



**MAYOR'S FOOD ACCESS
AGENDA
2019-2021**

Mayor's Office of Food Access

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food insecurity is an issue that affects us all. Our neighbors who struggle to make ends meet should not have to choose between putting food on the table, paying rent, and heating their homes. Over the past decade, the number of families with young children in Boston who have limited or uncertain access to nutritious and safe foods, known as food insecurity, has increased significantly.

The Mayor's Office of Food Access (OFA) for the City of Boston believes that food is a right, not a privilege. Because of this belief, OFA will take on a bold vision to end food insecurity in Boston by 2030. Working towards equitable access to affordable, fresh, healthy, and culturally connected foods for every Bostonian will be a key part of the Mayor's Food Access agenda.

These strategic goals were developed through a thorough, comprehensive, and collaborative process which allowed feedback from the greater food access network in the city.

The five strategic goals that will get us to our bold vision are outlined below. They are:

1. Ensure food access issues are prioritized within community organizations, city agencies, and other key partners, emphasizing a racial equity and resilience lens
2. Strengthen citywide food access network by developing shared resources and strategic collaboration opportunities
3. Develop and support a policy and advocacy agenda to eliminate food insecurity
4. Build public awareness of food insecurity and available resources, programs, and services
5. Implement strategies to make healthy and fresh foods more affordable and accessible throughout Boston

This strategic plan will provide the background and context for how the goals were developed how they connect to the larger vision for the Mayor's Office of Food Access.



2. MISSION AND VISION

I. VISION

The Mayor's Office of Food Access (OFA) for the City of Boston believes that food is a right, not a privilege. As such, our vision endorses a just, resilient, and robust food community in Boston that supports the wellbeing of all Boston residents.

2030 VISION

The Mayor's Office of Food Access will take on a **bold vision to end food insecurity in Boston by 2030**. Along with the ideas within the Imagine Boston 2030 plan to make Boston the healthiest city, OFA will work towards the strategic goals outlined in this plan to reach this bold vision.

COLLECTIVE VISION

As a part of the strategic planning process, stakeholders and key OFA staff were asked what success looks like with respect to food access in Boston. It's important to know what we are all working towards. It became clear that there is general agreement on our collective vision. **We are working towards equitable access to affordable, fresh, healthy, and culturally connected foods for every Bostonian.**

II. MISSION

The mission of the Mayor's Office of Food Access for the City of Boston is to improve equitable access to nutritious food with respect to affordability, physical accessibility, and cultural connectedness. In pursuit of this mission, OFA will foster a more food secure community with a vibrant, inclusive food culture, reflective of the diverse residents of the City.

III. DEFINITIONS

Food Access

This mission highlights OFA's definition of appropriate "food access", which is the state which we seek to build in order to foster food security for all Bostonians. OFA defines food access as having adequate access to food through affordability (Do I have enough money to buy the food I need and want?), physical accessibility (Do I have the means to get to the food I need and want?), and cultural connectedness (Can I access the culturally relevant food products that I need and want?).



Food Security

The Mayor's Office of Food Access uses the USDA definition of food security which is "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life." It is important to note these definitions of food access and food security for this strategic plan.



3. CURRENT LANDSCAPE

I. OVERVIEW

Food is a basic necessity. The World Health Organization and the United Nations consider access to safe and nutritious food a basic individual right, but many urban residents have limited access to fresh produce and other healthful foods. Low-income community members may face greater barriers in accessing healthy and affordable food, which may negatively affect diet and food security.

Today, 1 in 10 households in Massachusetts is food insecure.

Over the past decade, the number of families with young children in Boston who have limited or uncertain access to nutritious and safe foods, known as food insecurity, has increased significantly.

Research clearly demonstrates that food insecurity negatively impacts the health of children and adults. New research, conducted in 2018 by Children’s HealthWatch and the Greater Boston Food Bank, show hunger and food insecurity in our state increased health-related expenditures by an estimated \$2.4 billion at least, in 2016 alone. This reflects the avoidable costs of doctor’s visits, hospital stays, emergency room treatment, prescription medications, home healthcare, and much more associated with food insecurity. It also includes lost work time, low productivity, premature death and special education expenditures—indirect costs that sap the economic health of our state.

According to Project Bread’s 2016 Status Report on Hunger in Massachusetts, at the height of the recession in 2011, food insecurity was at its peak in Massachusetts at 11.9%. Now, with unemployment at a 15-year low, we expect to see a similar decline in food insecurity. But food insecurity rates are still 24% higher than it was a decade ago. While more people are working, their income doesn’t keep up with the basic costs of living, such as housing and child care, and too many households are forced to cut back on consistent, nutritious meals.

