

Alliance to End Hunger—Hunger Free Communities Listening Session Report to White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition & Health July 15, 2022

Hosted by



Convening Partners



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Introduction

About Alliance to End Hunger

The [Alliance to End Hunger](#) unites diverse sectors to address today's hunger and malnutrition needs and to solve the root causes of hunger at home and abroad. We are a coalition of over 100 corporations, non-profits, faith-based organizations, universities, foundations, international organizations, and individuals. While driving factors may vary among membership, there is a shared conviction that addressing hunger is essential.

About Hunger Free Communities Network™

The Alliance to End Hunger's Hunger Free Communities (HFC) Network initiative supports broad-based, multi-sector coalitions that are committed to ending hunger in their communities. The HFC Network partners spanning 33 states work to bring a broad range of community stakeholders together to unite behind a common vision and strategy for ending hunger. The Alliance to End Hunger builds the capacities of these groups by providing multiple platforms that foster communication between anti-hunger coalitions to share best practices and lessons learned.

The Hunger Free Communities Network™ Advisory Council provides valuable input and feedback to the Alliance to End Hunger on its programs and policies. The Advisory Council is comprised of representatives from Hunger Free Community coalitions and/or Alliance to End Hunger member organizations. Advisory Council members have current or past, first-hand experience with food insecurity and federal nutrition programs. The Advisory Council meets regularly and is integrated into the Alliance's various decision-making tables.

The Listening Session

The virtual listening session was organized to address the questions set forth by the White House in preparation for the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September. It was organized by Alliance to End Hunger targeting outreach to the Hunger Free Communities Network™. It was co-convened by DoorDash, End Child Hunger in Alabama, FoodFinder, Healthy Living Coalition, Instacart, Islamic Relief USA, March of Dimes, Nuro, RESULTS, Souper Bowl of Caring and WHEAT. The co-conveners also conducted outreach to their networks.

Given the focus of our listening session, we gathered feedback on Pillars 1-3 (see below). The listening session was held on June 29, 2022. The listening session began with a panel discussion featuring the Hunger Free Communities Network Advisory Council, then the participants went into 23 separate breakout rooms to discuss their recommendations. The audience was a diverse group of community members and practitioners connected to the hosts and convening organizations. About 400 people registered the event and about 200 people attended the Listening Session.

The Report

This report is organized in three sections, recommendations by Alliance to End Hunger, recommendations by some of the convening partners (others have submitted recommendations separately) and recommendations by listening session participants.

The answers to the questions are organized by the Pillar and Question as outlined in the Toolkit for Partner-Led Convenings.

Pillars

1. Improve food access and affordability: End hunger by making it easier for everyone — including urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities — to access and afford food. For example, expand eligibility for and increase participation in food assistance programs and improve transportation to places where food is available.

2. Integrate nutrition and health: Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure that our health care system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.

3. Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices: Foster environments that enable all people to easily make informed healthy choices, increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy workplace and school policies, and invest in public messaging and education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities.

Questions

1. How has hunger or diet-related disease impacted you, your family, or your community?
2. What **specific** actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve each pillar? What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
3. What **specific** actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve each pillar?
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve each pillar?
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?

Section One: Recommendations from Alliance to End Hunger

Pillar 1: Improve food access and affordability

Hunger and poverty are pervasive in the United States and disproportionately impacts communities of color and economically marginalized communities. According to [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (U.S.D.A.), in 2020, before the impact of the pandemic could be fully realized, over 10 percent of Americans, or 38.3 million people, lived in food insecure households. Further, specific populations experienced rates of food insecurity that were significantly higher than the national average. This was the case for households with children (14.8 percent), households with children under age 6 (15.3 percent), Black, non-Hispanic (21.7 percent) and Hispanic (17.2 percent) households, and households with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty threshold (28.6 percent).

The Alliance to End Hunger advocates that ending hunger and poverty reduction be a national priority of the U.S. government. The White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health is a good first step and should focus on convening a broad range of stakeholders to comprehensively address the root causes of poverty, hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition so that fewer Americans experience diet-related diseases and can thrive.

Response to Question 2:

Actively include and reflect the recommendations and feedback of those experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

As conference planning continues, it is imperative that individuals who have experienced hunger and poverty are included at all steps and stages of the process, and equity is at the forefront of the strategy moving forward. Meaningful engagement with individuals with lived poverty and hunger experience should inform the national strategy that will be announced at the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022. Barriers between program participants and the federal government must be dismantled. Meaningful engagement with individuals with poverty and hunger experience is necessary to truly understand the challenges they face. As the national strategy is formed, some of the decision-making power must be turned over to those who have not historically been given this authority. It is a great moment of opportunity to build a more equitable process for developing policy at the federal level.

The following are examples of how the Administration could engage individuals with lived experience:

- Include individuals in all aspects of the conference – including an equal voice in the decision-making process.
- Ensure the conference is accessible, both in-person and virtually.
- Provide compensation for the time of individuals with lived experience, while being cognizant of how cash payments may impact their eligibility for public programs that they may rely on, also known as a “benefits cliff” (discussed later in this document).

Address the root causes of hunger, poverty, and diet-related diseases.

We support a comprehensive approach that includes various federal, state, local, and Tribal policymakers, anti-hunger, health and private sectors, and people with lived expertise of hunger. The American people deserve economic policies that promote good jobs with benefits, wages that reflect the cost of living, and robust benefits for those who are unable to work or have found themselves on hard times, to help lift them out of poverty.

Supports should target and tailor to the needs of specific populations with disproportionate rates of poverty and hunger. The following strategies should be employed to address the root causes of hunger and poverty:

- Advance equity and make targeted investments to close the racial wealth divide and eliminate disparate racial treatment and outcomes in federal nutrition programs.
- Pass economic policies that promote good jobs, wages, benefits for low- and moderate- income households, and improve government income support programs for struggling families and individuals;
- Expand and strengthen the federal nutrition programs;
- Work alongside states, localities, and nonprofits to expand and improve participation in federal nutrition and other government support programs; and
- Make sure all families and individuals have convenient access to reasonably priced, safe, and healthy food.

Advance equity and make targeted investments to close the racial wealth divide and eliminate disparate racial treatment and outcomes in federal nutrition programs.

[Systemic racial inequity in employment, housing, education, food access, and health care compound to make it so that Black, Indigenous and people of color \(BIPOC\) experience higher rates of food insecurity.](#) In [2020, the food insecurity rate](#) for white households was 7.1% compared to 21.7% for Black households. Latino households had a food insecurity rate of 17.2%. Ending hunger in the United States requires movement toward closing the racial gaps in food security. That movement will create better outcomes for all people experiencing food insecurity.

Government agencies should collect and report program data by race and ethnicity where appropriate. Lack of data has consistently hampered efforts to determine the impact of government programs among BIPOC individuals in the U.S. More nuanced analysis of collected data would be helpful. For example, the U.S.D.A. annual household food security report publishes data that is disaggregated by race or by household type, but there is no information on how they relate to each other, such as the food insecurity profile of female-headed households by race. Such analyses would help to better target needed interventions. Separate analysis of additional racial categories such as American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian American/Pacific Islander would be informative.

Federal government agencies should undertake review of all current and future public benefit programs to assess disparate racial outcomes for underserved communities. Assessing federal programs for potential disparate outcomes among BIPOC communities is an essential step in correcting past and current injustices and inequities. To ensure that federal programs are effective and able to achieve their intended purposes in all communities, policies and programs must be examined for any implicit bias. A good example of how to conduct such an analysis is Bread for the World's [Applying Racial Equity to U.S. Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs: SNAP, WIC and Child Nutrition](#). We suggest the recommendations in this analysis be adopted.

