

2023



ANNUAL REPORT

January 1- December 31, 2023



Table of Contents

Letter from Board Chair 3

Soulful Seeds by the Numbers 4

Volunteers Make the Difference 5

Community Programs 6

Neighborhood Spotlight 8

Special Projects 9

Soulful Seeds Team 10

Financials 11

Contributors 12



May 15, 2024

Dear Soulful Seeds Community,

At Soulful Seeds, our work transcends mere logistics. It's deeply personal. Each member of our team carries a heartfelt commitment to alleviating food insecurity because we believe that food has the power to heal and connect us. It's not just sustenance; it's a bridge that brings communities together.

Our impact is felt in the neighborhoods we serve. Whether it's a warm meal for a struggling family, a seedling planted with care, or a conversation shared over a harvest, we know that every small act contributes to a larger transformation. This is why we are most proud of our progress scaling operations in 2023 to serve more people in need. Below are a few highlights from the year.

- **Program Expansion:** We proudly welcomed our first full-time employee, a dedicated Program Coordinator. Her passion and commitment was instrumental in driving our programs forward and serving the community in a more lasting way.
- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** Our garden flourished as we completed the installation of large-scale composting bays and storage containers and began installation of the first hoop house. These improvements allow us to operate more efficiently and sustainably.
- **Community Spaces:** At the suggestion of garden neighbors, we added ample seating throughout our gardens, creating inviting spaces for neighbors to gather, share stories, and connect. These spaces symbolize our commitment to fostering community bonds.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** We established a robust data collection and quality improvement plan to ensure that our efforts are evidence-based, data-driven and impactful.
- **Sustainability Planning:** Working closely with the Blueprint Collaborative, we learned invaluable strategies for building a long-term, sustainable plan for raising funds. Their guidance empowered us to secure the necessary resources to fulfill our vision and create a plan for sustainability that will carry us into the future.

As we move forward, we remain steadfast in our mission. With your continued support, we will nourish both bodies and souls, creating a ripple effect of positive change. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey. Together, we cultivate connection and resiliency.

With Gratitude,

Earstin Whitten,
Co-founder & 2023 Board Chair

Soulful Seeds by the Numbers



In 2023, Soulful Seeds continued to expand its impact, operating two urban gardens in high-need neighborhoods and initiating collaborative talks to establish a third garden in the coming year. Throughout the year, we engaged hundreds of volunteers and distributed thousands of pounds of produce. Our greatest success was in community engagement, as we completed essential construction tasks across our gardens. This year was pivotal in laying the foundation for our future growth. Take a closer look at the numbers from the past year to see the full extent of our impact.



Our Place Campus
engagement in the garden
increased by
83%

We hosted **22**
different community
groups in the
gardens



Volunteers donated
1,798.5
hours of their time in
our gardens



219.5 hours of
programming was
provided to garden
neighbors



we increased the
volume of produce
we grew by
96%



Volunteers Make the Difference

Volunteers played a pivotal role in the remarkable growth of Soulful Seeds this year. Their unwavering dedication was evident across various aspects, including construction, planning, maintenance, and harvest. An astounding 90% of our volunteers join us with the intention of connecting with others, while an impressive 95% seek to enhance their gardening skills. This unique blend of purpose makes Soulful Seeds an ideal hub for fostering connections and building a vibrant community.





How We Served the Community



In the past year, Soulful Seeds continued to serve the community in impactful ways as we worked diligently to complete construction of our largest garden to date. Through our efforts, we have provided essential food access, educational programs, and workforce development opportunities. These initiatives are crucial in addressing food insecurity, as research shows that community-based food programs significantly reduce the prevalence of food insecurity by improving access to nutritious food and fostering self-sufficiency. By empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to grow their own food, we are not only meeting immediate needs but also building a more resilient and food-secure community for the future.

