

City of Manchester, New Hampshire Healthy Food Access Plan

2023

Developed by



**City of
Manchester
Health Department**

Prepared by



**NEW
VENTURE
ADVISORS LLC®**



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Acknowledgments

The vision for this plan and related initiatives was guided by dedicated staff at the City of Manchester Health Department and partners within the Manchester Food Collaborative.

The Manchester Health Department is an innovative and proactive local health department grounded in the principles and application of the core public health functions. Their mission is to improve the health of individuals, families, and the community through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats with an aim to work both across its branches and with other community partners to improve the public's health.

Special thanks to the following Manchester Health Department staff members for their involvement:

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The Manchester Food Collaborative (MFC) is a coalition of community partners founded in 2021 as an initiative of New Hampshire Hunger Solutions working to build a resilient food system in the greater Manchester area. Their mission is to increase food security through sharing resources, expanding equitable access, providing nutrition education, reducing food waste, eliminating stigma, and empowering communities to shape the local food system. MFC members helped to organize community engagement efforts, prioritize the recommendations in this plan, and will be integral as lead and supporting partners in implementation.

Special thanks to the following community groups that assisted with the community survey and community roundtables:

Victory Women of Vision
Somerville Street Community Group
St. Raphael Parish
NeighborWorks Southern New Hampshire
Manchester School District: Beech Street Elementary School; Gossler Park Elementary School

Manchester Housing & Redevelopment Authority:
Kalivas Apartments
Islamic Society of New Hampshire
NH Hunger Solutions
Mentor Adult Day Health
NH Food Bank

This plan was created by New Venture Advisors, a business consulting firm specializing in food system planning and sustainable food business development.

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The recommendations that follow were informed by the experiences and input of hundreds of community members. We are especially grateful for those who took the time to complete the community survey and those who participated in the community roundtable discussions.

Contents

Why Focus on Healthy Food Access in Manchester?.....5

The Healthy Food Access Plan Development Process..... 13

How to Read the Healthy Food Access Plan..... 15

Plan Quick Guide 18

Healthy Food Access Strategies

Availability 21

Objective I: Increase healthy food choices and food retail outlets across the city of Manchester, especially in the nine low-access/low-income census tracts

Objective II: Foster opportunities for Manchester residents to grow their own food

Objective III: Encourage the diversion and utilization of wasted food for those in need

Access 27

Objective I: Increase access to affordable and free food through school and community partners

Objective II: Increase availability of fresh and culturally appropriate foods through retail and charitable partners

Objective III: Reduce barriers to emergency food assistance programs

Objective IV: Reduce transportation and built environment barriers that limit access to healthy food

Utilization41

Objective I: Promote and offer nutrition education resources

Stability 45

Objective I: Increase community awareness of existing and new food programming

Objective II: Ensure food access is incorporated into Manchester’s emergency planning

Moving the Plan Forward 49

Glossary of Terms 50

Appendix51

 Additional Long-Term Strategies Requiring City of Manchester Leadership or Other Large Institutional Partners for Implementation



WHY FOCUS ON HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS IN MANCHESTER?

Introduction

Improving access to healthy food is an investment in the health and well-being of all community members. Communities are more likely to thrive when residents have access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate foods for themselves and their families.¹

According to the 2022 Greater Manchester Community Health Needs Assessment, **more than 91% of Manchester residents surveyed said that it is “very important” for Manchester to take action to increase access** to healthy, affordable food sources, including addressing health conditions such as obesity and diabetes, lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and food deserts. **More than one in ten residents (11.3%) reported having trouble getting access to food/meals in the past three years.**

The availability of healthy foods in a community is driven by a variety of factors, including economic conditions, the prevalence and types of food access points within a community, the presence of food and nutrition programs within a community, and the local policy and regulatory climate. This Healthy Food Access Plan began with a scan of food access in Manchester to understand the baseline community conditions.

Existing Conditions

Food insecurity and a lack of access to healthy foods do not exist in a vacuum and are often symptoms of larger systemic issues. Families and individuals that struggle to afford and access healthy foods are also struggling to access affordable housing, transportation, and health

care. Manchester’s average per capita income is \$36,440; **12.5 percent of residents live below the federal poverty line** and many others struggle to make ends meet.² The minimum wage in New Hampshire has not risen in over ten years and remains at the federal minimum level of \$7.25 per hour. This is at least \$3 per hour less than the minimum wage in all of the surrounding states.³

Rising housing prices further burden families and stretch budgets. As of 2020, **37.8 percent of Manchester residents experienced “excessive housing costs,”** or spent over 30 percent of their household income on housing. The situation is especially serious for Manchester renters, over 50 percent of whose gross rent payments exceed 30 percent of their income.⁴

Nationwide, inflation has driven up prices for nearly all goods and services. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the **overall cost of living in the Northeast region rose by 6.4 percent** from 2021 to 2022, the largest year over year increase since 1990.⁵ Regionally, electricity prices surged by 12.3 percent, utility gas service increased 20.3 percent, and motor fuels rose by 36.4 percent.⁶ Heating fuel can be one of the highest household expenses in the Northeast’s challenging winters.

In combination with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of these factors have exacerbated economic inequality across the country. This additional strain on individuals and families is felt in Hillsborough County and Manchester and can make it more difficult to prioritize and access healthy food.

¹The City of Manchester Health Department, “2022 Greater Manchester Community Health Needs Assessment,” accessed February 28, 2023.

²U.S. Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: Manchester City, New Hampshire,” accessed February 28, 2023.

³New Hampshire Department of Labor, “Minimum Wage,” 2019, accessed February 28, 2023.

⁴City of Manchester Health Department, “2022 Health Needs Assessment.”

⁵U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Consumer Price Index, Northeast Region,” January 2023.

⁶Mike Cherry, “Cost of Living in New Hampshire Highest Year-to-Year Since 1990, According to U.S. Bureau of Labor,” WMUR, April 6, 2022.

Food Insecurity Rates in Hillsborough County as Compared to New Hampshire

Food Insecurity Rate (%)	Hillsborough County		State of New Hampshire	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Overall	8.6%	8.5%	8.8%	7.0%
Black (all ethnicities)	13.0%	12.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Hispanic (all ethnicities)	25.0%	26.0%	23.0%	24.0%
White (non-Hispanic)	8.0%	6.0%	9.0%	6.0%
Child	10.9%	12.7%	10.8%	9.5%

Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2021 and 2022.

Food Access in Manchester and Hillsborough County

Food insecurity in Hillsborough County (home of the City of Manchester) is more prevalent than in the rest of the state. Overall, the food insecurity rate in Hillsborough County is 8.5 percent in comparison to 7.0 percent in New Hampshire. The data over the last two years available (2019–20) shows that state-wide in New Hampshire, food insecurity rates decreased by 2 percent, while the rate in Hillsborough over the same years remained constant.

Food insecurity in Hillsborough County is experienced differently across various racial and ethnic groups in the community. Hispanic populations are the most vulnerable with rates of food insecurity three to four times the White, non-Hispanic population. Black populations are also at higher risk compared to the White, non-Hispanic population, with food insecurity rates twice as high.

Food insecurity varies across the City of Manchester itself, and where residents live can significantly impact their ability to find and afford healthy food for their families. Nine of Manchester's 30 city census tracts (tracts 6, 8, 13, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, and 25) were considered areas of both low income and low food access in 2019, meaning that the residents in these neighborhoods live with high rates of poverty and live at least one-half mile from the nearest grocery store. The term "food desert" is often used to describe these census tracts experiencing both low income and low access.

