip	James & Lisa Modaff	Lisa Lewis	Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation	Wilson & Jo Bradshaw
Billie Pikur	Dianna Twombly	James Anderson	Logical Improvements Inc.	Richard Young	1915
Bluenery LLC	Don Ausman Foundation Inc.	Janet McNabb	Lori Kurtz-Larkin	Ricky & Joanne Bybee	Womens Club of Welaka
Bogdan Seleiko	Don Menefee	Jean Clapp	Lucy Reilly	Robert & Pamela Clark	
Borland Groover	Dorothea Wall	Jeff Eggleston	Mahna Salter Salter	Robert Sileo	
Brenda Csencsits	Dorothy Ames	Jennifer Birst	Maks Caudill	Robin Thomas	
Brenda Gossman	Dorothy Chiu	Jennifer Hornik	Marcy Frick	Ronald & Michelle Cannon	
Brent Bechtold	Dorothy Delaney	Jeremy Caudill	Margaret Campbell	Russell & Kathy Scott	
Brian & Louise Nelson	Douglas Lytch	Jerome & Rebecca Eker	Margaret Kelly	Ruth Thompson	
Brian & Rana Sass	Dr. Anand Kuruvilla	Jerry Barnard Wilhelmy	Marie McCloud	Sandra Rieder	
Brian Killough	Dr. & Mrs. David Loeb	Jim & Debra Powers	Marika Seven	Schwab Charitable	
Campaign Account for Lilliana Bristow	Dwight & Mary Jane Miller	Joe & Huiya O'Doherty	Marsha Welch	Shakira Husain	
Cancer Specialists of North Florida	Eily Jones	John & Patti Mitrik	Marsha Williams	Shawn Dale Goddard	
Candace Johnson	Elisabeth Leary	John Goetz	Mary Anne Russell	Shelia McCoy	
Carlos Sanchez	Elisabeth Wandzell	Jonathan Kline	Mary Kallough	Sidney Ansbacher	
Carol Ann Raufen	Elizabeth Leary	Joseph Tirado	Maureen & Daniel Winkler	Simon's House	
Carol Pratt	Ellen Benson	Joyce Hintz	Maurice Baehr	Sons of Amvets Post 45	
Carol Sisco	Eric Pollard	Joyce Oliver	May Family Trust	Sooyoung Nemecek	
Cathleen Walsh	Erika Boyle	Judith Burdan	McKenzie Russo	Spirit Alive Church Inc.	
Champion Church	Ervin Bullock	Judith La Bree	Melissa Cain	SJC Board of Realtors Foundation, Inc.	
Charles Ross	Ethel White	Julia Lantz	Michael Arnold	St. Augustine Boating Club	
Chris Layton	Evelyn Gosselin	June Gutterson	Michael Fish	Stephanie Infante	
Christ Episcopal Church	Faith MacPherson	Jyothi Challa	Michael Flemming	Stephen Lawrence	
Christine Apthorp Aims & Fare	Fannethia Vitolo	K.E. or Debra Searcy	Michele and Matthew Jozoff	Steve Nurse	
Christine Doyle	Flagler Hospital Inc.	Karen Topchik Mullen	Michele Anderson	Susan Marples	
Chubb Group	Gail Nielsen	Karl and Susan Jaeger	Michelle Colee	Suzanne Clulow	
Chung & Paul Chandler	George Jones	Kate Gallagher	Mike & Lisa Chismark	Suzanne Villa	
Cindy Ann Nixon-Witt	Gerald Berry	Kate Thomas	Mike & Teresa Borzilleri	Sylvia Spengler	

(Audited Financials are expected to be prepared in early Summer 2025)

Importantly, **\$639,081** of the **\$699,066** “Net Income” is from State of Florida funds specifically earmarked for the new construction of the St. Augustine operations facility. See yellow highlighted figures.

www.Epic-Cure.org

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Management Prepared Financial Statements

(Audited Financials are expected
to be prepared in early Summer
2025)

Epic-Cure Inc. 12/31/2024 Balance Sheet			
	Total		Total
ASSETS		LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Current Assets		Liabilities	
Bank Accounts		Current Liabilities	
Checking (9319)	3,278.00	Other Current Liabilities	
Second fundraiser (8026) - 2	639,028.96	Florida Department of Revenue Payable	0.00
Van Fuel and Maintenance Acct	7,895.15	Loan	10,000.00
Wells Fargo	71,892.48	Payroll Liabilities	-1,435.19
Total Bank Accounts	<u>\$ 722,094.59</u>	Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>\$ 8,564.81</u>
Accounts Receivable		Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$ 8,564.81</u>
Accounts Receivable	271.09	Long-Term Liabilities	
Total Accounts Receivable	<u>\$ 271.09</u>	Other Liabilities	-1,203.52
Other Current Assets		Total Long-Term Liabilities	<u>-\$ 1,203.52</u>
20' Reefer Storage Unit	5,000.00	Total Liabilities	<u>\$ 7,361.29</u>
3 Door Freezer	4,005.00		
40x40 Walk In Freezer	42,615.05		
Commercial Floor Cleaner	9,182.50		
Daewood Forklift	4,838.00		
Power Pallet Jack	6,393.00		
Prepaid Insurance	3,335.31	Equity	
Refrigerated Van	10,400.00	Unrestricted Net Assets	352,193.34
Toyotal Pallet Jack	3,068.00	Net Income	699,066.48
Uncategorized Asset	-1.00	Total Equity	<u>\$1,051,259.82</u>
Undeposited Funds	1,000.00		
Walk In Freezer St. Augustine	10,459.88		
Total Other Current Assets	<u>\$ 100,295.74</u>		
Total Current Assets	<u>\$ 822,661.42</u>		
Fixed Assets		TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	<u>\$1,058,621.11</u>
Accumulated Depreciation	-42,619.01		
Furniture and Equipment	256.04		
Pallet Floor Jack	2,100.00		
Refrigerated Trailer	7,300.00		
Trademark	3,450.00		
Total Fixed Assets	<u>-\$ 29,512.97</u>		
Other Assets			
26' Refrigerated Truck	70,000.00		
40' Refer Storage Units - 3	18,286.00		
Forklift	8,000.00		
Latter-Day Saints Grant	0.00		
Leasehold Improvement for Freezer	73,637.77		
New Warehouse	10,000.00		
Other Assets	2,758.89		
Palatka Generator/Freezer Grant	11,500.00		
Refrigerated Truck	56,085.00		
Security Deposits Asset	15,205.00		
Total Other Assets	<u>\$ 265,472.66</u>		
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$1,058,621.11</u>		