

JUSTICE
COMPASSION
priorities responsibility
security DIGNITY
EQUITY
food
community
nutrition
health
VALUES



San Francisco Food Security
2022 RECOMMENDATIONS



San Francisco Food Security Task Force 2022 RECOMMENDATIONS

87%

**SINGLE PARENT
HOUSEHOLDS
SURVEYED ARE
EXPERIENCING
FOOD INSECURITY**



THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

THE FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE (FSTF) was established by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and charged with making recommendations to the City to improve food security. The FSTF consists of representatives from community-based organizations, collaborative partnerships, city departments and, SFUSD. The FSTF meets monthly and includes many members of the public joining to collaboratively address the food needs of San Francisco. The 2022 Recommendations were based on issues and priorities identified in FSTF meetings (presentations, public comment, reports) and through a survey of FSTF members and community stakeholders requesting input on food security services/resources, barriers, opportunities, and what can be done to promote equity and address systemic racism in regards to food insecurity in San Francisco.

PRIOR TO COVID-19, one in four San Franciscans were at risk for hunger due to low income. With COVID-19, lack of food hit crisis levels, with many organizations and individuals becoming involved in food work. This has shifted the community food landscape in San Francisco to include new organizations that started during the pandemic, as well as community organizations that began new food programs in response to community needs. As the pandemic continues, our communities are still experiencing COVID-19 related challenges including reduced incomes, high food costs, and reduced transportation options.

The FSTF heard many presentations in 2021 from community-based organizations regarding the food needs of their clients which continue to remain very high for all groups, especially for families with children. In California, Hispanic households, multiethnic households, and Black/African American households experience the highest rates of food insecurity. In addition to these groups, in San Francisco many Asian households are also experiencing food insecurity. The financial cliff faced by many lower-income families with the expiration of the Child Tax Credit is alarming. These payments have lowered childhood hunger across the country, but unfortunately, with the program having expired in December 2020, we anticipate childhood hunger to once again rise.

In a survey conducted by the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank in 2021 of their participants, they found that 80% of the respondents were experiencing food insecurity. Households with children, and especially single-parent households, had the highest rates of food insecurity (87%). Half (50%) of respondents had not used food programs prior to the pandemic, 61% said someone in their household had lost their job or earned less money because of COVID-19, and 81% reported that their household had not recovered from this financial loss. In addition, a separate food security assessment conducted by Conard House (a permanent supportive housing provider) found that among their residents, 66% report they do not have enough money to buy food each month.



SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, the number of San Francisco residents on CalFresh has increased by 40%, the number of Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants increased by 21%, and the number of congregate meals provided to seniors and adults with disabilities through the Department of Aging and Disability Services has increased by 45%. Additionally, in the last fiscal year, the San Francisco-Marín Food Bank has increased the amount of food distributed by 67%.

Food insecurity caused by the pandemic was associated with an increased risk of mental illness. A recent study examining the association between food insecurity and mental health during the pandemic showed that food insecurity is associated with a 257% higher risk of anxiety and a 253% higher risk of depression. Comparatively, the study found that losing a job during the pandemic is associated with a 32% increase in risk for anxiety and a 27% increase in risk for depression. ([Fang et al. 2021](#))

As the world continues to grapple with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that maintaining and expanding community food initiatives directly supports San Francisco's recovery. **To meet this need, San Francisco must commit to sustaining critical food programs that communities with the highest needs rely on.** These investments will reap immediate as well as long-term health and economic benefits.

The breakdown in our local, regional, and national food system was amplified by the pandemic; and this has renewed the call for a more holistic approach to food in San Francisco that takes a whole-system perspective grounded in health equity, racial justice, environmental sustainability, and economic justice led by the communities impacted.

ADVANCING FOOD JUSTICE

IN OUR 2018 ASSESSMENT, the FSTF called for "ensuring that policies related to food systems prioritize principles of food justice. Food justice

40% THE NUMBER OF SAN FRANCISCO RESIDENTS ON CALFRESH HAS INCREASED BY



supports communities having power over resources, as well as ownership over decision-making, and promotes growth, selling, and eating healthy food that is affordable, fresh, nutritious, culturally appropriate and, grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals."

The San Francisco Office of Racial Equity has offered that food sovereignty should be the policy goal of San Francisco: "Food Sovereignty movement envisions a food system that is inclusive, community-led and participatory, without the exploitation of people, land, or the environment. It identifies and acts to remove the significant structural inequities that exist within our food and economic systems. This means establishing healthy, resilient communities with equitable access to nourishing and culturally appropriate food, and, control over their means of production."