Mirroring the overall food insecurity rates, the child food insecurity rate is 12.7 percent in Hillsborough County in comparison to 9.5 percent in New Hampshire. The 2022 Greater Manchester Community Health Needs Assessment found that the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch is substantially higher in Manchester than in other districts within the Greater Manchester Region. In fact, Manchester's childhood food insecurity rate is more than twice that in every district in the region.⁷

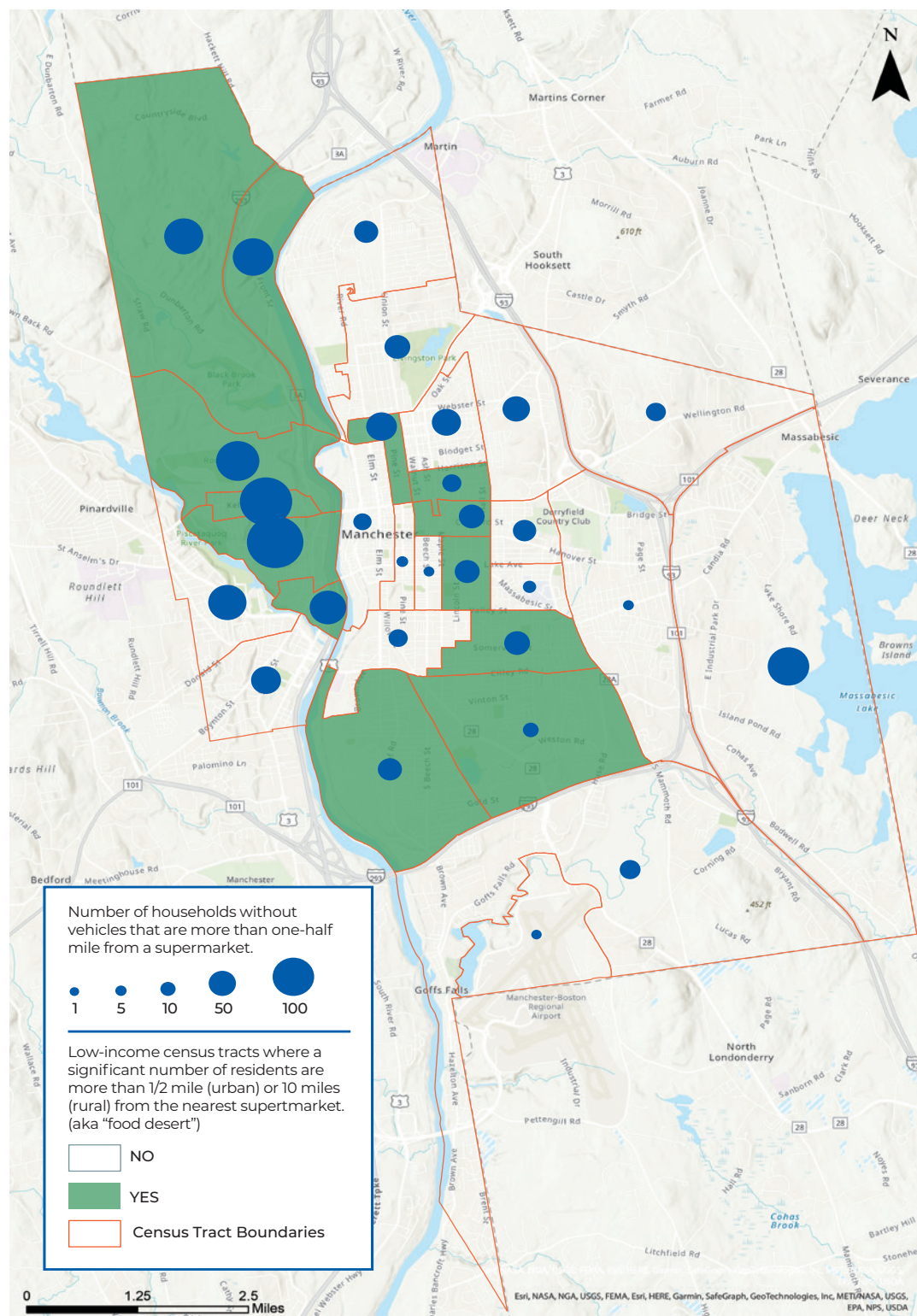
Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price School Lunch by Town

Town	% of Students Eligible
Manchester	44.0%
Auburn	5.9%
Bedford	4.5%
Candia	13.8%
Deerfield	7.9%
Goffstown	9.1%
Hooksett	15.0%
New Boston	6.6%
Londonderry	11.1%
Nashua	35.6%
State of NH	20.9%

Source: NH Department of Education

⁷City of Manchester Health Department, "2022 Health Needs Assessment."

Map of Access to Healthy Food In Manchester



Source: USDA Economic Research Service Food Atlas, ESRI.

Food access is closely linked to vehicle access in communities without a walkable full-service grocery store. In Manchester, 8.3 percent of households had no access to a vehicle in 2020 and 40.6 percent of households shared one vehicle. Manchester residents are less likely to have access to a vehicle than residents of all other cities in the greater Manchester area and than residents of the state as a whole.

Residents living in low-access/low-income tracts that also have limited access to a vehicle or public transportation are left with few options for easily accessing healthy food and can often face higher prices at more convenient corner stores.

For some Manchester residents, available food access supports such as local food pantries and federal programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) can help provide additional resources.

The percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits in Manchester is higher in comparison to every city in the surrounding area.

The percentage of Manchester residents receiving SNAP is higher than the New Hampshire state average for nearly every demographic category.

Within the City of Manchester, the percentage of those receiving SNAP correlates to the percentage of residents living below the federal poverty level. However, we know that in Hillsborough County, only 55 percent of those eligible for SNAP are actually enrolled in the program.⁸ There are likely many more eligible Manchester residents that could benefit from these additional food programs.

Within the City of Manchester itself, the majority of census tracts have SNAP enrollment rates between 5 and 20 percent. In 4 of Manchester's 32 neighborhoods, over 20 percent of residents rely on SNAP benefits to help feed themselves and their families.

Percentage of Households with No Vehicle or a Shared Vehicle by Town

Town	% of Households with no Vehicle	% of Households Sharing one Vehicle
Manchester	8.3%	40.6%
Auburn	0.0%	14.1%
Bedford	4.1%	16.3%
Candia	1.0%	17.7%
Deerfield	4.2%	12.9%
Goffstown	4.3%	35.3%
Hooksett	0.0%	33.4%
New Boston	0.0%	0.0%
Londonderry	2.6%	23.2%
Nashua	7.9%	35.2%
State of NH	5.0%	29.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, DP04 Selected Housing Characteristics," 2020, accessed October 11, 2022.

Percentage of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits by Town

Town	Households Receiving SNAP
Manchester	11.5%
Auburn	1.9%
Bedford	1.5%
Candia	5.7%
Deerfield	3.3%
Goffstown	3.5%
Hooksett	2.3%
New Boston	0.0%
Londonderry	4.4%
Nashua	8.5%
State of NH	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, S2201 Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," 2020, accessed October 11, 2022.

⁸NH Hunger Solutions.