The federal government should direct state agencies to collect data on program access barriers from local jurisdictions and program participants. For example, the above-referenced report concludes that federal nutrition programs are for the most part racially equitable. However, having a program or policy that seems free from bias in law and regulation, does not preclude implementation that results in biases or differential outcomes. Examining how programs and policies are implemented on the ground, will identify areas for improvement. It will also expose how seemingly race-neutral policies can have racially biased outcomes. For

example, a policy like promoting breast-feeding through WIC will not have the desired impact if WIC staff do not account for the much lower rate of breast-feeding among African Americans due to structural racism and historical trauma (see afore-mentioned Bread for the World report). Having these assessments at the local level are critical in assessing barriers that are specific to the communities in questions. For example, New York City in 1999 was found to be instituting practices that delayed or denied persons from seeking Food Stamp benefits. A class action lawsuit eventually brought an end to this practice. It also will make it easier to identify barriers that are outside of the province of USDA programs, recognizing the interrelated nature of systemic racism. For example, underutilization of a federal nutrition program in a community of color may result from transportation barriers or other obstacles outside of USDA's purview. In a case like this involving other community stakeholders and agencies would be critical to resolving the issue. Finally, the best source of information about barriers to access or discriminatory treatment will come from program participants.

Government agencies administering public benefit programs should train all employees in diversity, inclusion, equity and culturally competent practices. The beginning of supporting an environment of anti-racism is to ensure all staff are properly trained and supporting that training through policy, practice and accountability mechanisms. For example, U.S.D.A. employees as well as program participants report bias in their interactions with the agency. According to U.S.D.A., "Race was the second most frequently alleged basis in formal equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints at U.S.D.A. in fiscal year (FY) 2020. In FY 2020, 43 percent of complaints cited race as a basis, compared to 55 percent in FY 2019."

Government agencies should direct resources and outreach to historically underserved communities. To address the inequities identified through these processes, the federal government should work with state, local, and Tribal policymakers, anti-hunger, health and private sectors, and people with lived expertise of hunger to direct resources to assist underserved communities through outreach, enrollment and removing barriers to equitable participation.

Improve government income support programs for struggling families and individuals and other solutions that help break the cycle and lift individuals and families out of poverty.

Policies that do not financially harm individuals and policies that incentives businesses to provide decent working conditions, wages that reflect the cost of living, and robust health and other benefits that prevent families from quickly falling on hard times in the event of an accident or loss of income, must be a national priority to address the root causes of poverty. The following strategies discussed below will support better benefits, jobs, and wages for Americans.

Address the benefits cliff: [A benefits cliff](#) (also known as the "cliff effect") occurs when individuals receive public benefits from the government and begin to earn more income that puts them above the eligibility threshold to continue to participate in the public benefit program. As a result, the individual loses their public benefits. In a benefits cliff situation, the individual's income increase is not as much as the public benefit amount they had previously received – as a result, the overall resources available to the individual are reduced. This puts individuals in tough positions on whether to accept more hours at work, or a raise, out of fear of losing crucial benefits that they need to sustain themselves and their household.

Enhance the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC): Expansions and enhancements to the child tax credit and earned income tax credit during the pandemic showed the powerful impact it could have on low-income and working families. For example, from July to December 2021, the advanced monthly CTC payments provided a lifeline, helping parents put food on the table for their children. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), the expanded CTC benefit proved to be an effective tool for addressing childhood hunger. Nearly half of parents who received the monthly child tax credit used the money for food. [Columbia University's](#) initial

CTC research found that the first monthly CTC payment was associated with a 25% decline in food insufficiency (defined as sometimes or often not having enough to eat in the last 7 days) for households with children. Further, Columbia’s research found that the CTC’s greatest impact on reducing food insufficiency was concentrated among families with 2019 pre-tax incomes of less than \$35,000, and benefits strongly reduced food insufficiency among low-income Black, Latino, and White families alike. Unfortunately, the expanded monthly CTC benefit ended in December 2021, and by January 2022 — just one month after families lost the expanded monthly credit — [3.7 million more children were pushed into poverty](#). Children living in poverty face numerous uphill battles, including accessing nutritious foods. Children who struggle with hunger have [poorer academic outcomes](#) and are at a [higher risk of developing diet related diseases](#).

Additional strategies to create better working conditions for low-income families: People require a livable wage and equitable employment opportunities to feed themselves. For many BIPOC in the U.S., wage and employment inequities make that harder to attain and COVID-19 exacerbated unemployment rates for many Americans. Still, Black, Indigenous, and Latino households were more likely to lose income and [less likely to regain employment compared to white households](#). [Labor statistics consistently demonstrate](#) that within 4 weeks of searching, [equally qualified Black job seekers are half as likely as white job seekers to secure employment](#). Further, returning investments in college degrees contribute to the growing wage gap. In 1979, for every \$1 earned by white workers, Black and Latino workers with an undergraduate degree each earned 86¢. In 2019, those gaps widened to an average of 78¢ for Black workers and 84¢ for Latino workers. Alliance to End Hunger suggests the additional following strategies are considered in the White House’s roadmap to end hunger by 2030:

- Raise the minimum wage so that individuals working fulltime do not have to rely on public benefits to afford basic essentials like housing, food, and transportation;
- Enact and enforce needed worker protections to ensure good health and safety;
- Provide benefits and protections for contract or “gig” economy workers;
- Support policies that make it easier for workers to form labor unions;
- Promote and enforce fair hiring practices to address racial, gender and sexual orientation discrimination, and to allow individuals with previous arrests or convictions a chance at gainful employment; and
- Enact policies to make childcare more affordable for low- and middle-income families.

Expand and strengthen the federal nutrition programs to increase access and affordability of food.

While the root causes of poverty and hunger are addressed, the immediate hunger needs of Americans are met. Federal nutrition programs have proven to help lift families out of poverty and increase food security are robust enough to meet needs of low-income families. This requires protecting the current safety net system and expanding federal assistance programs that are proven to reduce food insecurity. The national strategy that will be announced at the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health must take a comprehensive approach to addressing food security, recognizing the inseparable relationship between nutrition access and overall health, social well-being, and future economic prosperity. Charitable organizations are working to address the unprecedented need for nutrition support but cannot solve the current crisis alone. Robust and accessible federal nutrition programs ensure nutrition assistance is targeted to communities and individuals that need it most.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Eliminate the three-month time limit on SNAP participation for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) so that all eligible individuals can access nutrition regardless of their ability to obtain employment. A recent [USDA report](#) found that there is no evidence that the ABAWD time limit has increased employment or annual earnings.
- Provide a pathway for full participation in SNAP for U.S. citizens residing in U.S territories of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- End the ban that disallows participants to use benefits from the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and SNAP within the same month. FDPIR is the only commodity food program that cannot be used in conjunction with SNAP benefits.
- Repeal the lifetime ban on individuals with a past felony drug conviction from receiving SNAP.
- [Increase access to SNAP among eligible immigrants](#) by eliminating the five-year bar or waiting period to access SNAP and include any individual lawfully present in the U.S. in the definition of a “qualified noncitizen” – a designation that often determines eligibility for government programs.
- For military families, [ensure the Basic Allowance for Housing is excluded as income](#) for the purpose of qualifying for SNAP.
- [Improve outreach to seniors](#) and others underutilizing SNAP.
- Support SNAP-related measures that promote equity and eliminate practices that exclude or hurt people of color and strengthen hiring, training, and accountability for the participant experience. These measures should take a trauma informed approach.
- Streamline WIC and SNAP eligibility and enrollment.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- Expand eligibility to WIC to address coverage gaps by allowing two-year WIC certifications periods, extending eligibility to all postpartum mothers to two years, and extending eligibility to children from five years to six years.
- Streamline certifications through lessons learned during the pandemic to permit telehealth options and onboard new families via video or telephone options, enhance adjunctive eligibility to include Head Start, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and enhance coordination with healthcare providers to facilitate greater access to WIC services. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of relaxing physical presence requirements, removing additional procedural barriers to access, and creating flexibility to invest in technologies and program services to provide a streamlined and accessible clinic experience.
- Invest in WIC nutrition services and technologies to grow and diversify the WIC workforce, permit benefit redemption through online shopping, further integrate data with other healthcare services, and streamline transactions at farmers markets. WIC shoppers face an inequitable and challenging shopping experience, with outdated regulations continuing to require that shoppers redeem their benefits in-person at retail grocery store locations. The WIC shopping experience should allow for online ordering and payment.

