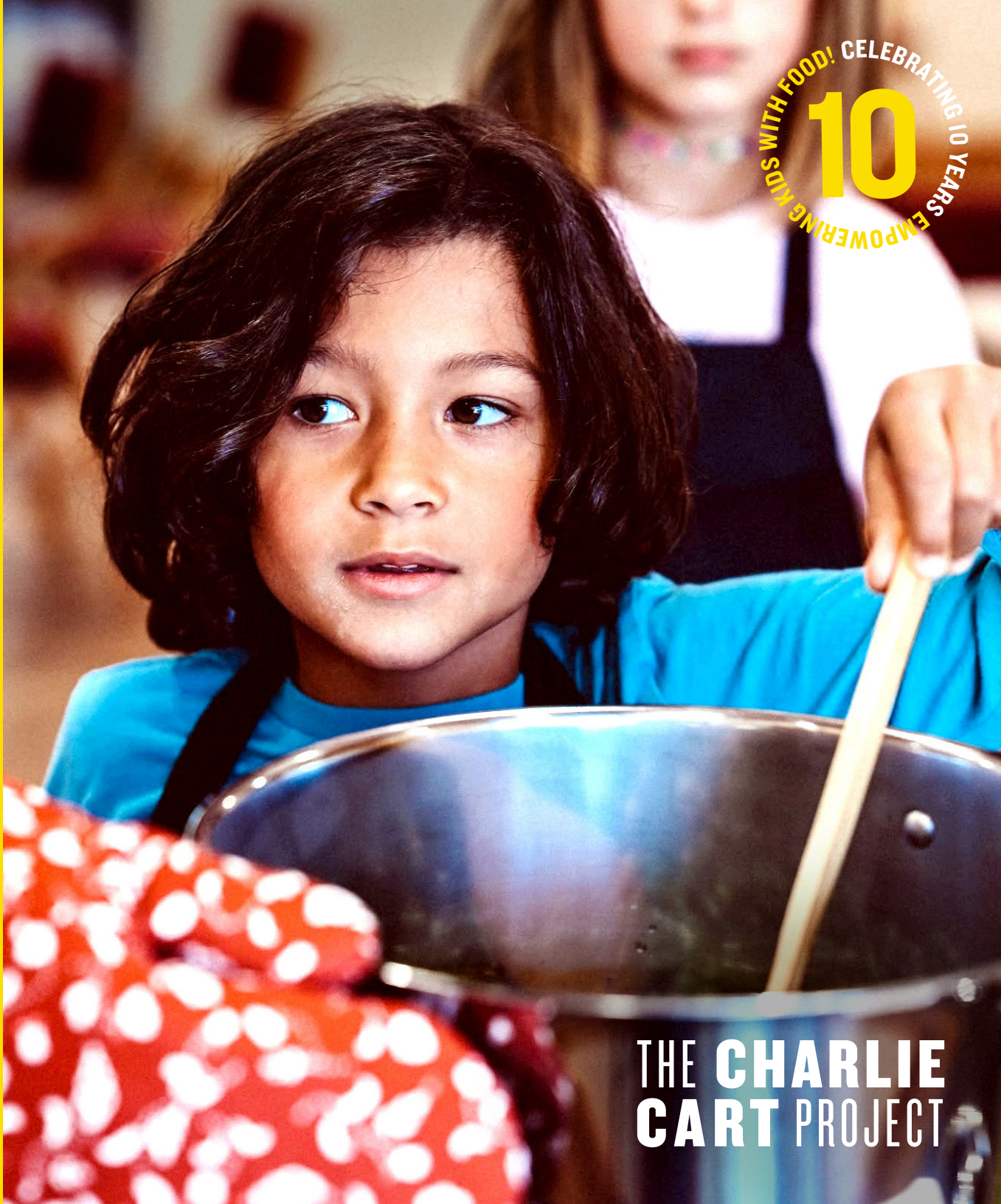
SMALL KITCHENS, BIG IMPACT

When federal funding fell short, communities kept cooking

ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2026



DEAR FRIENDS,



When federal food programs like SNAP-Ed were eliminated this past year, kids lost more than access to good nutrition. They lost opportunities to learn to cook—vital knowledge for living healthfully.