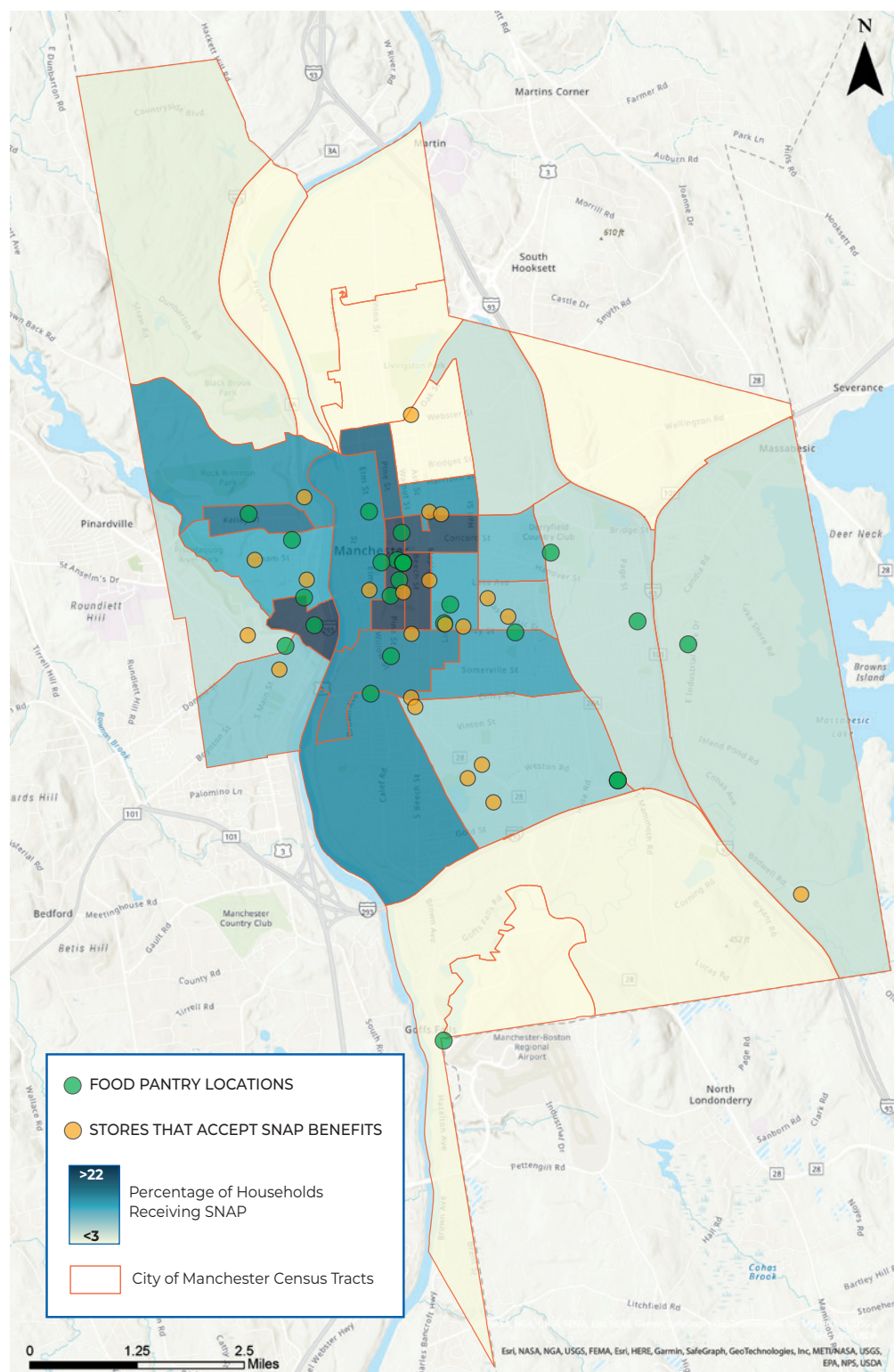
Types of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits in Manchester as Compared to New Hampshire

% of Households Receiving SNAP	Manchester	State of New Hampshire
Receiving SNAP	11.5%	6.4%
Living Below Poverty	11.4%	7.8%
Receiving SNAP Below Poverty Level	46.9%	44.0%
Receiving SNAP (with person >60)	29.0%	34.6%
Receiving SNAP (with children)	54.1%	48.1%
Receiving SNAP (White, Not Hispanic)	76.3%	86.6%
Receiving SNAP (Black)	12.0%	3.5%
Receiving SNAP (Asian)	4.3%	1.9%
Receiving SNAP (Hispanic)	15.2%	6.3%
Receiving SNAP (2 or more races)	5.6%	3.0%
Receiving SNAP (some other race alone)	1.7%	0.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, S2201 Food Stamps/ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," 2020, accessed October 11, 2022.



SNAP Retailers and Food Pantries in Manchester



Source: USDA Economic Research Service Food Atlas, ESRI.

Retailers accepting SNAP benefits as well as the network of food within the city are two of the most important food access solutions. This map shows the percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits in each census tract, with a greater concentration of households shown by increasingly darker shades of blue. The orange dots mark the locations where SNAP recipients can spend their benefits to buy food, including a variety of retail locations such as grocery stores, dollar stores, and convenience stores. The green dots mark the locations of food pantries in the city. Food pantries distribute food to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity and are often an important safety net when food runs out.





THE HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Spurred to action by the increasing economic disparities fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Manchester Health Department and the Manchester Food Collaborative formed a working group to lead several food system planning initiatives for the City of Manchester. These planning efforts are supported by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that have been allocated for programs and policies that address food access and food insecurity issues.

The main initiative of this working group is the development and implementation of a Healthy Food Access Plan for the City of Manchester. In 2022, the working group embarked on a community-driven planning process to develop the Healthy Food Access Plan, which will be implemented as appropriate within the ARPA funding timeline through July of 2026.

Prior to planning, the group first conducted an assessment of the current food access landscape to demonstrate the scope of the impact that the plan will have in addressing food access and food insecurity within Manchester.

Throughout the fall of 2022, the Manchester Health Department led a community engagement process to elicit challenges and solutions to food access in the community. This process involved a widely distributed survey and community roundtable discussions hosted at accessible partner sites throughout the city.

Community Roundtable Discussions

Over the course of one month during the fall of 2022, the Manchester Health Department and partners facilitated ten roundtable events with a total of 84 community participants.

Facilitators led focused discussions on the accessibility of healthy food in Manchester using the following questions:

- What does “healthy food” mean to you?
- What challenges/barriers make it difficult for you, your family, or neighbors to access healthy food and food from your culture?

- What would make it easier for you, your family, and your neighbors to access healthy food and food from your culture?
- What neighborhoods or communities in particular struggle with accessing healthy food in Manchester?

Community Roundtable Timeline

Date	Host site	Attendees
9/14/22	New Hampshire Fisher Cats Stadium	4
9/20/22	MENTOR Adult Day Health, Maintaining Independence Center (Nepali language group)	6
9/20/22	MENTOR Adult Day Health, Maintaining Independence Center (Spanish language group)	6
9/29/22	Saint Raphael Parish (Group 1)	13
9/29/22	Saint Raphael Parish (Group 2)	11
9/30/22	Manchester Housing and Redevelopment Authority Christos Kalivas Apartments	16
10/5/22	Gossler Park Elementary School	7
10/6/22	Beech Street Elementary School	6
10/11/22	NeighborWorks Southern New Hampshire (Spanish language group)	14
10/13/22	NeighborWorks Southern New Hampshire (English language group)	1

Community Survey

The community survey had 411 respondents from across the City of Manchester. Surveys were distributed by the Manchester Health Department at a variety of public wellness events, including but not limited to the following:

- Manchester Wellness on Wheels
- NeighborWorks Block Party
- Hope for NH Recovery
- CelebratED
- Ward 7 Neighborhood Meeting
- Rimmon Street Heights Block Party
- National Night Out

For more detailed information on the community input process, please see [project website](#) for community survey results and findings from the community roundtable discussions.

The healthy food access objectives and strategies in this plan were distilled from direct community input from both the survey and roundtable discussions. These objectives and strategies were then validated with and prioritized by members of the Manchester Food Collaborative and the Manchester Health Department to create a framework for implementation. The final short-term and long-term strategies included represent a roadmap of specific policy and program recommendations to improve access to healthy food in the City of Manchester.



Photos from CelebratED MHT! event on September 17, 2022, where the Manchester Health Department collected over 100 community surveys.

HOW TO READ THE HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS PLAN

This plan lays out strategic recommendations to improve access to healthy food within the City of Manchester through July of 2026. The recommendations are organized by the four main dimensions of food security as defined below.

Based on the 1996 World Food Summit, food security is defined as “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”⁹

From this definition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) outlined the four main dimensions of food security.

All four of these dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously for a community to be considered food secure.



AVAILABILITY

THE PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY OF FOOD

Food availability addresses the “supply side” of food security and is determined by the level of food production and stock levels of food retailers and distributors.



ACCESS

ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL ACCESS TO FOOD

An adequate supply of food within a community does not in itself guarantee household or individual level food security. Food access concerns relate to the ability of consumers to reasonably and reliably acquire food, including price and income levels, transportation access, and the availability of culturally appropriate foods.



UTILIZATION

FOOD HANDLING AND ADEQUATE NUTRITION

Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals are the result of diversity of diet as well as safe food storage and preparation.



