



# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

## The 2026 Colorado Food is Medicine Summit

### **FOOD IS MEDICINE: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

These prominent national leaders will share their personal involvement in Food is Medicine (FIM), offer insights into where the movement stands today, and explore what's next for FIM at the national level, here in Colorado, and within local communities. This high-level landscape overview will set the stage for the day, framing key opportunities and challenges while teeing up deeper breakout discussions on demonstrating the impact and value of FIM, integrating FIM with other social services, and advancing smart, effective policy.

### **FOOD IS MEDICINE PARTNERSHIPS: A CASE STUDY**

Learn about an ongoing, innovative Food is Medicine partnership between *Colorado Access*, *Denver Health*, *Project Angel Heart*, and *Food Bank of the Rockies*. This panel will explore how the partnership was built and how cross-sector collaboration is driving meaningful impact. Attendees will hear candid insights into the challenges, the successes, and the practical lessons learned.

### **1A. COMMUNITY CLINICAL LINKAGES: PARTNERING ACROSS SECTORS TO ADDRESS PATIENT NEEDS**

Strong partnerships between health care organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) are critical to delivering effective, equitable Food is Medicine interventions. This session will explore how CBOs and health systems are working together to share clinical data, coordinate care, and improve outcomes for participants. Panelists will offer practical insights into building data-sharing agreements, integrating referral and feedback loops, and navigating complex health data systems—while maintaining privacy and trust.

## **1B. WHERE HEALTH AND HUNGER INTERSECT: BRIDGING FOOD IS MEDICINE AND FOOD ACCESS**

Food is Medicine and food access efforts share a common goal: ensuring everyone has the nourishment they need to thrive. Yet, they often operate in separate spheres—one within health care delivery and reimbursement systems, the other within community-based hunger relief and food justice work. This session will explore how these complementary fields can remain distinct in purpose while building intentional, effective bridges between them. Speakers will share lessons from cross-sector collaboration, discuss how Food is Medicine interventions can strengthen food security initiatives, and highlight opportunities to create a more connected, equitable, and responsive food system that addresses both health and hunger.

## **1C. FOOD IS MEDICINE AND BEYOND: POLICIES SHAPING NUTRITION AND HEALTH IN COLORADO**

While the concept of eating for health has been central to many cultures for centuries, the Food is Medicine movement in the U.S. is gaining new momentum. Alongside policies that directly integrate food-based solutions into health care, such as Medicaid 1115 demonstration waivers, it's equally important to understand the "Food is Medicine-adjacent" policies that complement and strengthen this work. This session will explore key state and national policy areas that enable Food is Medicine integration, including Colorado's existing reimbursement mechanisms through the 1915(c) and 1115 HRSN waivers, as well as telehealth expansion, reimbursement for community health workers, and licensing of registered dietitians to provide medical nutrition therapy. Speakers will discuss how aligning these policies can build a more connected, equitable, and sustainable food and health system in Colorado.

## **2A. MEASURING WHAT MATTERS: DATA-DRIVEN LEARNING IN FOOD IS MEDICINE**

Understanding and demonstrating impact is essential for strengthening Food is Medicine programs and ensuring their long-term sustainability. This session will explore how organizations are using data to evaluate participant and provider experiences, program engagement, food security, psychosocial well-being, and health and health care utilization outcomes. Speakers will share practical strategies for deciding what data to collect, how to gather it, and how to analyze information from diverse sources—including self-reported outcomes, participant surveys, and health insurance claims—to guide continuous learning, improvement, and program adaptation.

## **2B. CREATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES THROUGH NONPROFIT ENGAGEMENT**

Nonprofits are indispensable partners in building sustainable, community-centered Food is Medicine ecosystems. This session will examine the unique contributions of nonprofit organizations—bridging health and social care, centering programs in the communities they serve, supporting local food economies, and fostering volunteerism that strengthens community ties. Speakers will highlight how community-driven, nonprofit partnerships can improve health outcomes, enhance social connectedness, and build more resilient local food systems, as well as discuss strategies for communicating and marketing this value to partners and funders.

## **2C. DEFINING QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN FOOD IS MEDICINE**

As Food is Medicine programs expand nationwide, consistent standards are essential to ensure quality, safety, and equity across services. This session will explore the need for standards in Food is Medicine, as well as current efforts to accredit medically tailored meals (MTMs) and medically tailored groceries (MTGs), and why accreditation matters for the future of the field. Speakers will provide an overview of emerging frameworks, discuss how accreditation supports clinical integration and payer confidence, and highlight what's needed to align nutrition interventions with health care quality standards.