THE FSTF BELIEVES that food insecurity is a result of many converging factors (structural racism, low wages, high cost of living, lack of affordable housing, among others) and it must be addressed through this broader perspective. We must address the crisis of food insecurity while building a food system that advances values of food justice and food sovereignty. We must also join forces and support initiatives that increase racial and economic justice to address the root causes of hunger.



IDENTIFIED NEEDS

- Maintain adequate community resources to include new programming/innovations
- Increased multi-year city investment, grants, and funding for food supports
- Adequate (and equitable) funding for food supports (nonprofit, private sector, new contracts, existing contracts, among others)
- Healthy, culturally relevant, and quality food
- Continued flexibility and loosening of requirements that made it easier for individuals to utilize services and organizations to provide services (e.g., Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) food sent home with family)
- Neighborhood food hubs (such as in the Mission) and grocery services, especially those that focus on culturally relevant food items
- Support for smaller and local organizations that can respond to the unique needs of their community
- Meal and grocery delivery
- Takeaway/ready-made meals -- especially continuing this flexibility for congregate meal programs
- Meals prepared by restaurants, especially small businesses
- Investments in food programs linked directly to housing, such as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) and Shelter-In-Place (SIP) hotels
- Connections between healthcare and food security
- Food vouchers, gift cards
- Pop-up food pantries

OPPORTUNITIES

- Basic Guaranteed Income/Grants to Individuals
- Create and institutionalize an Office of Food Policy with a mandate beyond just ending hunger (using a whole food system approach)
- Housing and food connections
- Solutions that meet specific community needs, including multiple interventions and interventions that cover the whole family
- CalFresh outreach strategies, especially to students, non-English speakers, and seniors
- Healthy retail/corner stores
- Better coordinated food support and eliminate silos (also break down the barriers between "traditional" providers and "new" providers)
- Urban food production
- Good food procurement policies
- Food justice - involves relationships among farmers, retailers, restaurants, food providers, and the community

THE BARRIERS

There are multiple and complex barriers The City of San Francisco faces in tackling food insecurity for its residents, individuals, and families.



ECONOMIC TRAUMA

- A persistent and systemic racial wealth gap
- Income inequality and instability
- High cost of living
- Lack of affordable and safe housing
- Unemployment and under-employment (lack of living-wage jobs with benefits)
- Limited access to cooking space and equipment

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

- Inadequate information available about food support in the community
- Inadequate access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant quality food in some neighborhoods
- A lack of reliable and safe public transportation
- Perceived stigma and feelings of shame
- Fear and distrust of the government

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES (SUPPORT)

- Unclear (confusing) eligibility requirements
- Time intensive and arduous application (enrollment) process
- Insufficient culturally- and linguistically competent services
- Rigid programmatic requirements for community partners
- Inflexible service provision (e.g., Food available during a brief window of time, only available to narrow criteria of participants, among others)
- Lack of dignity and feelings of stigma when accessing services
- Fear of accessing public services due to immigration status
- Lack of training around technology and how to access services

CURRENT FUNDING STRUCTURE

- An inconsistent commitment to address food insecurity citywide and adequately fund a comprehensive approach
- Fluctuating annual fund levels that have been consistently insufficient to effectively meet the demand
- Lack of coordination between City departments
- Under-resourced and strained community partners

FOOD POLICY COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Increase FSTF resources, funding, and Department of Public Health (DPH) staffing to at least 1 FTE to ensure it can effectively respond to community needs.
- Establish a centralized food policy office in City government that eliminates silos, is community-led/informed, and addresses root causes of food insecurity in San Francisco.
- Invest in neighborhood-level community-led food policy to support connectivity and collaboration among residents and community-based organizations (CBOs), and ensure community members are adequately compensated for their participation.
- Work with the community and the FSTF to create a new comprehensive and holistic food policy body led by communities most impacted that includes representatives from neighborhood-level food task forces.
- Ensure DPH fully staffs all necessary roles and responsibilities to complete the Biennial Food Security and Equity Report and coordinates with city departments, community organizations, and the FSTF to collect and aggregate food program data, identify gaps, and create a city-wide implementation plan on food.
- DPH and SF Environment must ensure San Francisco's implementation of SB. 1383 does not result in communities receiving expired food, food that is not culturally relevant, or food that is not appropriately labeled (i.e., ingredients and allergens).
- Utilize special revenue funding (i.e., Prop C – child care infrastructure, Prop C – homeless services) to address the food and nutrition needs for these groups.
- Connect local healthcare to food security: Encourage the SF Health Plan to adopt the full spectrum of medically supportive food interventions available under California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM).