STABILITY

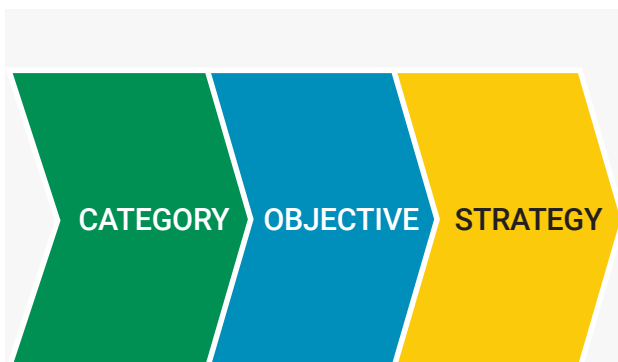
STABILITY OF THE OTHER THREE DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY OVER TIME

Even if an individual's food intake is adequate today, they are still considered to be food insecure if they have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of their nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors such as unemployment or rising food prices may have an impact on the stability of food security status.¹⁰

⁹The EC-FAO Food Security Programme, “An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security,” 2008.

¹⁰Ibid.

The framework for the City of Manchester Healthy Food Action Plan includes four **categories** of food security (availability, access, utilization, stability), measurable **objectives** that address barriers to food security, and specific policy and programmatic **strategies** to achieve these objectives.



Each strategy includes the following:

DESCRIPTION

A brief overview of the strategy.

RATIONALE

A summary of data and background information grounding the strategy in findings from research and extensive community engagement within the City of Manchester.

TIMING

Recommendation for whether this strategy should be implemented in the short term or long term.

Short term

Able to be implemented within the next one to two years (2023–25) with partner support.

Long term

Ideally implemented within the ARPA funding timeline through July of 2026, but may be longer term endeavors that require additional funding sources.

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Indicators of success and targeted impact for each strategy that will be used by the Manchester Health Department to evaluate progress toward the plan's implementation.

LEAD ORGANIZATION

The probable local lead to coordinate partners and guide processes for implementation of the specific strategy, a community organization or institution whose core mission aligns with the strategy.

Note: For strategies that list the lead organization as “To Be Determined,” support organizations and others will work collaboratively during implementation to determine project leadership.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Additional local community organizations and/or institutions whose work aligns with the strategy. This list includes probable partners, including those that have self-identified throughout the plan development process, but does not necessarily include every possible partner. Partnerships for implementation will draw on current work being done within the Manchester community and look forward to building new strategic relationships.

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

A high-level list of the resources needed for the implementation of each strategy.

These strategies were prioritized within each objective by members of the Manchester Food Collaborative considering the following factors:

LEVERAGE

How big an impact will this strategy have, if successful, on overall healthy food access in the City of Manchester?

FEASIBILITY

How likely are partners to be successful in this strategy? Do partners have the power, resources, knowledge, and partners to be successful?

SPECIFICITY

Do partners know how to be successful in this strategy? Do partners have the information and expertise to be successful?



PLAN QUICK GUIDE

Below is a summary of the objectives and strategic recommendations included in this plan.

Timeline	Category	Objective	Strategy	Lead partner	Support partners
Short term	Availability	Increase healthy food choices and food retail outlets across the City of Manchester, especially in the nine low-access/low-income census tracts	1.1 Expand farmers markets into “food deserts” (USDA designated low-access/ low-income neighborhoods)	Manchester Grows	AHA, Elliot Health, NHHS, ORIS
			1.2 Expand outreach and enrollment in the SNAP Double Up Food Bucks program	NHHS, NHFB, Unite Us	AHA, FIT, MHD, ORIS
			1.3 Strengthen the Manchester Health Department’s existing Healthy Corner Store program and build upon the 2022 pilot initiative	MHD, ORIS	Elliot Health, NHHS, Unite Us
		Foster opportunities for Manchester residents to grow their own food	1.4 Assess the distribution and utilization of the current community gardens in the City of Manchester	Manchester Grows	ORIS, Elliot Health
	Access	Increase access to affordable and free food through school and community partners	2.1 Partner with Manchester schools to create school-based food access sites (i.e., school-based pantries or food distribution pop-up events)	TBD	Elliot Health, NHHS, ORIS, Unite Us
			2.3 Partner with Manchester schools to promote and expand the Summer Meals program to additional locations throughout low-access/ low-income neighborhoods	NHHS	AHA, Elliot Health, Unite Us
		Increase access to fresh and culturally appropriate foods through retail and charitable partners	2.4 Conduct an assessment of the current food offerings at community partner pantries and City-operated facilities to determine the cultural appropriateness and relevance of the food offered	NHFB	Elliot Health, FIT, NHHS
			2.5 Support infrastructure at food pantries and food banks to increase ability to store fresh produce and meats (i.e., coolers, produce display cases, etc.)	NHFB	Elliot Health, NHHS
		Reduce barriers to emergency food assistance programs	2.6 Increase enrollment in food access programs (i.e., SNAP and WIC) through increased outreach and application assistance	NHFB, NHHS, Unite Us	FIT, ORIS
			2.7 Create a “coverage map” of all current pantry and food assistance programs to identify gaps in food access	NHHS, Unite Us	Elliot Health
			2.8 Partner with Manchester schools to explore options to increase SNAP enrollment among families with children	NHHS	NHFB, ORIS, Unite Us

Timeline	Category	Objective	Strategy	Lead partner	Support partners
Short term	Access	Reduce transportation and built environment barriers that limit access to healthy food	2.9 Audit the current bus system and identify changes to routes and stops that would allow for easier access to food access points	MHD	Elliot Health
			2.11 Set a target for the City of Manchester to establish transit stops within one-fourth mile of each food access point	MHD	AHA, Elliot Health, NHHS
			2.12 Advocate for an exception to the bus bag limit to allow for an increased number of grocery bags per individual to facilitate use of public transit for grocery shopping	MHD	Elliot Health, Meals on Wheels
	Utilization	Promote and offer nutrition education resources	3.1 Partner with Manchester schools to increase Farm to School and nutrition education programming	TBD	Elliot Health, NHHS, ORIS
			3.2 Partner with community-based organizations to increase nutrition education outreach	Elliot Health, NHFB	AHA, FIT, NHHS, ORIS, Unite Us
			3.3 Fund a kitchen “tools” program - provide cutting boards, knives, pots, pans etc. - to help families process and prepare healthy foods	Elliot Health	NHFB, ORIS
	Stability	Increase community awareness of existing and new food programming	4.1 Create a comprehensive guide to food access resources in the City of Manchester	Elliot Health, NHHS, Unite Us	
			4.2 Create an outreach and education campaign to promote the food access guide	Elliot Health, NHHS	AHA, ORIS, Unite Us
		Ensure food access is incorporated into Manchester’s emergency planning	4.3 Collaborate with Emergency Management to ensure that emergency planning includes food access considerations	MHD, Elliot Health, NHHS	Meals on Wheels
Long term	Availability	Encourage the diversion and utilization of wasted food for those in need	1.5 Assess the current state of the food donation and gleaning network	TBD	Elliot Health, Meals on Wheels, NHFB
	Access	Increase access to affordable and free food through school and community partners	2.2 Partner with low-income community housing partners (i.e., Manchester Housing Authority) to support pantries or pop-up food box pickup sites	ORIS	Elliot Health, FIT, NHHS
		Reduce transportation and built environment barriers that limit access to healthy food	2.10 Provide free shuttle service from community hubs to food access points—senior centers, MHA sites, etc.		

The lead and partner organizations referenced above are:
AHA: American Heart Association
Elliot Health: Elliot Health System
FIT: Families in Transition
Meals on Wheels: Meals on Wheels Hillsborough County
MHA: Manchester Housing Authority

MHD: Manchester Health Department
NHHS: New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
NHFB: New Hampshire Food Bank
ORIS: Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success
Unite Us: Unite Us New Hampshire





AVAILABILITY STRATEGIES

THE PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY OF FOOD

Food availability addresses the “supply side” of food security and is determined by the level of food production and stock levels of food retailers and distributors.

