Invest APPALACHIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bridge Meals Brings Year-Round "Crowdfeeding" to the Table with New Invest Appalachia Backing

Just ahead of Thanksgiving and Giving Tuesday, Bridge Meals has secured operational funding to protect its 100% pass-through model for restaurant-served free meals



A server brings drinks to diners at Rosetta's Kitchen in downtown Asheville, N.C., the first restaurant to join Bridge Meals. A "Fund a meal while you're here" card on each table lets customers scan a QR code to pay for free meals for neighbors. (Photo: Shan Dinally)

ASHEVILLE, N.C., Nov. 25, 2026 — Bridge Meals, the Asheville-based platform that lets anyone fund free meals at local restaurants, today announced an investment from Invest Appalachia, a regional social impact investment fund. The funding will cover Bridge Meals' operating costs,

so 100% of every donation continues to go straight to restaurants serving free meals to their neighbors.

Since launching in January 2026, Bridge Meals has run its operations on optional tips that donors add at checkout. Since Bridge Meals has never taken a cut of donations, Invest Appalachia's support gives Bridge Meals a sustainable way to keep growing without ever asking donors to pay for overhead.

"One of the things our donors love most is our pass-through: 100% of what they give goes straight to the restaurant serving the meal," said Will Oseroff, Co-Founder of Bridge Meals. "Saying that is one thing. Showing that we've found a sustainable way to keep it true is another. Invest Appalachia is helping us prove this model can last, right as more of our neighbors are looking for a warm meal this season."

How "Crowdfeeding" Works

Bridge Meals calls its model crowdfeeding. Donors fund meals at a specific restaurant, often by scanning a QR code on a table sign. The restaurant serves a free meal to anyone who walks in and asks, with no voucher or screening, logs it in the Bridge Meals app, and gets paid weekly through Bridge Meals' nonprofit fiscal sponsor, Grassroots Aid Partnership. Anyone looking for a meal can download the Bridge Meals app to find nearby restaurants serving free meals. Their model is straightforward: Donors fund meals. Restaurants serve them. Everybody eats.

Rooted in the grassroots food relief efforts that followed Hurricane Helene, Bridge Meals evolved from an urgent community response into a permanent, sustainable model for local food security.

The first partner was Rosetta's Kitchen in downtown Asheville, which was already running its own free meal program. Today Bridge Meals works with 26 partners in 12 cities, stretching from Southern Pines, North Carolina, to Nashville, Tennessee. Donors have given more than $49,700, and Bridge Meals has funded 14,398 free meals and paid more than $44,200 directly to local restaurants.

"If I've learned anything in the past few years, it's that the crises will probably keep coming," said Gab Bonfiglio, co-owner of Finest Deli in West Asheville, which has served nearly 1,500 free meals through Bridge Meals. "To be able to be consistent and not trying to wind up

something new every time something happens feels like what I want to commit time and energy to."

Strengthening Local Food Security

Food systems and sustainable agriculture are priority areas in Invest Appalachia's portfolio, and Bridge Meals keeps food dollars circulating through independent, locally owned restaurants across the region.

According to Victoria Buchanan-Hewlett, Invest Appalachia's Investment Solutions Coordinator, "Bridge Meals' model to support local restaurants while strengthening food security makes this a strong investment in the regional food system. Donated dollars not only provide a prepared meal to those who need it, but also strengthen profits for local establishments that help build our foodways and regional identity. All the while, small donors are assured that their donations go directly back to their neighbors and their favorite local businesses. It's a win-win all around."

Bridge Meals' model ensures that Giving Tuesday generosity goes farther. Across Appalachia, more than 1 in 9 working families rely on food assistance just to get by — and with Invest Appalachia's operational backing, 100% of every donation directly feeds neighbors while keeping independent local restaurants thriving.

About Invest Appalachia

Invest Appalachia is a collaborative blended capital impact investment platform created by and for the people of Central Appalachia, financing projects that build resilience and community wealth across the region.

About Bridge Meals

Bridge Meals is a crowdfeeding platform that connects donors with local restaurants serving free meals to anyone in need. Founded in Asheville, North Carolina and launched in January 2026, Bridge Meals pays restaurants directly for every free meal served, at no cost to the restaurant, and passes through 100% of donations. Donations are tax-deductible through its fiscal sponsor, Grassroots Aid Partnership, a 501(c)(3). Learn more at bridgemeals.com.

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