Key Accomplishments in 2023

- Introduced structured garden education
- Installed permanent garden storage
- Completed large-scale compost infrastructure
- Installed drip irrigation in all raised beds
- Began hoop house installation
- Completed the first section of the crop field



Food Access

Providing immediate access to fresh, nutritious food is the first step in combating food insecurity. The biggest barriers to fresh, healthy food access is where a person lives, transportation, and cost. According to Feeding America, 12.5% of Washoe County residents experience food insecurity.

Soulful Seeds' Food Access Program is dedicated to providing free, no-barrier access to fresh produce from our gardens to our garden neighbors. This initiative aims to combat food insecurity by ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has access to nutritious food. By fostering a sense of community and encouraging local participation, we not only address immediate food needs but also promote long-term food security and self-sufficiency.

In 2023, Soulful Seeds harvested an impressive 3,314.5 pounds of produce from our gardens and distributed an additional 736.5 pounds of bread and baked goods from Perenn Bakery. This significant achievement was made possible through the dedication of our community, with 1,798.25 hours of volunteer time donated by neighbors and community members.

Education

Increasing access to fresh, healthy food is only the first step. According to Harvard Medical School, combating food insecurity requires us to take a comprehensive approach. To truly address the root causes of food insecurity and create a lasting improvement in the neighborhoods where we operate, we provide education and awareness opportunities. These programs improve the community's knowledge about nutrition, cooking, budgeting, gardening, and food preparation.

In 2023, Soulful Seeds hosted multiple structured garden education, nutritional cooking classes, and garden-based wellness programs. The garden-based wellness programs included Beekeeping and Garden Therapy. In total, we hosted 219.5 programming hours and served 129 people. Based on program feedback surveys, participants shared that their time in the garden was the best part of their week and 67% indicated improved mood after working in the garden.






Neighborhood Spotlight: Our Place Campus

The Our Place Campus, is a low-barrier emergency shelter designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for women and families experiencing homelessness. Operated by the Washoe County Human Services Agency in collaboration with community providers, Our Place offers a warm, home-like setting where guests can access essential services. The campus includes family, women's, and senior homes, each tailored to meet the specific needs of its residents.

The campus operates on a model of collaboration, with peer-led services and a network of staff, peers, and community organizations working together to support guests. Services on campus focus on holistic support with the goal of providing not just temporary shelter but also a pathway to long-term housing solutions through comprehensive, wrap-around services. This includes access to healthcare, mental health services, job training, and educational opportunities.

Soulful Seeds operates a 3-acre garden on the Our Place Campus, dedicated to benefiting the guests residing there. This garden serves as a vital resource, providing fresh, nutritious produce directly to the campus community. By integrating gardening activities into the daily lives of the residents, we not only enhance their access to healthy food but also offer therapeutic and educational opportunities that contribute to the goal of stability and self-sufficiency.

Through its compassionate and outcome-based approach, Our Place is making a meaningful difference in the lives of many, helping to create a stronger, more resilient community.



Soulful Seeds takes on special projects to strategically identify the most effective ways to collaborate with the surrounding community. These projects allow us to pilot initiatives without overinvesting in programs that may not be successful, ensuring that our resources are used wisely. By introducing programs gradually, we can implement them in a more sustainable manner, fostering long-term success. Additionally, special projects enable us to test innovative solutions to systemic barriers specific to each neighborhood, helping us tailor our efforts to meet the unique needs of the community effectively. In 2023, we piloted two special projects.

Special Projects

Volunteer Days for English Learners: In 2023, Soulful Seeds collaborated with Miriam Ramirez, an MSW student from the University of Nevada-Reno, to launch an ESL Garden Volunteer program. This initiative aimed to connect new community members with our gardens while providing a welcoming environment for adults learning English to practice their new language skills. The program was well received and led to the addition of a new pantry partner, the Women's and Children's Center of the Sierra, whose recipients greatly benefit from the fresh produce we deliver. Ultimately, the program faced challenges in attracting new participants into the gardens due to the distance between the center and our gardens; however, it successfully identified an underserved neighborhood and expanded our reach to those in need.