Summer Food Service Program

- Permanently authorize and expand Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) nationwide (it is a demonstration program available in a handful of states). The program should be made available to low-income families during school breaks and the summer to supplement household food budgets when free and reduced-price school meals are unavailable. Grants will be necessary for states to implement this new EBT system.
- Authorize an option for “non-congregate” sites and provide other flexibilities. This will allow sponsors to provide different options meeting their communities’ needs to provide meals to children instead of requiring children to travel to centralized sites every day to eat meals.
- Streamline the summer and afterschool meals programs. Reduce red tape and excessive bureaucracy by removing the duplication between afterschool and summer meals programs, making it easier for schools and community organizations to serve needed meals year-round.

National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

- Provide breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students at school. Access to free school meals not only addresses hunger so children are ready to learn and [reduces food insecurity](#), research suggests that providing meals to students at no cost [improves school climate](#) and [that both poor and non-poor students participating in free school meals achieve higher test scores](#). Further, providing meals at no cost to all students reduces administrative burdens on schools, state agencies, and families, and encourages greater participation in school meal programs, making programs more financially viable.
- In the absence of providing free school meals to all students, eliminate the reduced-price category that requires low-income families pay a copayment for each meal consumed and allow kids at or below 185% of the federal poverty level to receive free meals at school.
- In the absence of providing free school meals to all students, enhance the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) by lowering the eligibility threshold to participate from 40% to at least 25% identified students and by increasing the federal reimbursement multiplier from 1.6 to a minimum of 2.5. These changes will increase the number of low-income children that have access to the [well-documented benefits of free school meals](#) and more schools will benefit from reduced administrative burdens, increased federal reimbursements, and eliminates unpaid school meal debt.
- Expand Medicaid direct certification nationwide to improve access to free school meals and eliminate unnecessary paperwork for school districts and families. To achieve this, state agencies operating the federal child nutrition programs will need direct certification improvement grants to get the needed technology in place.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- Include additional mandatory funding for TEFAP food in recognition of the sustained high need for food assistance at food banks nationwide while long term solutions are implemented that will eliminate the need for such a robust emergency food system.
 - increase TEFAP baseline funding baseline by \$250 million a year, providing \$500 million total for TEFAP food purchases before adjusting for inflation; and

- TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds should increase to reflect the actual distribution costs needed to \$200 million per year, and TEFAP Infrastructure Grants should remain at \$15 million per year.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program

- Increase funding for the OAA Nutrition Program to reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition among seniors, while promoting socialization and health and well-being. According to Meals on Wheels of America, [the OAA Nutrition Program also prioritizes access to seniors with the greatest social or economic need](#) – including seniors who are low-income; are a racial or ethnic minority; live in a rural community; have limited English proficiency; and/or are at risk of institutionalization.

What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions?

- Barriers between program participants and the federal government must be broken down to create a shift in power. Meaningful engagement with individuals with poverty and hunger experience to truly learn how benefit programs impact everyday lives will require that some of the decision-making power be turned over to those who have not historically been in positions of authority. This is also a great moment of opportunity to build a more equitable process for developing policy solutions.
- There must be sustainable funding for income support and federal nutrition programs to ensure programs are effective and accessible.

Response to Question 3:

- Strengthen food security and food sovereignty among Tribal Nations, such as allowing Tribes to directly administer federal nutrition programs rather than state agencies.
- States must implement economic policies that promote good jobs, wages, benefits for low- and moderate-income households, and ensure all families and individuals have convenient access to reasonably priced, safe, and healthy food. Provide incentives to bring grocery stores or healthy products to stores that already exist in rural areas and food deserts.
- Work alongside federal government, localities, and nonprofits to expand and improve participation in federal nutrition and other government support programs.
- Provide adequate training and resources for caseworkers administering safety net programs to ensure benefits are not held up in the application process, beneficiaries do not experience discrimination, and the process is positive for all parties involved.

Response to Question 4:

- Utilize public/private partnerships to overcome barriers to food access, such as transportation, technology, and capacity building.
- Create lines of communication between health care systems and federal nutrition programs where appropriate.
- Enact policies that promote competitive and non-consolidated to ensure greater equity and flexibility in the supply chain.

Response to Question 5:

- The Alliance to End Hunger’s Hunger Free Communities (HFC) Network initiative supports broad-based, multi-sector coalitions that are committed to ending hunger in their communities. Through the initiative, Alliance to End Hunger fosters communication between anti-hunger coalitions across the country, providing a space to share best practices and lessons learned. Leading to:
 - Deeper understanding of hunger in our communities and among our political leaders
 - Greater capacity and better coordination of emergency food programs
 - Improved access to and enrollment in public nutrition programs
 - Collective impact approaches to identify and address areas of need through equitable solutions
- Below are some examples of Hunger Free Communities partner projects:
 - Beyond Hunger - Beyond Hunger has a Client Advisory Council which incorporates community members with lived experience of hunger and poverty. By involving these individuals, their services are more focused, efficient, integrated, culturally appropriate, and sustainable.
 - Hunger Free Colorado – Hunger Free Colorado has initiatives focused on providing healthy, free school meals for all children, advocating better SNAP policies for college students, addressing barriers to nutrition programs, informing immigrant communities about available food resources, and the impact of proposed public charge rules.
 - Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger - The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger is a multi-year plan to end hunger for all Coloradans. It was developed, with funding from the Colorado Health Foundation, by individuals and organizations from across the state who are working on or experiencing hunger in their own homes and communities. Key elements of the plan include efforts to maximize enrollment of income-eligible Coloradans in both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which focuses on mothers, infants, and children under five years of age. The Blueprint also calls for boosting participation in federal child nutrition programs and expanding the number of Coloradans who can access the food they need through community-based organizations.
 - Hunger Free San Diego - The Hunger Free San Diego Navigator™ Program’s goal is to make it easier for people to learn about, access, and enhance food assistance resources available in their community. Their goal is that San Diegans facing hunger have immediate, equitable, and dignified access to food assistance. The nonprofit navigator training provides an overview of CalFresh (SNAP), school meals and P-EBT, WIC, meals for older adults, and food distribution sites, who is generally eligible, and how someone can help connect to each resource.
 - Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger - Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger (TBNEH) launched their Meals On Wheels for Kids (MOW4Kids) national expansion program in March 2020, a home-delivered meal program. The program serves children when schools are closed (Summer Break/Winter Break/Holiday closures). The program serves children who usually

receive breakfast and/or lunch meals at school through the free and reduced National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program (NSLP/SBP). MOW4Kids is an alternative option for kids who are unable to pick up food from meal distribution sites or food pantries due to transportation issues.