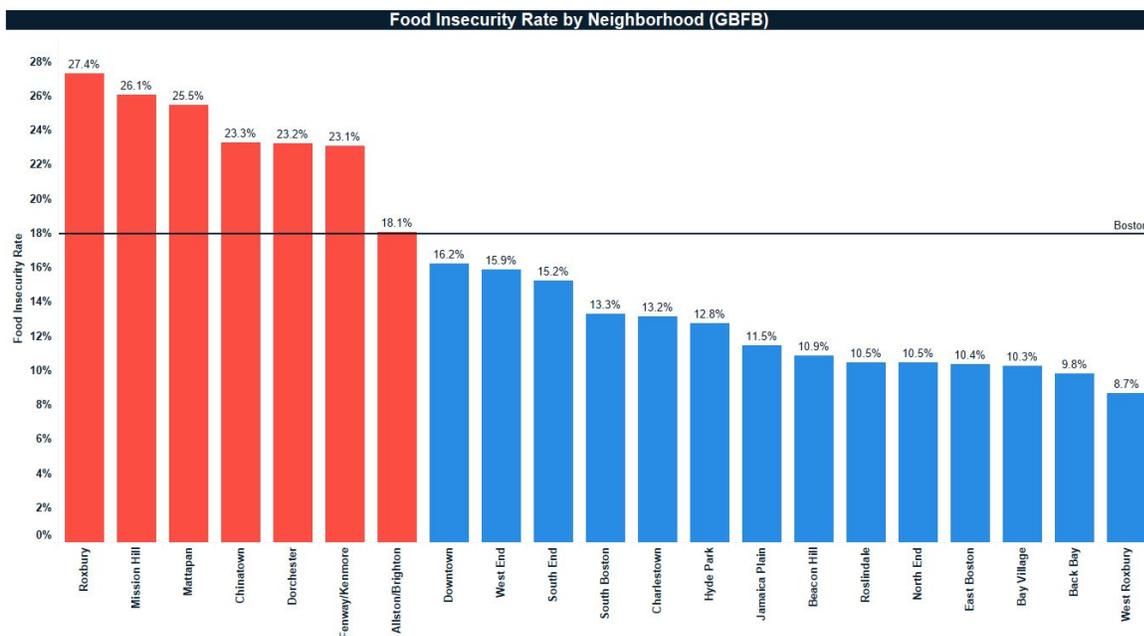
II. FOOD INSECURITY IN BOSTON

- 10.2% of Massachusetts households—approximately 723,000 adults and children—are food insecure.
- In Boston, the food insecurity rate is 18% on average, with wide ranges between neighborhoods and even within neighborhoods at the census tract level (see chart below for neighborhood detail).
- In 2017, the food insecurity rate in Massachusetts is 27% higher than it was 10 years ago.



- Boston residents who spoke English as a second language were more than twice as likely to respond to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) that the food they bought often or sometimes ran out and they didn't have enough money to get more, compared to residents whose primary language was English.
- Hispanic/Latino residents were nearly four times more likely to respond "we were hungry but didn't eat because we couldn't afford enough food," on the BRFSS survey compared to White residents.
- Despite unemployment in Massachusetts at a 15-year low, food insecurity is not going down due in part to the rising cost of living, including housing and child care. Massachusetts is currently ranked at having the second highest child care costs in the country. Additionally, over the last six years, the average monthly rent in greater Boston for a 2-bedroom apartment has increased by nearly \$800.