Charlie Cart educators stepped into this void to deliver more than 20,000 hands-on cooking lessons to children and families.

For the past 10 years, Charlie Cart has supported these educators as they bring Food Education—*a fundamental life skill*—to children everywhere. Today, kids across the country are learning to cook from teachers, librarians, and school nutrition leaders, who understand the power of basic cooking skills to change the trajectory of a child's life.

Here you'll meet one of them: Sarah Morbitzer, Children's Department Manager at the North Manchester Public Library in Indiana. For five years, Sarah planned and plotted to bring a Charlie Cart to her library, to attract new children to the library and engage their families in healthy cooking. Sarah's lobbying paid off: Within months of receiving a Charlie Cart, she had built a program that had her young patrons asking to eat—and cook—broccoli at home.

Together, we can make it easier for champions like Sarah to ensure all children can thrive.

Ten years ago, we rolled out our first Charlie Cart, reaching a handful of classrooms in California. Now, more than 500,000 children in 48 states get to chop, whisk, and taste fresh ingredients, building confidence and life skills along the way.

Thank you for helping make it happen! Let's see what we can cook up together in the next decade.

With gratitude,



Carolyn Federman
Founder and Executive Director


Our mission is to make hands-on
Food Education accessible everywhere
children gather to learn so that kids
have the knowledge and confidence to
make healthy food choices for life.

MEET KIDS WHERE THEY ARE

The Charlie Cart makes hands-on learning possible—wherever children gather to learn.

When federal food assistance programs disappeared from schools and community organizations, children lost opportunities to learn why nutrition is important—and how to cook for themselves.

With a Charlie Cart mobile kitchen, educators can reach young people wherever they are. At a high school in Burlington, Vermont, temporarily located in a defunct Macy's department store, life skills classes functioned with no kitchen equipment, not even running water. The Charlie Cart now serves as the school's kitchen—and Food Education lab.

School isn't the only place children gather to learn. Local libraries are a critical "third space" for learning and community-building, offering programs designed to entice youth through the doors. This year, Charlie Carts rolled into more libraries than ever before.

Beyond books: Cooking up culinary literacy in California libraries

This year, through a partnership with the California State Library and the Southern California Library Cooperative, 34 Charlie Carts found homes in libraries up and down the state.

At the Norco Branch of Riverside County Library, 67 youth enrolled in cooking programs, learning to turn fresh cucumbers into pickles and to make pasta with vegetables from scratch.

With this partnership, library branches around the state are set up to bring hands-on cooking to their communities, stepping in where federal cuts have left an enormous gap.



A summer safety net at the Library

Summer is a busy time at the public Library in North Manchester, Indiana. When school is out, kids get dropped off in the morning and stay until their parents finish work. One day, Children's Department Manager Sarah Morbitzer started asking the kids whether they had eaten breakfast. The answer was no.

That was before the Charlie Cart arrived.

Now, kids of all ages learn to cut vegetables, measure ingredients, and devour the nourishing meals they make for themselves. A favorite is pomegranate orange salad.

"It doesn't taste as good when it's not made on the Charlie Cart. I think the Charlie Cart is *magic!*

—11-year-old Mia

PREPARE EDUCATORS

Tools and training, in the hands of educators, transform children's lives

In our first decade, we equipped more than 2,000 community leaders with the recipes, tools, and training they need to help young eaters fall in love with fresh food. This year, with federal training programs cut, The Charlie Cart Project stepped up to support food educators everywhere, whether or not they have a cart.

Reaching educators beyond the cart

Nutrition Education lost a major source of training and support when SNAP-Ed—the federal Food Education program—was eliminated in 2025. In response, Charlie Cart



was invited by FoodCorps and Teachers College, Columbia University, to include Charlie Cart recipes and best practices in the curriculum for their new Food Eductaion in the Classroom Microcredential (Food-E). Launched in the summer of 2026, Food-E is the nation's first microcredential program designed to help K-5 educators understand, teach, and lead cooking lessons. Through this collaboration, hundreds of additional instructors will have access to key Charlie Cart learnings, building on the skills they already bring to the classroom.