Objective I

Increase healthy food choices and food retail outlets across the City of Manchester, especially in the nine low-access/low-income census tracts

Strategy 1.1

Expand farmers markets into “food deserts” (USDA designated low-access/ low-income neighborhoods)

DESCRIPTION

Nine of Manchester’s 30 city census tracts are USDA-designated low-access/low-income areas with the nearest grocery store located over one-half mile away. Farmers markets can be key community-level interventions to address food insecurity within food deserts. In comparison to longer term solutions such as additional grocery retailers, farmers markets are less expensive, require less space, and are quicker to implement. Collaborative efforts that partner with neighborhood entities such as schools, nonprofits, or faith-based organizations can tap into existing community networks, resources, and space to host neighborhood farmers markets.

RATIONALE

Expanding access to farmers markets was identified as a top priority during the community engagement phase. Focus groups discussed expanded farmers markets as the second most impactful healthy food access strategy, with 16 percent of survey respondents indicating interest in sourcing food from local farmers markets. There are already collaborative community efforts to increase fresh, local food access points that can be built upon, notably, the MUMs Pop Up Markets of 2022, coordinated by Manchester Grows, NeighborWorks, Queerlective, Uncharted Tutoring, Hope Tabernacle, the Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, and Fresh Start Farms. These joint events created additional market opportunities for local growers, created community spaces to gather around local products, and brought new temporary food access points into underserved areas of Manchester.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Additional pop-up markets, including numbers of vendors and customers

Additional recurring markets, including numbers of vendors and customers

LEAD ORGANIZATION

To be determined

SUPPORT PARTNERS

American Heart Association
Elliot Health System
New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Market management staff
Host site fees
Vendor booth materials, including tents and tables
Signage and marketing materials

Strategy 1.2

Expand outreach and enrollment in the SNAP Double Up Food Bucks program

DESCRIPTION

The Granite State Market Match, or New Hampshire Double Up Food Bucks program, is administered by the New Hampshire Nutrition Incentive Network, a statewide collaboration led by the New Hampshire Food Bank that works to offer SNAP incentives at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and independent retailers across the state. This program provides SNAP recipients with a dollar-for-dollar match to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at participating retailers.

RATIONALE

In the community survey, 0 percent of respondents indicated using Double Up Food Bucks as a food access solution. There are not many options for local Manchester residents to participate in this program, especially if they lack reliable access to a vehicle. Granite State Market Match only has one current site within the City of Manchester at Fresh Start Market, with an additional two sites located within ten miles of the city.¹¹ Expanding this program could increase SNAP recipients' access to high-quality local produce.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Additional sites participating in Double Up Food Bucks program
- Dollars matched with Double Up Food Bucks program

LEAD ORGANIZATION

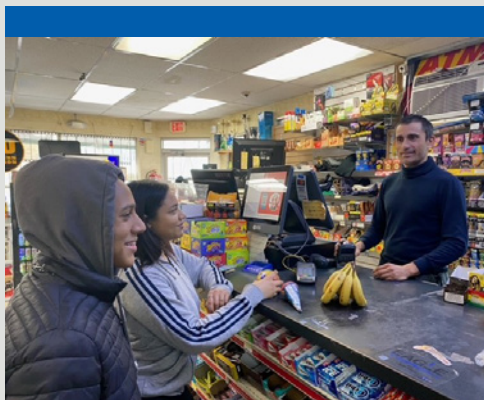
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- New Hampshire Food Bank
- Unite Us

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- American Heart Association
- Families in Transition
- Manchester Health Department
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Funds to provide match for Granite State Market Match program



¹¹Granite State Market Match, accessed March 1, 2023.

Strategy 1.3

Strengthen the Manchester Health Department's existing Healthy Corner Store program and build upon the 2022 pilot initiative

DESCRIPTION

Fresh Choice Manchester, the City of Manchester Healthy Corners program, was created to expand healthy food access in Manchester with a focus on designated "food deserts." The 2022 pilot program worked with six corner and convenience stores across the city that accept SNAP benefits, expanding customers' access to healthy food options within their neighborhoods.

RATIONALE

Eleven percent of community survey respondents indicated corner and/or convenience stores as a primary food source, while focus groups noted a lack of fresh and healthy foods offered at these types of retailers as a major food access challenge. The 2022 pilot Healthy Corners program successfully supplied customers with fresh produce and healthy snacks at wholesale prices as well as nutrition education. To ensure store capacity to facilitate the program, store owners were also provided training and technical assistance, marketing and merchandising support, and related infrastructure improvements. Using additional ARPA funds to expand this program into additional stores across Manchester, especially within Westside neighborhoods, would be an efficient way to increase healthy food access points through a program with proven community benefit.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Additional participating stores
- Sales of fresh/healthy food at each participating site
- Additional equipment and/or technical assistance provided to store owners

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Manchester Health Department
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Support partners
- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Unite Us

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

- Signage and marketing materials
- Display racks
- Additional cooler units where needed
- Materials for nutrition education classes



Objective II

Foster opportunities for Manchester residents to grow their own food

Strategy 1.4

Assess the distribution and utilization of the current community gardens in the City of Manchester

DESCRIPTION

Expansion of community gardens was identified as a top priority for increasing local healthy food access during this plan's community engagement phase. Local organizations should first collaboratively assess the distribution and utilization of current community gardens within the city to inform plans for strategic growth of garden spaces and supportive programming such as gardening education classes.

RATIONALE

Fresh produce from local gardens provides nutritionally dense foods that low-income families often cannot afford to purchase in grocery stores or at farmers markets. A community gardening program can reduce food insecurity, improve dietary variety, and strengthen community relationships. Within the focus groups, expanding and utilizing community gardens was the number 3 suggested strategy to increase food access: 36 percent of respondents to the community survey indicated a desire to learn more about how to grow food, while only 7 percent currently participate in a garden and only 19 percent knew where current Manchester community gardens are located.

Local and state resources such as Manchester Community Gardens, Manchester Grows, and University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners can be helpful in the design and implementation of the assessment.

TIMING

Short term

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success
- Elliot Health System

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Report created on state of current community gardening in Manchester
- Increased support for current gardening efforts, including connections with Master Gardeners, volunteer recruitment, and improved outreach efforts

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

- Funds to create community gardening report
- Funds to subsidize garden plot fees to remove access barriers

LEAD ORGANIZATION

Manchester Grows

Objective III

Encourage the diversion and utilization of wasted food for those in need

Strategy 1.5

Assess the current state of the food donation and gleaning network

DESCRIPTION

Organizations should collaboratively assess the current food donation and gleaning network within the City of Manchester to help identify long-term and sustainable processes for collecting and distributing produce from donor gardeners or retailers to food assistance sites. Based upon the findings of this assessment, an outreach strategy to encourage additional food donations and/or additional technology solutions, such as an app to facilitate food rescue, should be developed to better connect donors and food assistance sites and build capacity.

RATIONALE

Food pantries and other meal programs are often unable to purchase locally grown produce due to cost considerations. At the same time, nearly 40 percent of food is wasted in the United States across every stage of food production and distribution. Recovered or donated food can be put to its highest use by feeding those in need that often lack access to healthy food options.

TIMING

Long term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Report on current food donation and gleaning network, including pounds of food distributed and number of partner organizations involved
- Additional marketing tools created for the current network

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Elliot Health System
- Meals on Wheels
- New Hampshire Food Bank

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Funds to create community food donation and gleaning report

LEAD ORGANIZATION

To be determined

Nearly
40%
of food is wasted in the
United States across every
stage of food production
and distribution







ACCESS STRATEGIES

ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL ACCESS TO FOOD

An adequate supply of food within a community does not in itself guarantee household or individual level food security. Food access concerns relate to the ability of consumers to reasonably and reliably acquire food, including price and income levels, transportation access, and the availability of culturally appropriate foods.

Objective 1

Increase access to affordable and free food through school and community partners

Strategy 2.1

Partner with Manchester schools to create and/or enhance school-based food access sites (i.e., school-based pantries or food distribution pop-up events)

DESCRIPTION

Community partners can work collaboratively to alleviate food insecurity in Manchester's school children and their families with additional resources offered at Manchester-based schools. Programs should build upon piloted initiatives such as on-site pantries and communal meals that have been successful at certain Manchester schools. With the support of the Community Health Worker network, who have a presence in each Manchester school, partners should develop consistency in these resources across all school locations. Food distribution pathways can also be paired with additional family resources such as financial planning and nutrition education.