- End Child Hunger in Alabama - End Child Hunger in Alabama (ECHA), a component of the Auburn University Hunger Solutions Institute, has developed a state-wide database of food resources, organized by county, to make sure all Alabama citizens are aware of food resources available in their communities.
- Hunger Free Vermont - Hunger Free Vermont improves access to and participation in 3SQUARESVT (known nationally as SNAP). To ensure all eligible Vermonters can access this program to provide meals at home, Hunger Free Vermont works closely with the Vermont Department for Children and Families who administers the program, conducts training sessions for advocates and service providers, facilitates a statewide work group of state administrators and community partners to improve the program and creates outreach and educational materials to increase participation, advocates for policies at the state and national level to improve access. An example of their 3SquaresVT Advocacy includes supporting legislation that expanded 3SquaresVT eligibility for Vermonters from a max of 130% of the poverty line to 185% of the poverty line.
- Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon - Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon has a SNAP Client Advisory Board. The SNAP Client Advisory Board has created a Client Bill of Rights campaign with the hope of enacting legislation that will ensure that all Oregonians seeking benefits are welcomed, supported, treated with respect and dignity, and provided with transparency while seeking assistance from the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS). The SNAP Client Advisory Board questions and assesses the impact and outcomes of rules, regulations, policies, structural and systemic change issues, and implementation of SNAP in Oregon, works with advocates, program administrators, and legislative bodies to influence decision-making about SNAP in Oregon, advocates for individuals and groups that are underrepresented and marginalized within SNAP, highlights the successes and areas for improvement of SNAP in Oregon, and engages with SNAP participants out in the community to share their experiences, expertise, and needs.
- Indy Hunger Network - In 2020, Indy Hunger Network launched a new program called Community Compass, in partnership with the City of Indianapolis and Level Up Development. Community Compass is a multi-channel technology tool (available as an app, texting service, and website) that will allow people to quickly find the nearest food pantry, congregate meal site, or other food resource on their phone or computer, as well as determining eligibility for federal nutrition programs, including SNAP, WIC, senior meal programs, and summer meals. Community Compass expanded statewide in 2021.
- Montgomery County Food Council - The Montgomery County (MD) Food Security Plan is a five-year Strategic Plan created by the county government that envisions Montgomery County as a community in which all people at all times have access to safe, sufficient, nutritious food, with dignity. Introduced in 2017, the recommendations of the Food Security Plan are being implemented through Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Food Council and many other community stakeholders and agency

partners. The Montgomery County Food Council seeks to protect and improve the local environmental resources of Montgomery County related to agriculture and food, by collaborating with environmental stakeholders and policymakers to implement programs and policies that will promote sustainability in their food system.

- Texas Hunger Initiative - “Meals-to-You” began as a Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty pilot program in 2019 to provide nourishing, shelf-stable meals through the mail to families in rural areas across Texas. The unique Meals-to-You model led the U.S. Department of Agriculture to call on the Baylor’s assistance during the COVID-19 public health crisis. In partnership with the USDA, McLane Global and PepsiCo, the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty twice scaled the program nationally—now providing 5 million meals to rural schoolchildren in 38 states and Puerto Rico.
- Hall Hunger Initiative - HHI aims to strengthen vital nonprofits promoting food security and access in the Dayton area by providing micro grants to quickly and efficiently address needs and gaps. These grants are designed to provide build capacity for grass-roots projects aimed at reducing food insecurity.

Pillar 2: Integrate nutrition and health

It is essential that the conference live up to its Congressional mandate to examine the root causes of hunger and undernutrition, how they impact health and the prevalence of chronic disease, and how they can be addressed. According to The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the U.S. spends about [\\$3.5 trillion dollars \(18 percent of our nation’s GDP\) on healthcare spending](#), yet Americans die earlier and [face greater levels of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity](#) than almost every other peer country. Estimates on the cost of healthcare related to hunger nationwide is at a minimum of \$160 billion each year. Promising [research suggests](#) that for every dollar spent on feeding an individual who is food insecure or experiencing hunger, approximately \$50 is saved in Medicaid expenses. The relationship between eating well and good health is solidly acknowledged. With the growth of the obesity epidemic and other diet-related diseases, much of the attention on food consumption in America has focused on the volume, caloric density and fat content of food consumed, with good reason. What’s often missing in our discussion of good health and food consumption is the tragic level of hunger in America. In the richest nation on Earth, millions suffer the pangs of hunger and their health – and the health of the nation – suffers as a result.

Response to Question 2:

Expand and strengthen the federal nutrition programs to improve health and increase consumption of healthy foods.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- SNAP plays a critical role in preventing malnutrition and obesity. To fully realize SNAP’s potential for increasing consumption of healthy foods, SNAP’s minimum monthly benefit, which is currently only \$20 should be increased. Further, SNAP benefits should be based on a realistic cost of supporting a healthy diet without having to scratch cook every item. Under no circumstances should the recent recalculation of the Thrifty Food Plan be reversed nor seen as fully adequate to supporting a healthy diet.

- Expand the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) (formerly known as Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI)) to meet the growing demand for the program. [GusNIP stretches families' food budgets, incentivizes healthier options, and stimulates the economy and supports local and BIPOC farmers.](#) GusNIP increases the purchasing power of SNAP recipients when they buy healthy fruits and vegetables at participating grocery stores and farmers markets by leveraging financial incentives like discounts and coupons.
- SNAP benefits could adjust to reflect the variation in the cost of living and food prices in different areas of the country. [Evidence](#) suggests low-income households face higher costs when trying to access nutrition. Low-income and BIPOC are more likely than other groups of people to have limited access to supermarkets and other large grocery stores that offer a broad range of affordable and nutritious foods.
- Enable Tribal governments to administer all federal nutrition programs and allow Tribal organizations to expand Native-grown and culturally relevant food procurement options in federal nutrition programs.
- To increase the consumption of healthy foods, the focus should remain on providing enhanced SNAP benefits that can support the cost of buying fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods. Limiting food choice within the SNAP program will not lead to increased consumption of healthy foods.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):

- Increase WIC's fruit and vegetable benefits to at least the levels afforded during COVID-19. Since April 2021, more than 4.75 million women and children participating in WIC have received enhanced fruit and vegetable benefits in accordance with science-based recommendations. The temporary WIC benefit increase has already resulted in more than triple the amount of fruit and vegetable purchases, a greater variety of produce redeemed by WIC families, and increased fruit and vegetable consumption for young children. Further, the increased benefit amount has stimulated local economies by boosting purchases at retail grocery stores which in turn, supports American growers and producers.
- Promote better collaboration between WIC clinics and healthcare providers. WIC works best when partnering with healthcare providers. Additional steps to promote coordination between WIC and healthcare providers, including facilitating information-sharing, will more efficiently leverage WIC services to support stronger health outcomes without duplicating tests or services across providers.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- Permanently authorize and expand Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) nationwide. A [U.S.D.A. study found that monthly Summer EBT benefits](#) reduced food insecurity and improved nutrition among low-income children.
- Provide increased reimbursements for the SFSP to ensure more access to the program. When low-income children have better access to child nutrition programs, this can free up household resources to spend on other essential items, like food for the adults in the household. When students lose access to school meals during the summer months, not only are they less likely to have access to adequate nutrition, but their parents also have an even more limited budget to spend on food for themselves.