Within our own network, Charlie Cart supported the network with quarterly learning sessions on building budgets, partnerships, and planning for Food Education programs that last. We provided our Cooking 101 training to 150 new community leaders; published 100% of our curriculum online; and gathered network members and more at six school and library conferences.



For Sarah Charlie Cart tools and resources opened doors.

Sarah is not a professional chef, and she doesn't need to be. Once she became familiar with the Charlie Cart, participated in our training, and reviewed our how-to materials, she was well prepared to start cooking with her young, hungry patrons.

> **"It [Charlie Cart] helped me approach those first classes with confidence and excitement, which the kids picked up on. I've had kids who were sure they wouldn't like something and then I'm like, is this your fourth time up here?**
>
> —Sarah Morbitzer

Network members asked and we responded, with culturally diverse recipes that make cooking relatable and accessible

Over 10 years we've learned first hand that when kids cook dishes that reflect their experience, the skills they learn stick. So this year, when educators asked for new, culturally responsive recipes, Charlie Cart delivered. In partnership with Oldways, an organization that promotes heritage foodways, Charlie Cart produced two robust sets of lesson plans focused on African diaspora and Latin heritage recipes—including fresh, easy-to-find ingredients, with lessons on the foods' cultural and historical significance.



> **The only reason I could apply for the scholarship was because we had a Charlie Cart. We have what it takes now.**
>
> —Sarah Morbitzer

Thank you to our program partners who helped us put new tools into educators' hands



That preparation helped Sarah think bigger

Inspired by our new recipes, she successfully applied for a scholarship to run a seven-week African diaspora cooking course at her library, sponsored by Oldways.

One of the lessons—Kenyan Sweet Potato Peanut Stew—prompted several boys to discuss their own heritage. A parent pulled Sarah aside and said, "*This is so good that they're getting to have these conversations.*"

Sarah clearly inspires her audience, and they bring that excitement back home. When one child requested "Millet Porridge from the Charlie Cart," her mother made a point to ask Sarah where she could purchase the ingredients.

> **Where can I get the ingredients for that millet porridge?!**

MAKE FOOD EDUCATION A NATIONAL PRIORITY

Food Education belongs in every community. 160 Leaders from across the food system told us why.

Food Education has long been undervalued as a way to address hunger and food access, largely because it is not well understood. Often considered a “nice-to-have,” cooking and nutrition programs are frequently the first to get cut when budgets are strained. Programs like Sarah’s are filling the gap.

Last fall, the Charlie Cart Project launched a national campaign to raise awareness around this critical work. We asked leaders across the food system—including chefs, farmers, and policymakers—“What is Food Education? And why is it important?” Together, we made the case that Food Education is essential for every child to thrive.



Food Education is a way to build intergenerational connections. These activities get repeated at home, often at the little ones’ request, strengthening their bond and giving them a shared activity that will create lifelong memories.