RATIONALE

Forty-four percent of Manchester students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, a strong indicator of food insecurity. In addition, from the community survey, respondents aged 20–29 and 30–39 were reported as having the highest rates of food insecurity. These age groups are most likely to be caregivers for school-aged children who could benefit from additional food access resources through school programming.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Additional food distribution events at Manchester schools
- Pounds of food distributed
- Number of student/family participants

LEAD ORGANIZATION

To be determined

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success
- Unite Us

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

- Funds to purchase additional food resources
- Infrastructure needs such as storage containers, pantry shelving, additional coolers, etc.

Strategy 2.2

Partner with low-income community housing partners (i.e., Manchester Housing Authority) to support pantries or pop-up food box pickup sites

DESCRIPTION

Increase the reach of the Manchester food access network by removing transportation barriers and partnering with low-income community housing partners for on-site food distribution.

RATIONALE

Each Manchester Housing Authority location has an on-site commercial kitchen, including infrastructure such as shelving, appliances, and refrigeration. Many of these sites already serve at least one communal meal per week for residents and often rent out the kitchen to other agencies. This kitchen space can be further utilized to facilitate on-site pantries, pop-up food box pickup sites, and host meal preparation.

TIMING

Long term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Additional food distribution events at Manchester Housing Authority sites

LEAD ORGANIZATION

Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Elliot Health System
- Families in Transition
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Pantry or food distribution infrastructure such as display shelving, storage containers, etc.



Strategy 2.3

Partner with Manchester schools to promote and expand the Summer Meals program to additional locations throughout low-access/low-income neighborhoods

DESCRIPTION

Create an outreach campaign incorporating school and community partner networks to promote enrollment in the Summer Meals program. Identify additional schools, camps, and local nonprofit organizations offering recreational and enrichment programs to serve as site sponsors.

RATIONALE

According to Feeding America, the rate of childhood food insecurity in Hillsborough county is 12.7 percent, higher than the statewide average of 9.5 percent. Additionally, 44 percent of students in the City of Manchester are eligible for free or reduced price school lunch, in comparison to 20.9 percent for the state as a whole and an average rate of 15.35 percent for the greater Manchester region.¹² There is a clear need to extend resources available to students during the year throughout the summer to ensure consistent and reliable access to adequate healthy food.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Marketing and promotion tools created for Summer Meals program enrollment
- Additional student participation in Summer Meals program

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- American Heart Association
- Elliot Health System
- Unite Us

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Marketing and outreach materials

LEAD ORGANIZATION

New Hampshire Hunger Solutions

The rate of childhood
food insecurity in
Hillsborough county is

12.7%

higher than the
statewide average



¹²City of Manchester Health Department, "2022 Health Needs Assessment."

Objective II

Increase availability of fresh and culturally appropriate foods through retail and charitable partners

Strategy 2.4

Conduct an assessment of the current food offerings at community partner pantries and City-operated facilities to determine the cultural appropriateness and relevance of the food offered

DESCRIPTION

Conduct an assessment of the average variety of offerings available at each food distribution site in Manchester, including the demographics of consumers, ensuring that this assessment centers the voices of pantry clients. Based upon the findings from the assessment, work with partners to increase the offerings of culturally relevant foods in community partner pantries and city-operated facilities.

RATIONALE

Programs that work to increase food access are more efficient if the food is consumed by the individuals receiving it. Recipients may prefer certain food options based on personal taste preferences, knowledge on how to prepare the food, dietary restrictions, or religious restrictions. If the food being provided is not culturally relevant or acceptable, individuals may not use the food provided to them and instead seek out other options. This redirects household resources that may have gone to other expenses had the food access options been culturally appropriate.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Assessment conducted and shared with number of community partners
- Collaborative meeting(s) held on strategy to increase culturally relevant food offerings through city-wide resources

LEAD ORGANIZATION

NHFB

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Elliot Health System
- Families in Transition
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Staff time

Strategy 2.5

Support infrastructure at food pantries and food banks to increase ability to store fresh produce and meats (i.e., coolers, produce display cases, etc.)

DESCRIPTION

Audit current infrastructure needs at Manchester area food pantries to assess priority locations. Assist food pantries with grant opportunities for infrastructure improvements such as USDA's Emergency Food Assistance program. Streamline New Hampshire Food Bank's current policy to offer donated equipment to food pantries to efficiently direct resources to highest-need locations.

RATIONALE

Additional cooler units and other related storage infrastructure increase the capacity of food pantries to receive, store, and distribute fresh, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Additional infrastructure purchases made for Manchester-based food pantries
- Additional pounds of fresh produce, dairy, and meat able to be distributed with infrastructure improvements

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Food Bank
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Purchase of infrastructure elements such as coolers, display cases, etc.

LEAD ORGANIZATION

NHFB



Objective III

Reduce barriers to emergency food assistance programs

Strategy 2.6

Increase enrollment in food access programs (i.e., SNAP and WIC) through increased outreach and application assistance

DESCRIPTION

Develop and implement a multi-faceted campaign to increase enrollment in SNAP by targeting outreach to those who may be eligible but are not enrolled. This could include SNAP enrollment clinics or outreach events at schools, Manchester Housing Authority sites, and food assistance locations. Efforts to spread the word about SNAP could include bus advertisements, mailings to affordable housing residents, and signage at local grocers and healthcare partners. Community partners should leverage other programming to expand SNAP promotion through ongoing efforts to support seniors, those with disabilities, and individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

RATIONALE

Not all potentially eligible residents are currently enrolled in SNAP, meaning qualified individuals and families aren't accessing available financial support. Misinformation about SNAP eligibility and fear of perceived repercussions of enrolling can prevent applications. Features such as recently expanded eligibility guidelines and a simplified application process for seniors could help to make the program more accessible when combined with outreach from trusted community partners and community health workers.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Number of outreach activities and/or advertisements
- Number of additional SNAP/WIC enrollments

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- New Hampshire Food Bank
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Unite Us

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Families in Transition
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Additional funding for community health workers

Strategy 2.7

Create a “coverage map” of all current pantry and food assistance programs to identify gaps in food access

DESCRIPTION

Conduct an audit of all current food pantries and food assistance programs to analyze comprehensive services offered across the city. The gap analysis should identify opportunities to expand community offerings to better serve Manchester residents, including new pantry locations, new operating times, alternative pantry models, and restrictive policies that limit accessibility.

RATIONALE

The community survey revealed several opportunities for food assistance services to better align with residents' needs, including more fresh food offerings, shifting times to access resources, and better aligning resources with public transportation options. The creation of a coverage map will also present an opportunity for all community resource providers to network and have a clear understanding of all available complementary services their clients may use.

TIMING

Short term

SUPPORT PARTNERS

Elliot Health System

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Food services map created
- Number of participating organizations

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Staff time

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- New Hampshire Food Bank
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Unite Us



Strategy 2.8

Partner with Manchester schools to explore options to increase SNAP enrollment among families with children

DESCRIPTION

Increase SNAP outreach and enrollment efforts through trusted school networks to ensure eligible families and children are accessing available benefit services.

RATIONALE

Schools can be a neutral community space where children and parents feel more comfortable gathering and sharing information. Outreach for SNAP enrollment can be included in open houses and other open school events as well as tied into other school food assistance programs such as on-site pantries. Additional information on enrollment should also be included with all-parent communications such as school newsletters, Summer Meals program enrollment, etc.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Number of SNAP outreach activities and/or advertisements
- Number of additional SNAP/WIC enrollments

LEAD ORGANIZATION

New Hampshire Hunger Solutions

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- New Hampshire Food Bank
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success
- Unite Us

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Marketing and outreach materials



Objective IV

Reduce transportation and built environment barriers that limit access to healthy food

Strategy 2.9

Audit the current bus system and identify changes to routes and stops that would allow for easier access to food access points

DESCRIPTION

Evaluate the Manchester bus system from a high-level perspective to ensure a user experience that best facilitates food access. Plot distance from bus stops to community hubs such as senior centers, schools, and Manchester Housing Authority locations as well as all food access points, including grocery stores, corner stores, and food pantries.