National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

- Provide breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students at school. Providing free school meals to all students and participating in school lunch in and of itself, [increases the percentage of students that fall within a](#)

[healthy weight range](#) and there is [no evidence that providing meals at no cost to students leads to incidence of obesity or being overweight](#).

- [A recent study found that school meals are some of the healthiest meals](#) that kids consume, even when compared to food bought at the grocery store highlighting the need to increase consumption of school meals among all children.
- Increase the reimbursements rates for the lunch and breakfast programs. When schools have more financial flexibility, they can provide healthier food options because they can secure more local foods, prepare more scratch cooked meals, and increase the variety of foods offered to students.
- Current school nutrition standards require that schools offer meals that are well rounded with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, while limiting calories, saturated fat and sodium. These rules have led to school meals being some of the healthiest meals that kids consume. Any changes or future school nutrition rules should prioritize scientific recommendations.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- Funding for TEFAP should be increased to increase the healthy foods available through the program. According to [Feeding America](#), TEFAP offers more than 120 nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, nuts, milk and cheese, and whole-grain and enriched grain products, including rice, cereal, and pasta. More funding will ensure more healthy foods will be provided to individuals finding themselves in need of emergency food programs.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program

- Increase funding for the OAA Nutrition Program. The program provides access to nutrition and to nutrition related disease prevention and health promotion services for seniors. Funding should be increased to meet the growing demand for the services provided through the program.

Response to Question 5:

- Community Food Advocates - Community Food Advocates is pushing for a cafeteria redesign program to be expanded to all 500 middle and high schools in New York City. Since 2017, the New York City Department of Education has improved the cafeteria experience in over 45 schools. This project, championed by Community Food Advocates, has resulted in a 20% increase in school lunch participation rates. According to the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food and Education Policy, students in these schools have more time to eat, are eating more healthily, and have more positive attitudes towards school lunch. By prioritizing students' nutritional wellbeing and developmental health, they can have more energy and focus during school. Cafeteria redesigns have also led to more students eating on-site as opposed to going off campus.
- Hunger Free Oklahoma - Double Up Oklahoma, a program of Hunger Free Oklahoma, doubles the value of SNAP dollars spent at participating farmers markets and grocery stores in the state.

Section Two: Recommendations from Convening Partners

DoorDash

Pillar 1: Improve Food Access and Affordability

Response to Question 2:

The U.S. federal government should evaluate opportunities to create a sustainable policy landscape that supports innovation in food assistance programs – including public-private partnerships – so that they are more accessible to those in need. We believe these opportunities are particularly apparent when it comes to local delivery of charitable food.

About Local Delivery of Charitable Food

The COVID-19 pandemic brought America’s hunger crisis to the forefront while exacerbating the various barriers to food access that exist for far too many families. In response, organizations providing food assistance stood up new, innovative service models to get meals to those in need. One of those models was local delivery of charitable food.

Many of the barriers to accessing charitable food stem from people traditionally being required to travel to a food bank or food pantry to obtain assistance. This means that issues like unreliable transportation or a disability, or even scheduling challenges created by work or childcare commitments can come between families in need and the food they need. Local delivery eliminates these barriers.

In the local delivery model, charitable food is delivered from a food bank, food pantry, or other community organization directly to a recipient’s home, often utilizing a third party. Although expanded use of local delivery was in response to the challenges of the pandemic, the model can be a long-term solution to help end hunger by overcoming common barriers to food access – like unreliable or unaffordable transportation, disability, or other challenges – by ensuring food gets to those in need where they are already located.

Local delivery also emphasizes dignity and reduces the likelihood that stigma associated with accessing charitable food will prevent people from seeking food assistance by allowing them to receive food in the same way that any other family may choose to do so. And, even for people who do not face these specific food access challenges, local delivery allows recipients to care for loved ones, pursue educational credentials, work more hours to save for financial goals, or otherwise maximize their productivity.

Barriers and Opportunities

As with any program or model, local delivery cannot be part of a national strategy to end hunger without supportive public policies. Funding and regulatory restraints are two areas that present barriers to expanding local delivery to meet the potential need, but also significant opportunities for policy change.

Funding

Local delivery programs, like any other service, require food banks, food pantries, and other community organizations to have sufficient resources. Recognizing the sudden, heightened need during the pandemic, increased government aid was made available to ensure that food banks could continue to serve their clients. Food banks were able to expand their capacity through robust funding for services, hiring additional staff, and volunteerism. Now, food banks across the country face substantial decreases in funding as pandemic response funds are exhausted. There is a significant role for public-private partnerships to advance local delivery of

charitable food, but these partnerships alone cannot meet the vast needs of those who would benefit from a local delivery program.

Continued, increased local, state, and federal resources will help food banks and food pantries hire or retain essential staff, make infrastructure investments, conduct client outreach, and establish and enhance programs like local delivery that can ensure that every family has access to the food they need. These resources include fungible funds that allow organizations to direct investments to their most critical needs as well as program-specific administrative funds and commodities through programs like the federal Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Robust resources are particularly important in order to expand services to meet the food and nutrition needs of those in rural, hard-to-reach communities.

Local delivery should be considered as Congress weighs authorizing and funding demonstration pilots or grant programs to evaluate the potential of alternative approaches to food assistance. Doing so would provide opportunities for new food banks or community organizations to initiate local delivery for their clients and for organizations to expand the scope of existing delivery programs to new populations or new communities. Demonstration pilots would also allow the federal government to better evaluate the positive impact of local delivery on food insecure families and how delivery could be implemented as part of a national anti-hunger strategy.

Regulatory Restraints

Local delivery is an innovative approach to food access, and can also serve as a complement to existing food assistance programs. But, long-standing assistance programs may not have been designed in anticipation of food being delivered to an individual's home or vary significantly across states. Federal programs like TEFAP and CSFP are good examples. There are many differences between regulations for these programs from state to state. Differences include, but are not limited to, whether a state requires a signature upon home delivery, whether signatures must be maintained, whether food can be left at a recipient's door, and whether a state allows recipients to designate "proxies" who can receive food on behalf of the program recipients. Similar regulatory barriers exist for the child nutrition programs like the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) – where meals are traditionally required to be served in a congregate setting and eaten on-site. Some of these regulations may be a barrier to efficiently scaling local delivery, especially where the delivery infrastructure is provided by a third party. The challenges created by these regulations may be heightened due to their patchwork status across jurisdictions.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, federal and state agencies authorized food assistance programs to operate with unique amounts of flexibility. Based on the learnings from these operations, federal and state regulators should assess whether certain flexibilities should be maintained or expanded and whether certain requirements should be adjusted to reflect new ways of food distribution, including through local delivery.

Response to Question 3:

See above and below. With respect to local delivery and as discussed in the previous answer, the two big opportunities for state and local governments related to actions to increase funding for organizations providing charitable food assistance and addressing regulatory barriers. Specifically, additional state and local resources will help food banks and food pantries hire or retain essential staff, make infrastructure investments, conduct client outreach, and establish and enhance programs like local delivery that can ensure that every family has access to the food they need. State regulators should also assess whether certain flexibilities for food assistance

operations should be maintained or expanded and whether certain requirements should be adjusted to reflect new ways of food distribution, including through local delivery.