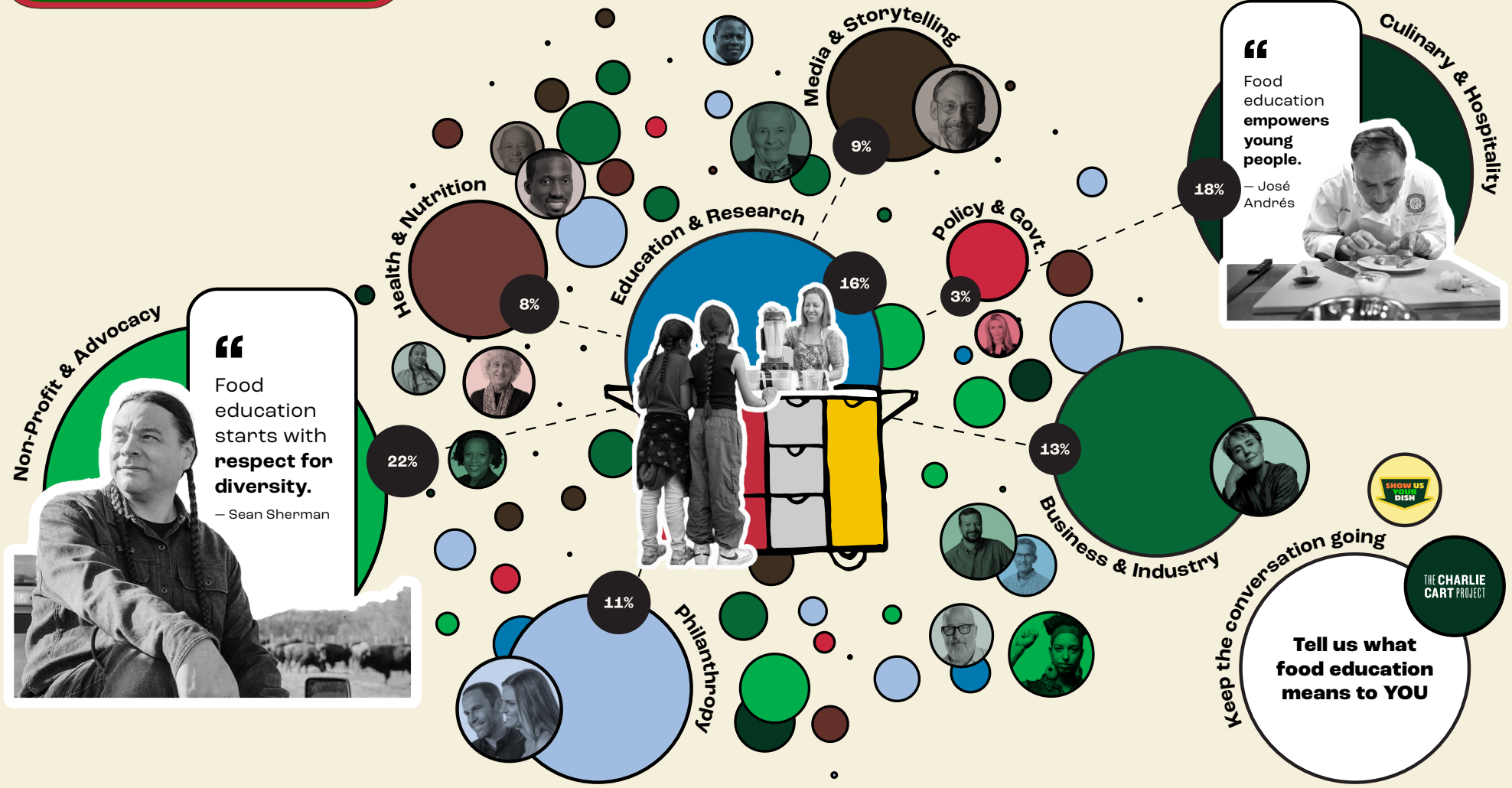
—Sarah Morbitzer

The **What Is Food Education?** campaign was presented in partnership with

THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD PROJECT

foodtank
THE THINK TANK FOR FOOD

WHAT IS FOOD EDUCATION?