RATIONALE

Local government can help address access to healthy food through transportation policy and planning. Even where food access points such as grocery stores, food pantries, or farmers markets are present in a community, some people may still have difficulty obtaining healthy foods because of resource constraints or proximity. Connecting routes such as sidewalks, trails, and public transit can provide affordable food access opportunities, especially for those who do not own a car or are physically impaired or immobile.

Twenty-four percent of survey respondents indicated that the bus stop distance to their destination was a transportation barrier to accessing healthy foods. Similarly, the focus groups identified limited bus routes and schedules as the top public transportation access challenge.

TIMING

Short term

SUPPORT PARTNERS

Elliot Health System

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Bus system audit conducted and suggested improvements identified

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Staff time

LEAD ORGANIZATION

Manchester Health Department



Strategy 2.10

Provide free shuttle service from community hubs to food access points—senior centers, MHA sites, etc.

DESCRIPTION

During the upcoming FY23 update, the City should amend the Manchester Transit Authority Short Range Transit Plan to expand the Shopper Shuttle offerings to alleviate transportation barriers to food access points.¹³

RATIONALE

The Shopper Shuttle currently operates a free fare fixed-route service to connect residents with grocery stores. The shuttle runs along two routes to Manchester grocery stores on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The City should expand the Shopper Shuttle routes to additional days and intersections with additional community hubs such as senior centers and Manchester Housing Authority locations.

TIMING

Long term

SUPPORT PARTNERS

Elliot Health System

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Additional routes of the Shopper Shuttle

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Resources for additional routes of Shopper Shuttle

LEAD ORGANIZATION

Manchester Health Department



manchester transit

¹³Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission, "Short Range Transit Plan for Manchester, NH: FY 2018–FY 2022," August 2017.

Strategy 2.11

Set a target for the City of Manchester to establish transit stops within one-fourth mile of each food access point

DESCRIPTION

Use the results of the bus system audit to inform a City target to establish a transit stop within one-fourth mile of each food access point.

RATIONALE

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that people are only willing to walk one-quarter to one-half mile to get to mass transit, so if stops are beyond this point, residents are unlikely to view mass transit as a practical form of transportation.¹⁴ With careful planning and modification, public transit can provide practical and accessible connections to healthy food retailers. The City should consider food access and distribution while working with the Manchester Transit Authority to plan, expand, and improve the public transit system, planning for the development of new healthy food retailers along existing transit lines, and addressing first and last-mile transit connectivity (walking, biking, or rolling to or from a transit location).

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

City target strategy established and included in Manchester Transit Authority Short Range Transit Plan

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- American Heart Association
- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Staff time

LEAD ORGANIZATION

Manchester Health Department



¹⁴U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, "Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies," last modified January 31, 2013.

Strategy 2.12

Advocate for an exception to the bus bag limit to allow for an increased number of grocery bags per individual to facilitate use of public transit for grocery shopping

DESCRIPTION

Current regulation limits bus patrons to only two bags, with no additional devices such as grocery carts allowed on board. Community partners should advocate as a coalition for an exception to the bag limit for grocery bags so that residents can more easily and efficiently shop for food for themselves and their families.

RATIONALE

Focus groups identified the bag limit as the second most pressing public transportation access challenge behind inconvenient routes. Forty-seven percent of community survey respondents indicated that the bag limit was a barrier to accessing adequate food when using public transportation. The bag limit restricts the amount of food that residents without reliable vehicle access can purchase and transport home at any given time, creating a need for more frequent trips to the store or diverting shoppers to more convenient neighborhood corner stores with fewer healthy options.

TIMING

Short term

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Elliot Health System
- Meals on Wheels

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Number of community partners involved in the advocacy coalition
- Number of advocacy activities
- Exception or relaxation of the bag limit for passengers transporting grocery bags

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Related advocacy expenses

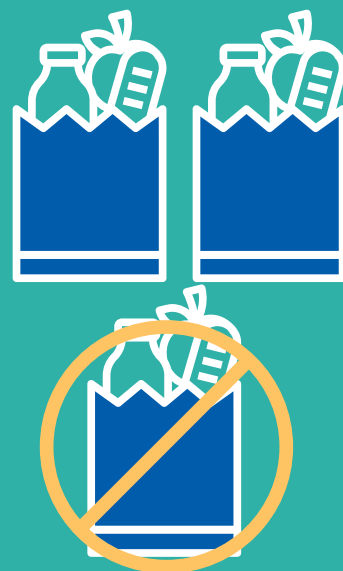
LEAD ORGANIZATION

Manchester Health Department



47%

of community survey respondents indicated that the bag limit was a barrier to accessing adequate food when using public transportation







UTILIZATION STRATEGIES

FOOD HANDLING AND ADEQUATE NUTRITION

Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals are the result of diversity of diet as well as safe food storage and preparation.

Objective I

Promote and offer nutrition education resources

Strategy 3.1

Partner with Manchester schools to increase Farm to School and nutrition education programming

DESCRIPTION

Expand Farm to School programming in Manchester schools to encourage child nutrition program operators to incorporate local foods into the National School Lunch program and Summer Meals program.

RATIONALE

Farm-to-school programs combine purchasing, promoting, and serving local foods with healthy eating and nutrition education objectives. Farm-to-school programs increase students' exposure to fresh, healthy local foods and are associated with students' increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Additional Farm to School programming events
- Additional nutrition education included in curricula

LEAD ORGANIZATION

To be determined

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

- Support for local food purchasing
- Staff time for additional Farm to School programming events

Strategy 3.2

Partner with community-based organizations to increase nutrition education outreach

DESCRIPTION

Leverage current work of community partners to increase nutrition education opportunities, both for general education and to increase healthy food consumption. Courses should include resources on purchasing, storing, and preparing healthy foods on a limited budget with specific opportunities for individuals in low-access/low-income areas, seniors, and youth.

RATIONALE

Systemic and structural barriers that limit access to healthy foods can also prevent access to information on how to incorporate those foods into daily diet choices and prepare them in ways that are culturally relevant. Creating additional opportunities for residents to access knowledge, skills, and support around nutrition can improve health outcomes.

The community survey revealed location and transportation issues as the main barriers to accessing current food and nutrition programming, with 55 percent noting one of those as a challenge. Twenty-six percent of survey respondents indicated interest in virtual programming to increase accessibility. Virtual nutrition education courses could be offered in conjunction with food distribution, specifically highlighting seasonal ingredients or certain techniques to prepare available foods.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Number of nutrition education activities
- Number of nutrition education participants
- Percentage of nutrition education participants that report increased knowledge

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Food Bank — “Cooking Matters”¹⁵

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- American Health Association
- Families in Transition
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success
- Unite Us

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

- Marketing and outreach materials
- Supplies for nutrition education courses

¹⁵New Hampshire Food Bank, “Cooking Matters,” 2023.

Strategy 3.3

Fund a kitchen “tools” program to help families process and prepare healthy foods

DESCRIPTION

Improving availability and access to healthy foods is less impactful when consumers still lack the tools necessary to process, store, and prepare meals with those products. In conjunction with food access and nutrition education resources, community partners should fund a kitchen tools program to provide items such as cutting boards, knives, pots, and pans to ensure participants are fully equipped.

RATIONALE

Ten percent of community survey respondents reported that they did not have the tools needed to cook. A lack of adequate and functional cooking equipment can hinder preparation of healthy foods, even if access is increased within the community.

Further survey data and feedback from a kitchen tools program can help guide nutrition education interventions by grounding them in techniques and technology that are available to the community served. Meal preparation suggestions and recipes can be tailored to tools readily available to program participants.

TIMING

Short term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Number of kitchen tools distributed
- Number of program participants that report increased capacity to prepare healthy meals

LEAD ORGANIZATION

Elliot Health System

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- New Hampshire Food Bank—“Cooking Matters”
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Kitchen tools to distribute







STABILITY STRATEGIES

STABILITY OF THE OTHER THREE DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY OVER TIME

Even if an individual's food intake is adequate today, they are still considered to be food insecure if they have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of their nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors such as unemployment or rising food prices may have an impact on the stability of food security status.