Response to Question 4:

See above and below. Private companies and nonprofit organizations and governments should find ways to partner in order to incorporate private sector innovations with food assistance programs. Project DASH – discussed in greater detail in the following Q&A – is a good example of this work being done throughout communities.

Response to Question 5:

See above. One example of local delivery of charitable food successfully being used throughout the county is DoorDash’s Project DASH. Launched by DoorDash in 2018, Project DASH uses the DoorDash platform, in partnership with government and nonprofit partners, to increase access to food and other essential items across communities. Using the same technology available to DoorDash’s restaurant and merchant partners, food banks and other organizations are able to request pickup and delivery by Dashers to fulfill these deliveries to people experiencing food insecurity and other clients in their respective local communities. Items being delivered have ranged from food boxes, prepared meals, school supplies, home essentials, mental health kits, and even holiday items. Since the start of the program, Project DASH has powered more than 2 million deliveries including food equivalent to more than an estimated 33 million meals.

[March of Dimes](#)

Pillar 1: Improve Food Access and Affordability

Response to Question 1:

There are programs such as WIC that have helped address these issues for birthing persons and infants that need continued funding.

- WIC reduces fetal deaths and infant mortality.
- WIC reduces low birthweight rates and increases the duration of pregnancy.
- WIC improves the growth of nutritionally at-risk infants and children.
- WIC decreases the incidence of iron deficiency anemia in children.
- WIC improves the dietary intake of pregnant and postpartum women and improves weight gain in pregnant women.
- Pregnant women participating in WIC receive prenatal care earlier.
- Children enrolled in WIC are more likely to have a regular source of medical care and have more up to date immunizations.
- WIC helps get children ready to start school: children who receive WIC benefits demonstrate improved intellectual development.
- WIC significantly improves children’s diets.

And without these programs, the access to needed nourishment for these communities is significant and without it the health of birthing persons and infants declines leading to:

- Our nation is in the midst of a maternal and infant crisis.

- Nearly every measure of the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and infants living in the U.S. is going in the wrong direction. In many communities, infant mortality rates exceed those in developing nations. Approximately every 12 hours, a woman dies due to pregnancy-related complications.
- This startling increase comes after nearly a decade of decline. As you might expect, the worsening national picture does not signal good news in individual states. Between 2018 and 2019, preterm birth rates worsened in 38 states. One in every 10 babies are born preterm, which can lead to life-long health problems and, in the most tragic cases, a baby's death.
- In addition, racial disparities exist across the U.S., and Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Black babies are born premature at a rate surpassing their White peers. In fact, the preterm birth rate among Black women is 50 percent higher than the rate among all other women-combined.

Response to Question 2:

- Qualifying moms should have access to services that support their postpartum needs both mentally, physically, and nutritionally.
- Increases in fruit and vegetable allotments as part of the American Rescue Plan Act should be maintained.
- Also, Congress should maintain their commitment to prioritizing postpartum needs and pass the WIC Act.

Response to Question 4:

- Foster an environment for public private partnerships to deliver innovative solutions such as quality improvement projects in health systems, community gardens in clinical settings, transportation navigation co-located with prenatal care clinics.
- Collaboration and coordination so that philanthropy can fill gaps public funding cannot.

Nuro

Pillar 1: Improve food access and affordability

Response to Question 1:

Modernize federal vehicle regulations that make it more difficult to use innovative technology to end hunger.

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) used for local delivery can help to improve food access for Americans living in low-income, low-access areas with limited transportation options. However, the U.S. Department of Transportation's regulations have never contemplated how this new technology could help address hunger.

AVs designed exclusively for local delivery of goods like groceries or prescriptions, known as zero-occupant vehicles (ZOVs), can democratize access to affordable home delivery for Americans living in food deserts. Out of the approximately 20 million low-income Americans living in food deserts, delivery AVs can improve food access for an estimated [14 million \(70%\)](#) of this population, if permitted to travel at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) should continue its work to revise outdated federal vehicle regulations that did not contemplate ZOVs when they were originally written. NHTSA recently took a significant step by updating federal motor vehicle safety standards (FMVSS) pertaining to occupant protection. As a next step, NHTSA should prioritize the modernization of FMVSS pertaining to manual controls, which serve no purpose in a ZOV that does not have a human driver.

Response to Question 4:

Autonomous delivery can help to expand the capacity and reach of food banks. The pandemic led to a significant increase in food insecurity, increasing the demands on food banks while also reducing the availability of volunteers. Nuro partnered with [Houston Food Bank](#), Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, and Waste Not Greater Phoenix to provide thousands of home deliveries of food with its autonomous vehicles (AVs). These deliveries helped hungry families to access much-needed food assistance regardless of their ability to access a vehicle, while also reducing the risk of virus transmission for volunteers and recipients. AVs were also used to provide contactless delivery of medical supplies and meals to healthcare workers and patients at [emergency treatment centers](#) for COVID-19 patients in California.

Future rulemakings by the Department of Transportation on AVs should consider the benefits of autonomous delivery for improving goods transportation for charitable purposes.

Autonomous delivery can improve food access for people with disabilities. An estimated [61 million adults](#) in the U.S. live with a disability, and 22% of households with an adult who receive federal or state disability benefits are food insecure. Shopping for goods can present significant transportation challenges for many people with disabilities, who often must rely on local paratransit services to reach the grocery store. Autonomous delivery can provide a convenient and affordable option for paratransit customers to receive home delivery of groceries and medicine.

Nuro recently [partnered](#) with Houston MetroLIFT to provide free delivery of groceries from Kroger with its autonomous vehicles to paratransit customers in Houston. The federal government should modernize federal vehicle standards to reduce barriers to the broader deployment of delivery AVs and support further pilot programs that can reduce food insecurity for people with disabilities.

Souper Bowl of Caring

Souper Bowl of Caring, as a Convening Partner to the Alliance to End Hunger, recommends these priorities and suggestions that should be considered based on experience of local food charities and schools that work with us.

Pillar 1: Improve food access and affordability

Response to Question 2:

- Change the threshold for the income guidelines, especially for the SNAP programs. Consider the cost of living per person in the household when determining eligibility criteria, including the cost of living in various parts of the country. For example, someone who lives on a fixed income and might be disabled is only eligible for \$20/month on CalFresh. With rent being so high right now, but variable across the country, that means people in CA or NY can't access basic food support the same way as someone in KS or OK.
- Consider investing in NGOs who are providing technology in a national food locator map that is maintained and includes all food charities (those that are part of the Feeding America network and those who choose or geographically are independent that network). Allow food charities to indicate their ability to meet current needs and use this data to help state/local municipalities provide resources and funding to any food charity having difficulty meeting the needs of residents. This database should be funded and built with conditions that it is shared and used across all NGOs, so food charities only need to update their information one time to change status/hours/criteria for getting help at that location. ([map.tacklehunger.org](#) is working on this and is already working with many other NGOs and

sharing data.) This data can be used to determine specific geographies with higher risks for food insecurity (i.e., no grocery store access, no food charity, low socio-economic status) in order for changes to be made to provide resources to those vulnerable populations.