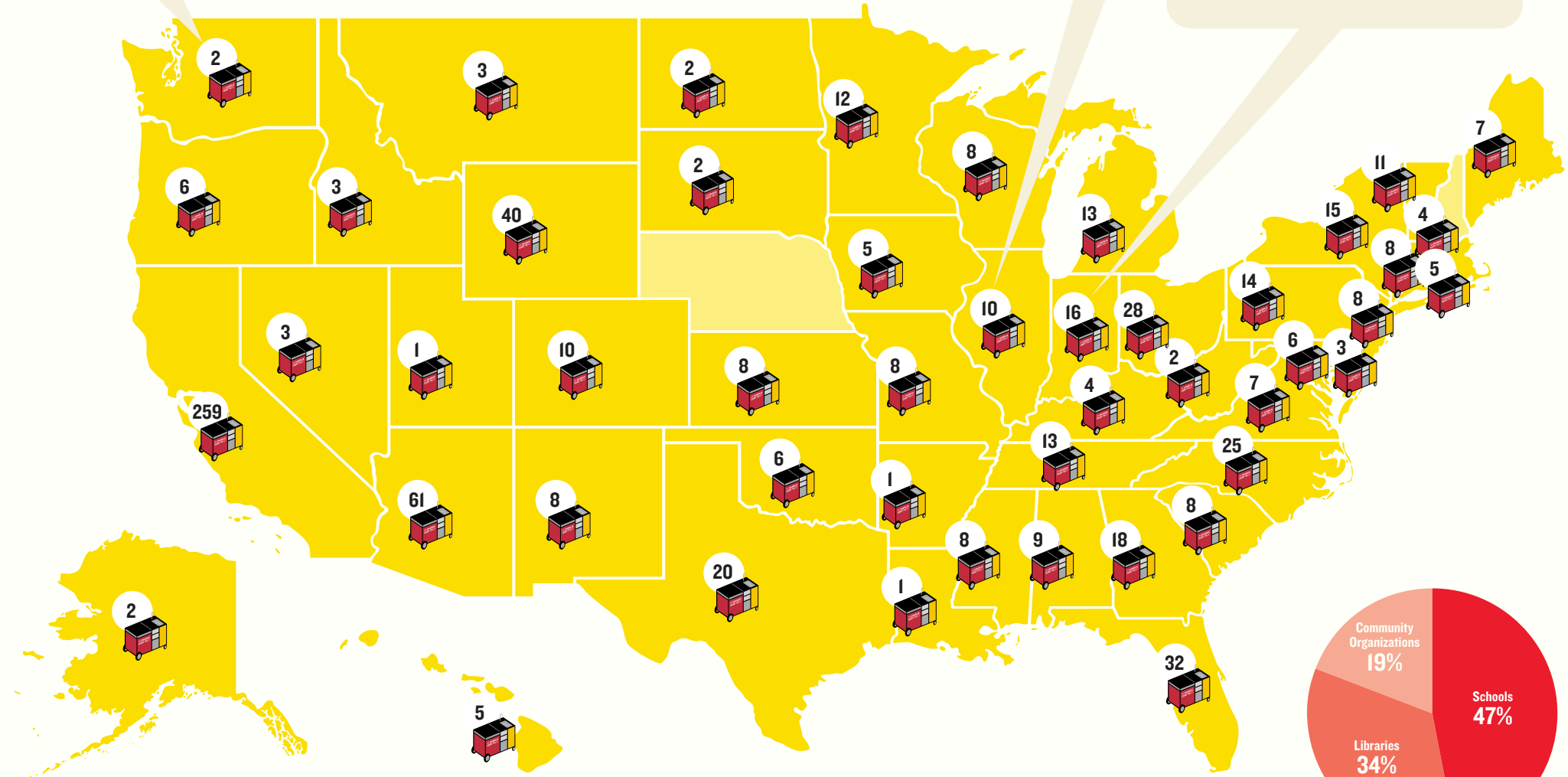
To learn about the campaign and hear from the more than 160 participants directly, visit: charliecart.org/what-is-food-education/

FROM A MOMENT TO A MOVEMENT

Welcome, Washington!
Our 48th state

The Obama Presidential Center opened in Chicago this year with a Charlie Cart at the center of its food programming. This summer, families spent an afternoon in the garden chopping produce and jarring their own pickles.

Sarah Morbitzer's library in North Manchester, Indiana.



Ten years, 754 carts, 48 states, and countless carrots chopped.

FY26 BY THE NUMBERS

Since 2015, we've delivered
754 Charlie Carts to communities
and **trained 2,000+ educators,**
expanding access to hands-on learning.

This year we expanded our network....

115 carts added

150 new educators trained

20,000 hands-on lessons delivered

500,000 kids chopped, stirred, and tasted real food

67% of sites served food-insecure communities

97% of educators would recommend the Charlie Cart tools, training, and curriculum

4.1 level of educator self-reported confidence leading lessons (out of 5)

NEXT UP: REACH ONE MILLION KIDS

Every child needs Food Education as part of their learning day to grow up healthy and strong. That's the core of our work, and our supporters make it possible.

Last spring we set a new and ambitious goal to reach one million children across all 50 states by 2030. To get there, we'll partner with school districts, library systems, and entire communities, with a focus on reaching children and families who face food insecurity.

We'll keep sharpening our training program, so everyone—no matter their experience with food and cooking—can be a champion for kids' health in their communities. And we'll showcase more stories like Sarah's to highlight Food Education's transformative power in action—one engaged, happy child at a time.

In our first decade the Charlie Cart Project has flourished—just like our participants—and the next decade is ripe with possibility. Thank you for being a part of the movement!



"I know I can do this, and I know I'm good at it."