Objective 1

Increase community awareness of existing and new food programming

Strategy 4.1

Create a comprehensive guide to food access resources in the City of Manchester

DESCRIPTION

Use the internal food access resource "coverage map" to create an external guide for community members to access food distribution and programming through partners across the city.

RATIONALE

Almost 60 percent of community survey respondents reported being worried that their food would run out. Furthermore, 48 percent reported their food did run out either "often" or "sometimes" and they did not have money to buy more. Community members need a consolidated reference to identify additional food assistance resources.

TIMING

Short term

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Funds to create guide and update on a regular basis

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- Guide to Manchester food access resources created
- Number of partner organizations participating in the guide's creation

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
- Unite Us

Strategy 4.2

Create an outreach and education campaign to promote the food access guide

DESCRIPTION

In addition to creating a guide to food access resources within the City of Manchester, community partners should plan a joint effort to promote the guide across the city.

RATIONALE

According to the community survey, 57 percent of Manchester residents rely on social media, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, to access information on food availability and programming within the city. Understanding how residents access information can inform the development of an impactful outreach strategy to share food access resources with the community. Using social media platforms to reach community partner networks and boosting posts with paid promotion will be the most efficient way to advertise a food access guide. Social media promotion can be paired with television and/or radio advertisements as well as promotion within health care settings to reach the next largest segments of information consumers.

TIMING

Long term

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Number of residents accessing the guide
—website views and/or copies distributed

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions

SUPPORT PARTNERS

- American Heart Association
- Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success
- Unite Us

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Funds to create guide and update on a regular basis



Objective II

Ensure food access is incorporated into Manchester's emergency planning

Strategy 4.3

Collaborate with Emergency Management to ensure that emergency planning includes food access considerations

DESCRIPTION

Advocate for food access prioritization in Manchester's emergency preparedness to ensure consistent and reliable access to food during social, environmental, or economic disruptions. Food should be explicitly included in considerations of resource continuity during emergencies.

RATIONALE

Low-access and low-income residents are particularly vulnerable to the effects of disruptions on accessible food sources. Even smaller scale disruptions such as unexpected school closures can significantly impact food access for families that rely on services such as free and reduced price school lunches. Already leveraged food access resources such as food pantries are further taxed during times of disruption and economic downturn and may require additional support to serve an increased number of clients.

TIMING

Short term

PARTNERS

Meals on Wheels

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Expanded inclusion of food access into the City of Manchester's emergency management planning

POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES

Staff time

LEAD ORGANIZATION

- Manchester Health Department
- Elliot Health System
- New Hampshire Hunger Solutions



MOVING THE PLAN FORWARD

This Healthy Food Access Plan will serve as a guiding document for the City of Manchester through July of 2026 with ARPA funding, and potentially beyond with additional funding sources. Implementing each of the strategic recommendations will require action from the listed partners and additional city stakeholders.

The Manchester Health Department will serve as the principle implementation partner for the Healthy Food Access Plan, including the following:

- › Convening relevant partners to pursue prioritized recommendations
- › Identifying funding and resources available for implementation
- › Coordinating or delegating work on specific action items for various recommendations
- › Assessing progress against the plan's recommendations

Successful implementation will depend on the work of the many stakeholders in the Manchester food system as well as continued community engagement. Community involvement will help ensure equitable processes and sustainability of the developed practices and programs.

Community partners not already included in the plan, as well as other local businesses, institutions, and especially residents are encouraged to engage with the Manchester Health Department's efforts and follow the Healthy Food Access Plan journey.



Glossary of Terms

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): U.S. president Joe Biden's administration's plan to provide direct relief to Americans, contain COVID-19, and support the national economy. This legislation includes a mandate to distribute more than \$360 billion in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and tribal governments to maintain and improve vital services.¹⁶

Double Up Food Bucks: A program of the Fair Food Network, a national nonprofit that matches SNAP EBT dollars used to purchase fruits and vegetables at participating retailers and farmers markets. In New Hampshire, this program is administered in partnership with the Granite State Market Match.¹⁷

Food recovery: Actions organizations can take to prevent and divert otherwise wasted food. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) has developed a hierarchy of food recovery to prioritize the best ways to prevent and divert wasted food based on the benefits they create for the environment, society, and the economy. The most impactful strategy is to first reduce the volume of excess food generated, followed by strategies to feed people in need of additional food, including donation of excess food to food banks, shelters, etc.¹⁸

Food security: When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.¹⁹

Healthy diet: A healthy diet includes "a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy and fortified [dairy] alternatives."²⁰

Hunger: Also referred to as undernourishment, hunger is an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. Hunger or undernourishment is a symptom of food insecurity.²¹

Low access, low income: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) identifies areas of low food access based on certain low-income and low-access criteria. Low-income (LI) is defined as a census tract with a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater, or median family income at or below 80 percent of the statewide or metropolitan area median family income. Low-access (LA) is defined as a low-income census tract with at least 500 people or 33 percent of the tract's population living more than one mile (urban areas) or more than ten miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket or grocery store.²²

National School Lunch program: The National School Lunch program provides subsidized meals to income-eligible students each school day. Children with household incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free school lunch, while those with household incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price lunch. The proportion of students who qualify for this program is often used as an indicator of overall poverty within a school district, and this measure is also a strong indicator of food insecurity.²³

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): The largest federal nutrition assistance program. SNAP provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. This card can be used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores.²⁴

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): The WIC program provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.²⁵

¹⁶American Rescue Plan Fact Sheet, accessed March 1, 2023.

¹⁷Granite State Market Match, "Double Up Food Bucks a Win for Families, Farmers & Communities," accessed March 1, 2023.

¹⁸U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Food Recovery Hierarchy," updated August 28, 2022.

¹⁹EC-FAO Food Security Programme, "Introduction to Food Security."

²⁰U.S. Department of Agriculture, "What Is a Healthy Diet?" July 17, 2019.

²¹Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Hunger and Food Insecurity," accessed March 1, 2023.

²³U.S. Department of Agriculture, "The National School Lunch Program," updated November 2017.

²⁴U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)," accessed March 1, 2023.

²⁵U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)," accessed March 1, 2023.

Appendix

Additional Long-Term Strategies Requiring City of Manchester Leadership or Other Large Institutional Partners for Implementation

Category	Objective	Strategy	Potential partners
Availability	Increase healthy food choices and food retail outlets across the City of Manchester, especially in the nine low-access/low-income census tracts	Consider adding incentives or requirements for new and existing food retailers within the City of Manchester to stock a minimum amount of “healthy foods” based on volume or square footage	City of Manchester Planning Department City of Manchester Economic Development Department
		Conduct a market feasibility study for additional supermarkets in the City of Manchester with a focus on Westside neighborhoods	City of Manchester Planning Department City of Manchester Economic Development Department
		Identify economic development incentives to attract new supermarkets to the City of Manchester with a focus on Westside neighborhoods	City of Manchester Planning Department City of Manchester Economic Development Department
Access	Increase access to fresh and culturally appropriate foods through retail and charitable partners	Offer financial and technical assistance to existing ethnic grocery stores and food business entrepreneurs from diverse cultural backgrounds; assistance could include direct offers of revolving or low-interest loans and/or grants as well as technical assistance in accessing programs such as USDA REAP or other state economic development funds	City of Manchester Planning Department City of Manchester Economic Development Department
	Reduce barriers to emergency food assistance programs	Consider allocating additional city and/or county funding for the existing network of pantries, food banks, and/or meal programs	City of Manchester Planning Department City of Manchester Economic Development Department
		Include food security screening questions into healthcare offerings to identify patients with food insecurity Work with health care partners to facilitate nutrition prescription programs and/or increase availability of medically tailored meals for eligible individuals with healthy food access barriers and chronic disease risk	Catholic Medical Center Dartmouth Health Elliot Health System



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