- Consider offering more annually renewable resources/grants to smaller independent food providers who help protect vulnerable communities especially where the centralized system of food charities (FA) is not available. Consider using technological means to prove proper usage of the funds instead of asking for specific personal information from those who receive food (which can be the reason some food charities do not want access federal funds and work with FA). Also, one charity mentioned, “Larger resources like to distribute to larger NGO's but food charities that are on the street literally feeding every day have increased needs with no ability to get broader support (outside their local donations) to get neighbors fed.”
- If the government is going to outsource its ability to feed those who can't easily afford food to nonprofits/ grassroots orgs, then it should not only support the direct costs of food, but also staff and infrastructure like technology and the cost of personnel. Otherwise, as food security organizations grow to feed more people, the orgs are losing money and going out of business, because their overhead doesn't scale with their direct costs.
- Public schools who offer basic needs resources (i.e., a food pantry) to families in their community should have access to easily renewable grants to help support that program. Schools are geographically convenient to families in need. Access to food is proven to increase attendance, academic performance, communication between school and parents, and trust. Schools can also provide invaluable information to parents who need additional support through federal SNAP and WIC programs, but are there with help immediately and consistently if needed.
- Advertise federal programs where people who need them will get the information. Specifically, advertising at schools, near grocery stores, current food charities, and senior and community centers. Provide resources to those places to be able to help those with questions about these programs.

Response to Question 3:

- One maintained food locator, likely connected to a national map, where food charities can interact with ONE database to change their status AND their information (hours, etc.) that is shared to whomever needs it. This allows state and local authorities to see if a charity is at risk of turning people away and provide support as needed. In addition, when all food charities are in one database, AI can be used to determine where specific vulnerabilities lie based on demographics, lack of nutritious grocery stores and/or existence of only dollar stores to assist in providing more nutritious options.
- Opportunity for public/private partnerships in creating and maintaining database with map of any place that is providing food to those in need where not only can clients be served better with more accuracy, but people with the means can donate to those charities directly and/or volunteer to help. An NGO can maintain the database and collect and distribute donations as requested by the donors themselves based on their geography and wishes for distribution. (map.tacklehunger.org is already doing this)
- Provide schools with easily renewable grant opportunities, if they wish to provide basic needs (food, toiletries, school supplies, etc.) resources to families in need at their school. These programs have proven to be highly effective at increasing school performance, attendance, communication between home and school and trust. Do not require schools to share personal information about families who have required assistance or ask for documentation of effectiveness. Requiring this information causes some families to not get the help they need.

Pillar 2: Integrate nutrition and health

Response to Question 2:

- Use national food charity maps to assist social workers in public hospital systems to provide “healthy food prescriptions” at local food charities that can handle the client. Again, avoiding sending vulnerable people to charities that don’t have products the client needs, which adds to the frustration and fragility of the ill patient. map.tacklehunger.org asks food charities to report their status to be able to serve clients in need in real time.
- Provide educational curriculum for social workers to use so that they can offer an educational component to support a client’s need to create new habits of better nutrition as a part of overall good health. Consider limitations of those on fixed income (no kitchen or limited equipment to cook, disabilities, ability to physically get to where nutritious foods are available).
- Provide resources/grants to programs where public hospitals provide counseling services to those who are chronically ill and living on fixed income where nutrition can make a significant difference. Counseling should offer the awareness of and inclusion in programs at the hospital or a convenient location near the hospital where these clients can learn how to change their behaviors to be on a healthier track (bringing in resources weekly through mobile pantry programs, etc.)
- School meal programs need to be determined and run through local school districts. Federal guidelines requiring levels of nutrition (i.e., the amount of salt that can be in one meal) need to be balanced by what students will eat and what is nutritious. Allow nutritionists to determine school meal programs and portion sizes (17-year-old student meals should not be the same portion size as kindergarten meals) in order to ensure proper nutrition and healthy development for all students and eliminate the waste that is occurring because students do not like the food they are eating.
- Basic school meals, with proper portion sizes for the age of the children, should be provided for all public-school children.

Pillar 3: Empower healthy choices

Response to Question 2:

- Provide educational curriculum that can be used on specifically vulnerable communities through social workers and school programs teaching healthy eating and basic cooking skills
- Provide recipes that prioritize nutrition while using economically accessible food products and access to limited or no kitchen resources (i.e., eating healthy on the cheap) in grocery stores and food charities
- Provide food that is tasty and in acceptable portions to students at all levels of public schooling, no “one size fits all” portion sizes that mean 5-year-olds get the same portion as high school senior athletes, with campaigns encouraging healthy choices.

Section Three: Recommendations from Listening Session Participants

[In this section, specific quotes from listening session participants (unattributed) will appear with quotation marks. Otherwise, recommendations may be paraphrased. Recommendations will appear once, even though the same or similar recommendations may have come up more than once in the discussion or across breakout rooms.]

Recommendations from Hunger Free Communities Network™ Advisory Council

- “Poverty should be the 6th pillar at the White House Conference.”
 - Root cause of hunger
 - Address the social determinants of health that affect our safety, mental health, and well-being as well as racial and economic disparities
 - “People are not broken, the system is.”
- “Shift the power to the experts with lived expertise because they are the ones who have the insight into the community, and the impact of government policies and program processes.”
 - Everyone wants financial freedom and to not compromise their own boundaries, privacy, and dignity by sharing their lived experiences to expose the disparities that exist in marginalized communities (just to be ignored in the end)
 - Have a team of consultants with lived expertise included in the planning of the White House conference, directly in the room with the decision-makers. Have them review the information submitted to the White House to ensure equity by incorporating the true voices, suggestions, and input that have been excluded by society
 - “People with lived experience don’t just have stories to share, they have ideas and policy recommendations.”
- Expand SNAP, WIC, free and reduced lunch, and other nutrition assistance programs
 - Update and raise the federal poverty guidelines used to measure and determine eligibility to reflect the world that we live in today which includes inflation and the cost of living rising every year
 - Federal government and the USDA should work to change the way income and expenses are analyzed and calculated to reflect the true expenses families face, including all household bills and accurate amounts as deductions
 - Expand choices under SNAP. “There shouldn't be any food policing.”
 - Limited choices hurt those with dietary restrictions
 - Incentives are unnecessary and actually insulting
 - Have never thought “if someone could just control my diet.”
 - Paternalistic, culturally insensitive, and racist to tell people what they can and cannot consume. Should have more dignified approach.

- Food insecurity is not about being able to make healthy decisions or lacking awareness of which foods are good or bad for you - it's about knowing where your next meal is coming from. "Trust SNAP recipients to make health-conscious decisions."
- Keep Covid-19 assistance programs
 - Pandemic EBT enabled people to pay other expenses, expanded food options/ to try new healthy recipes
- More education needed re: application process
 - Most people don't know how to access services until they're in crisis (and still don't know what to do)
 - It should be required in every school district to understand requirements and process to applying to nutrition programs
 - If you don't need it, someone else might
- A successful program to expand: Idaho - Rx for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables. Get referral from doctor for healthy foods. Evidence that this program works (recipients report lower A1C levels, children eating healthier)
- Address Titles 1 and 2 in Farm Bill – "Why are we only insuring 5 commodity crops across US?"
 - Very few control food chain - that needs to change
 - We can redistribute existing dollars across value chains to support entire system
 - We're missing the opportunity to reinvest in rural and local communities
 - Invest money into regional food systems, support small and medium businesses, uplift farm workers as farm owners
 - Proposal: Community food utility - Each county employs farmers (provide health insurance), ensure safety, invest in land

Recommendations from Listening Session Participants

Pillar 1: Improve food access and affordability

Response to Question 2:

- Involve people with lived experience in the policymaking process by having a team of consultants with lived expertise included in the planning of the White House conference
- Policies need to have a racial equity lens applied to them
- Establish a federal entity dedicated to ending hunger - Need for a central government agency to coordinate national efforts to end hunger
 - National database for people to be able to access food - Support data coordination. Communities must work together to effectively identify, implement, and evaluate hunger interventions. Government support needed to coordinate these efforts at local, state, and federal levels.