FUNDING/RESOURCES

- Fund direct cash benefits, universal basic income, and other initiatives to provide households with adequate financial support.
- Ensure adequate, equitable, and ongoing funding for food supports (nonprofit, private sector, new contracts, existing contracts).
- Increase city investments and commitment to long-term, institutionalized funding for food supports and coordination.
- Create a multi-year funding infrastructure that ensures transformational food solutions that promote the prosperity of historically neglected communities and that are grounded in and led by community wisdom that already exists.
- Develop strategies and structures for Requests For Proposals (RFP) that support greater coordination between large and small-scale programs.
- Encourage city agencies to collaborate and coordinate around funding to streamline processes for the community.
- Reduce the data collection burden on consumers and organizations.





SERVICES

- Identify underserved communities and improve/expand services in these neighborhoods.
- Eliminate transportation barriers to food access and invest in food/grocery delivery, investigate discounts on taxis and rideshares, and expand paratransit programs.
- Require and fund culturally relevant and quality food and service provision, including high-quality food, language capacity, dignified services, and choice.
- Fund smaller neighborhood organizations that can respond to the unique needs of their community.
- Sustain successful food interventions that arose in response to COVID-19 (such as food hubs, restaurant meals, pop-up pantries, grocery vouchers, delivery, take-out, among others).
- Provide funding for food programs that provide food for the entire household.
- To achieve equitable food security for residents in Supportive Housing and SROs, increase funding for HSH and DPH for on-site and off-site food programs including investments in 1) 24 hour access to prepared meals and groceries, 2) food vouchers, 3) heating/cooking and storage infrastructure in units and community rooms and 3) electrical capacity.
- Continue flexibility and loosening of requirements that streamlined service provision for city agencies/and community organizations to provide services (e.g., takeaway options at congregate sites, CACFP food sent home with family, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) area eligibility waivers, remote eligibility, expanded support to feed the whole household, Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) ability to move funds where needed, delivered food with CalFresh funds, etc).
- Increase outreach to Black/African American, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and American Indian communities to ensure they are aware of and can easily access the food support programs.
- Maintain and improve food referrals through an integrated and reliable food programming information and referral database available through 311 and the city website.
- Increase utilization of outdoor public spaces for food programs and urban agriculture.



STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

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CALFRESH

- Expand the Fruit and Vegetable Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Pilot to boost benefits for a greater number of CalFresh households.
- Address college student hunger by codifying the regulations issued by the Department of Social Services which sought to make CalFresh benefits more accessible to eligible college students.

SCHOOL MEALS

- Ensure full, permanent funding for Universal Free School Meals and for the additional infrastructure funds to support it.
- Adopt state-wide Community Eligibility Provision, maintain the non-congregate feeding waiver to continue serving students in non-traditional settings.
- Support creation of the Better Out of School Time (BOOST) Nutrition Program to prevent child hunger during school breaks or campus closures, and increase security and privacy protections for school income data collection.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

- Increase funding for compensation for the increased cost of food and food service for providers operating CACFP.
- Make permanent the policy to issue subsidy reimbursement based on program enrollment rather than attendance.

Photography: Fox Nakai



FEDERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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GENERAL

- Demand re-implementation and expansion of the Child Tax Credit and other poverty-mitigation programs established during COVID-19.

SCHOOL MEALS

- Continue Federal waivers for program flexibilities and the increased reimbursement rate for providers of school meals.

PANDEMIC - EBT (P-EBT)

- Continue to fund this new program.
- Add an option for additional cards to be passed out at the site level for students who are being suspended so that they can get meals during that time.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

- Support passage of S.1270 (Access to Healthy Foods for Young Children Act of 2021) to improve the reach of the food program through increases to the reimbursement for providers.
- Make permanent the CACFP waivers issued throughout the pandemic that made it easier for individuals to access services and organizations to provide services.
- Use the Consumer Price Index for Food Away from Home as the cost-of-living adjustment for family child care home CACFP reimbursement rates.
- Continue funding the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Team Nutrition CACFP nutrition education and program efforts.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN (WIC)

- Ensure that Child Nutrition Reauthorization includes changes outlined in marker bills (WIC Act, WIC for Kids Act, and Modern WIC Act):
 - Extend WIC to cover children up to age 6
 - Expand postpartum eligibility to 2 years
 - Extend certification periods
 - Streamline certification, removing the in-person requirement
- Extend funding for online shopping pilot and an increase in fruit and vegetable cash-value benefit.

Photography: Fox Nakai

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