—Charlie Cart cook, North Manchester, Indiana



Back in Indiana, Sarah dreams up cooking classes for all ages

Sarah Morbitzer plans cooking classes for teens going off to college and for seniors who tell her it's hard to make dinner for themselves. She says Charlie Cart's delicious recipes and approachable lessons speak for themselves:

"I don't have to stand up there and say healthy food tastes good.' The food does the talking for me."

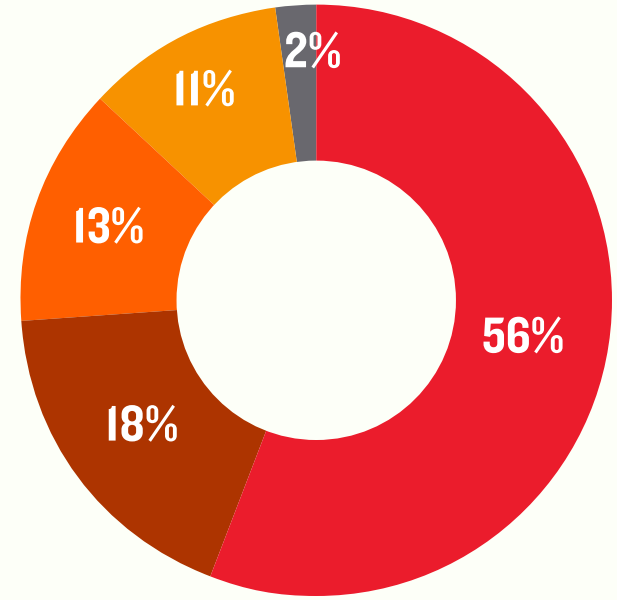
—Sarah Morbitzer

FINANCIALS

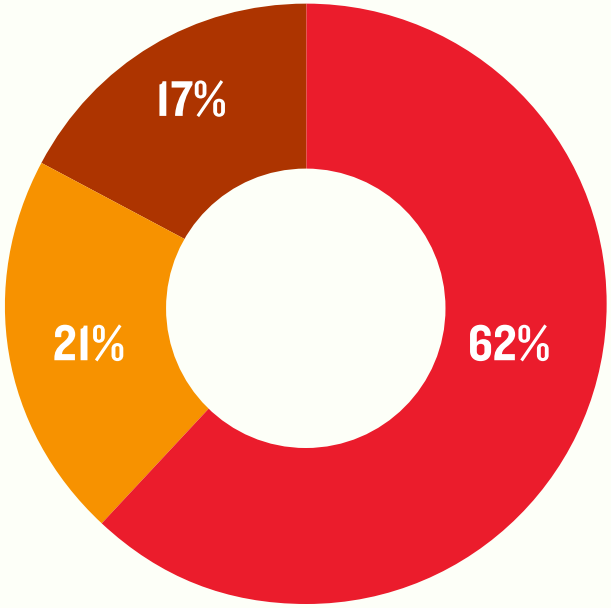
Ten years of steady growth and a strong earned revenue stream have prepared the Charlie Cart Project to thrive despite significant market and policy shifts.

In the 2025–2026 fiscal year, The Charlie Cart Project's total revenue increased 7% over 2024–25, ending the year with $941,000 in net assets, and stronger earned revenue than in any previous year.

Where our funding came from:



How we spent it:



Revenue	Amount
Sales (Net)*	$582,380
Foundation grants	$188,500
Individual gifts	$131,030
In-kind goods and services	$108,328
Corporate gifts	$8,635
Investment income	$18,678
Total net revenue	$1,037,551
Total gross revenue	**$2.09 million***

Expense	Amount
Program: Educator training, curriculum, and support	$651,796
Fundraising	$222,996
Management and Administration	$184,747
Total Operating Expense	**$1,059,539**

Net revenue reflects total revenue less the cost of goods sold.

Net revenue reflects total revenue less the cost of goods sold.


Thank you for cooking with us!

YOU MADE IT POSSIBLE

Institutional Foundations

Anonymous
Comis Foundation
June and Julian Foss Foundation
The Rachael Ray Foundation
Yum-o! Foundation

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Genentech
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Intuitive Surgical
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The Charlie Cart Project is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, EIN 47-1905802.

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