- Expand critical nutrition assistance programs introduced during COVID-19, such as free school lunches, summer meals, increase in SNAP benefits, WIC waivers, and other food assistance efforts
- Simplify process of applying/re-certifying to nutrition assistance programs
 - Recipients should be able to stay enrolled for a long time/shouldn't have to re-prove themselves. "Government should be treating people as if they deserve food, not as if they must prove they need it." "Having to reapply every 6 months is a significant barrier."
 - Eliminate state-by-state requirements since tribal communities extend beyond state borders
 - SNAP should not be an income-based program/income guidelines don't reflect cost of living
 - Common problem: Families make too much money but still don't have enough to eat. "Minimum threshold needs to be high enough where people can accept work and accept a raise and not choose between the raise and feeding the family."
 - Address rising costs of living - provide livable wages, make real-time adjustments to SNAP benefit amount to account for inflation and rising cost-of-living
 - Deductibles for SNAP should be revisited - rent, inflation, and internet should all be considered as part of someone's income
 - Provide more education re: application process for nutrition assistance programs
 - Including information in multiple languages
 - Address stigmas and misconceptions (for example, public charge)
 - Ensure that every eligible family is aware of food assistance programs available to them. For example: when a child is enrolled in school, the family should receive information about all of the nutritional assistance programs available to them
- Expand nutrition assistance programs' eligibility requirements for college students, formerly incarcerated people, recent immigrants and refugees, tribal communities, veterans, those in foster care, and farm workers. "If you are a veteran below a certain income, food access benefits should be advertised to you at the VA."
- Allow for SNAP benefits to be used on prepared meals and at restaurants. There should be "dignity of choice."
- Free and Reduced School Meals program should be set at 250% of the poverty line
- Single system of Medicaid & SNAP - Share data across systems
 - Individuals and families shouldn't have to apply to multiple programs (triggering process)
 - How can we make applications as accessible as possible?
- Shift funding towards small scale, localized farming - A disproportionate amount of money goes to the commodities that benefit people with large acreage of mono crops because they get the bulk of the federal funding in the Farm Bill. Farmers who are feeding people with diverse crops get almost nothing because there's very little funding.
 - Will strengthen local and regional food systems

Response to Question 3:

- Provide incentives to bring healthy food options (farmers markets, healthy grocery stores) to food deserts
- Subsidies for grocery stores to come to food deserts/stay in food deserts
- Provide incentives to retailers to donate/redistribute excess food to address hunger and reduce food waste

- Corporate partners should donate excess food to local food banks, schools, and hungry families
- Subsidize small farms with focus on BIPOC farmers
- Hospitals and public libraries should share information re: food assistance programs
- Conduct outreach for those who lack internet access
- Certify halal foods in K-12 and college settings

Response to Question 4:

- Partnerships between food banks/grocery stores and food delivery services (such as DoorDash, Instacart, and Walmart) for home deliveries, especially for seniors
 - Need funding
 - Expand radius to reach those in food deserts
 - Provide culturally sensitive food
- Increase in stores that accept SNAP payments online

Response to Question 5:

- Mandatory food donation policies in California
- “San Diego’s CalFresh Program is a great example of public private partnership.” California just signed into law an expansion of CalFresh (SNAP) to undocumented older adults.
- Food Forward’s model - Provides surplus fresh produce to hunger relief organizations
- Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (since 2010) - Community free meals provision
- Students who participate in these programs have better nutritional intake, perform better academically, etc.
- Grab n Go Meals and Parent Pick-Up (since 2020)
- Donors doing what was previously impossible (without government funding)
- Eliminates cost barriers
- Double Up Food Bucks - Allows for twice as much in purchases at farmers markets and grocery stores, including fruits and vegetables. “Provides healthier food options.”
- United Food Bank manages a subsidiary called WasteNot - Rescues over 9M pounds of food from grocery stores and prepared foods. Also have an app called Meal Connect where people can post donations of prepared food and get matched with a volunteer that picks it up and delivers it to agencies
- Data coordination to connect resources from grocery stores to volunteers for food distribution

- Nourish New York - State funded the emergency food system to purchase New York State grown product, like meat, dairy, and produce
- Invest in local produce, local farmers

Pillar 2: Integrate nutrition and health

Response to Question 2:

- More funding and easier access to mental health services. "Poverty/hunger is trauma."
- It is mandatory that we ask people at the doctor's office if they have domestic violence issues or depression. We should be doing this with SNAP and hunger.
- Farm to food bank, farm to school, farm to hospital programs need government support/funding
- Children's nutrition programs, especially summer programs, need government support/funding
- Government-funded community gardens

Response to Question 3:

- Strong linkage and referral system between and throughout hospital systems, primary care systems, and community programs that can help with nutrition resources
 - Referral access line for people who get sent home from the hospital
 - Hospitals should provide malnourishment screenings. "Medical providers should be informed about role of hunger/nutrition in health."
 - Cheaper to invest in food than in pharmaceuticals and other hospital expenses... Will save money on Medicare and Medicaid costs

Response to Question 5:

- Food for Change - Program for produce prescriptions written by doctors
- App called Tangelo - Someone who has a particular health condition, it creates incentives for them to make behavioral choices and access healthy foods locally while integrating SNAP and other programs. It's a for-profit app.

Pillar 3: Empower healthy choices

Response to Question 2:

- Allow for SNAP benefits to be used on prepared meals and at restaurants

Response to Question 3:

- Sustainable funding from Medicaid to integrate a continuum of food as medicine programs from veggie RX program to medically tailored groceries, as well as at home delivery options for people who have transportation barrier. Should be available in all states
- Food banks need to provide culturally relevant food
 - If we give people the food they actually want to eat, it will decrease chance of waste while also tackling hunger
 - Will improve health conditions
- More funding for mobile pantries
 - Will help reach those with transportation issues

Response to Question 5:

- Partnerships with food banks and public libraries for educational outreach, free nutrition and cooking classes
- Texas A&M to start a minor in food diversity, only degree in the country that focuses on that
- Increase educational opportunities to learn about food policies, nutrition, etc
- Investing in research around local food cultures/systems is needed to optimize access to food and nutrition for all Americans
- Massachusetts Healthy Incentives Program - \$40-80 of fresh fruits and vegetables grown in Massachusetts per month.
- You go to a HIP eligible vendor, use SNAP card, \$10 goes off of the SNAP card but there is an instant rebate of \$10. Essentially doubles those SNAP dollars, and \$10 spent goes right to MA farmers.
- Milwaukee Upstart Kitchen – Provides chefs the opportunity to teach people how to cook in commercial kitchens
- Arizona Food Bank Network - Friends of the Farm. Bought locally grown food directly from farmers using federal funds distributed in Arizona
- Allowed food banks to have fresh produce and a variety of fruits and vegetables that normally aren't seen in food boxes
- Too Good to Go program – Offering to purchase food at nominal fee, 10-20% what would normally cost
- Whole Foods in Detroit - Used to have free classes on nutrition
- Good Food Purchasing Program - Value based procurement
 - Forces providers to be meeting certain nutritional and wage standards
- Client Choice Food Programs – “Trust communities and their organizations to share the right foods for them.”
- Brighter Bites (Houston, TX) - Works with local schools. Cooking classes. People who sign up will receive a 50 lb bag of produce
 - They teamed up with Cisco and they provide all of the produce