

San Francisco Food Security Task Force - 2020 Food Security Recommendations
Working draft for discussion at the Food Security Task Force meeting on 8/5/20

The Food Security Task Force was established by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and charged with making recommendations to the City to improve food security. The task force requested input from members and community stakeholders on 1. Immediate threats to food security, 2, innovations to food security during the response to COVID19, and 3. Policy recommendations to improve food security. Below is a summary of immediate threats to food security, innovations that should be sustained, and recommendations to improve food security during these unprecedented times.

Background: Prior to COVID19, food security in San Francisco was a pressing and widespread issue impacting at least 1 in 4 San Franciscans and resulting in poor health, elevated stress, exacerbation of mental health conditions, and impairment to child development and academic achievement. Previous reports from the FSTF ([2018](#), [2019](#)) provide a list of San Francisco residents most vulnerable to food insecurity. The COVID19 pandemic has resulted in growing food insecurity across San Francisco. Many individuals and families are newly food insecure due to unprecedented unemployment, as well as the closure of organizations that previously offered food programs. The widespread impact of COVID19 has required immediate solutions to minimize hunger and support residents to safely shelter in place. Many food programs pivoted their models to support their clients, and innovative models emerged led by public agencies, community organizations, and newly formed spontaneous feeding groups. These efforts have played a key role in supporting vulnerable populations to shelter in place, and minimize the community transmission of COVID19.

With the current surge in cases of COVID19, we must be even more vigilant in sustaining support for vulnerable populations to shelter in place, including those most vulnerable to serious illness from COVID19 including communities experiencing health disparities, and structural racism with a focus on African American, Latinx, immigrants who are undocumented, people with disabilities, and people who are homeless. Additional, people living in congregate setting and in multigenerational households including many children are of concern, as well as low wage essential workers who have been heavily impacted by COVID19. Mayor Breed's budget includes \$45.7 million to support food security as part of the City's response to COVID19. This historic investment is critical, and the food security crisis in San Francisco will likely require additional public as well as private investment.

Immediate threats: The economic uncertainty along with heightened racial inequities exacerbate existing food insecurity. Below is a summary of some of the most immediate threats to food security.

- High rates of unemployment
- Budget cuts at the federal, state, and local level
- Lack of comprehensive federal COVID relief package
- Expiration of enhanced federal unemployment benefits and increasing lack of health insurance for the unemployed

- High cost of living combined with workers earning above the income threshold for federal nutrition benefits.
- Immigrants are often not eligible for federal benefits.
- Limited, short-term and unstable funding for food programs as cost increase and need grows exponentially;
- Closure of schools and child care increases food insecurity among children;
- Uncertainty about renewal of USDA waivers that have allowed SFUSD and DCYF to serve all children in San Francisco for free;
- Food service providers burnout;
- Suspension of Muni lines leave gaps in access to food businesses and programs;
- Anticipated loss of some locations of pop-up pantries.

Innovations that should be sustained: In the immediate response to COVID19, innovations in improved food security helped to mitigate widespread hunger and should be sustained and scaled to meet the need.

RESOURCES (ability to purchase food): direct cash benefits, gift cards, food vouchers, rapid enrollment for CalFresh/SNAP and WIC, Pandemic EBT

ACCESS (ability to obtain food safely and conveniently): Food programs for the entire household; culturally appropriate food; higher quality food; increased access points to pick up free groceries and meals; increased home delivery of meals and groceries; meals for unsheltered residents delivered to encampments; food for households isolating and quarantining; meals for medically vulnerable people without kitchens living in SROs.

CONSUMPTION (ability to prepare and store food): Programs that provided hybrid of groceries and prepared meals to meet food needs over time; localized, high quality and culturally appropriate food from neighborhood groups, restaurants; reduced frequency of delivery and pickup of food to eliminate unnecessary physical contact.

Recommendations: City needs a sustained commitment to end systemic racism and address structural barriers to health including food insecurity.

FEDERAL/STATE: Advocate for the extension of enhanced unemployment benefits, and for federal/state waivers for existing meal programs; Advocate for increased funding for SNAP/CalFresh

LOCAL:

- Maintain and expand city investments in food through a health equity framework;
- Ensure food to communities is high quality and culturally appropriate;
- Food programs should provide for the food needs of the entire household;
- Conduct a consistent and ongoing food security assessment and implementation plan with regular public updates to the Board of Supervisors and Mayor.
- Ensure continued funding for programs serving families with children at risk the loss of waivers.

- Maintain and improve integrated food referral and resource list through 311 and city website.
- Target economic stimulus recovery through direct cash support, jobs, business development, with a focus on food for vulnerable communities.

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