Green Waste Program: When Soulful Seeds was founded, we recognized that soil amendments would be a significant ongoing expense. To mitigate this, we developed our own composting program. In early 2023, we tested this idea through a collaboration with the Great Basin Community Food Co-op, which provided us with green food waste. We quickly found this to be a manageable and scalable solution, reducing long-term expenses and construction costs as we developed the soil across our garden at Our Place. By the end of 2023, we had added the Grand Sierra Resort kitchens and Saint Mary's Hospital Network kitchens as green waste partners and constructed large-scale composting bins to manage the increased volume. Although we only began green waste data collection in January 2024, we conservatively estimate that we collected 10,000 gallons of green waste during the scaling of this project in 2023.

Looking Ahead: Soulful Seeds was awarded a five-year grant from the USDA Division of Urban Forestry to introduce a comprehensive urban orchard and workforce development project. This project will be the major focus of our special project efforts beginning in 2024 and in the years ahead.

Our Team

Staff

Brooke O'Byrne, Interim Director
Cara Montoya, Program Coordinator
Cindy Gallimore, Garden Assistant
Miriam Ramirez, Intern

Board of Directors

Earstin Whitten, Chair
Dee Whitten, Secretary
Janice Bailey, Treasurer
Amanda Burden, Board Member
Christina Ghiggeri, Board Member
John Lipinski, Board Member
Marc Chapelle, Board Member
Parker Peterson, Board Member



Awards and Acknowledgements

100% Giving Board Award, *Community Foundation of Northern Nevada*
Golden Pinecone Sustainability Award, *greenUP!*
Certified People's Garden, *USDA*

2023 Consolidated Financial Statement

Revenue and Support	2023 Without Restriction	2023 With Restriction	2023 Total	2022 Total
Government Grants	\$72,194	\$---	\$72,194	\$41,498
Private Grants	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$70,000	\$18,500
Contributions and Events	\$111,000	\$15,500	\$126,500	\$195,787
Contributions, Nonfinancial	\$87,499	\$---	\$87,499	\$101,012
Total Revenue and Support	\$300,693	\$55,500	\$356,193	\$356,797

Expenses	2023 Without Restriction	2023 With Restriction	2023 Total	2022 Total
Programs and Gardening	\$189,689	\$---	\$189,689	\$128,512
Management and Support Services	\$89,291	\$---	\$89,291	\$37,716
Total Expenses	\$278,980	\$---	\$278,980	\$166,228

Change in Net Assets	\$58,784	\$18,428	\$77,213	\$190,569
-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------------

A copy of the consolidated 2023 Independent Financial Review conducted by Connie Christiansen, CPA, CFE is available upon request.

Contributors

Soulful Seeds is deeply grateful for all the contributors who supported us in 2023. Your generosity and dedication were instrumental in helping us provide fresh, healthy food to our community and promote sustainable gardening practices.

\$20,000+

Jack and Bonnie Grellman
Nevada Department of Agriculture
Peek Family Foundation
Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation
USDA, Division of Urban Forestry
Washoe County

\$15,000- \$19,999

Ed and Martha Reese
Patagonia
Steve Miller and Maureen Mullarkey

\$10,000- \$14,999

AmericanAg Credit
Great Basin Community Food Co-op
John Ben Snow Memorial Trust

\$5,000- \$9,999

American Wealth Management
NV Energy
Peter and Maureen Herrmann
Reno Arches Lion's Club
Stephanie Kruse

\$1,000-\$2,499

Anonymous Donor
First Independent Bank
Fred & Jill Altman
Jerry & Maralene Martin
Mark & Carol Steingard
Mark & Elaine Wimbush
Meri Shadley

In-Kind Supporters

Edible Reno Tahoe
Grant Sierra Resort
Great Basin Community Food Co-op
Heirloom Gardens
Kellogg Products
Modern Storage
Patagonia
Perenn Bakery
Plan B Ranch
Reno Green
Saint Mary's Hospital Network
Sterling Farms
Washoe County
Zazzle