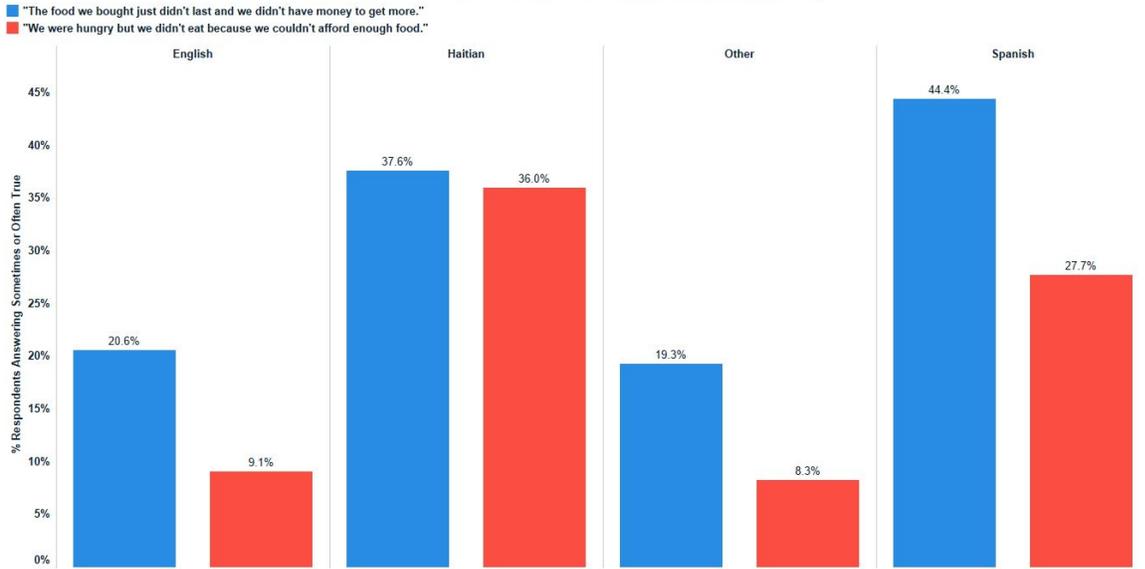
Food Insecurity Rate by Neighborhood



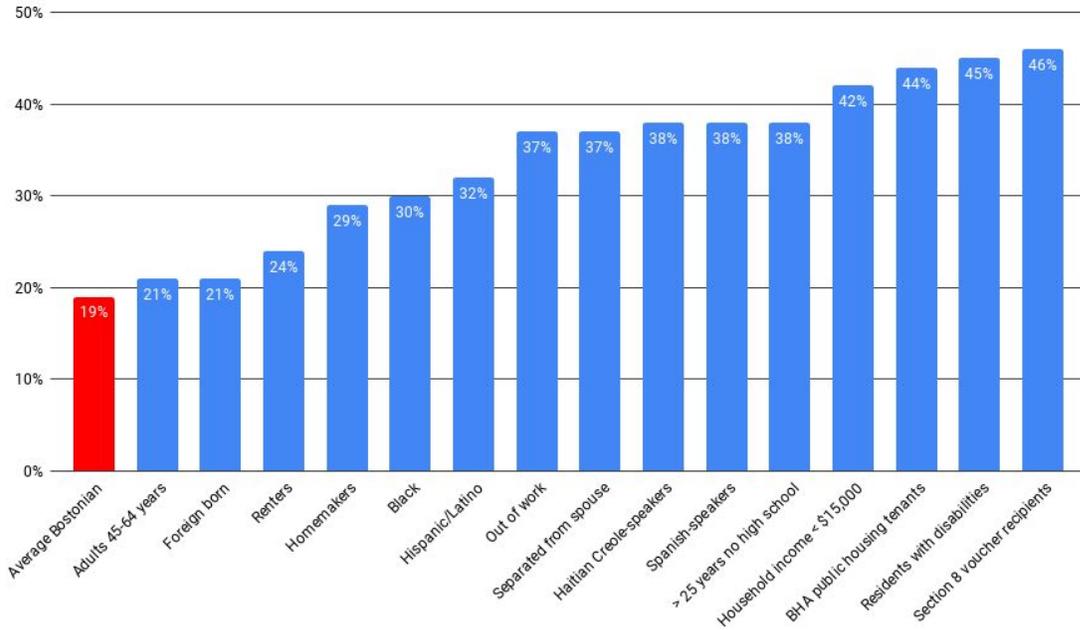
Below are a few graphs that visualize data from the Boston Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), which is a CDC survey administered by the Boston Public Health Commission every two years in Boston. The charts below represent their 2015 and 2017 data aggregated.



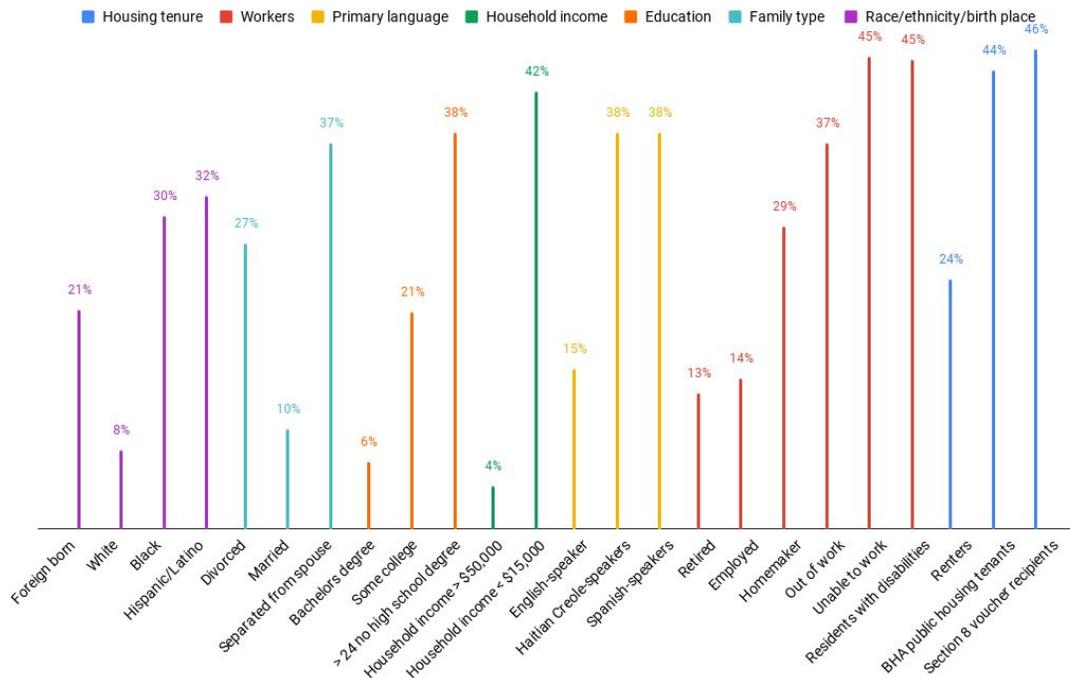
Food Access Survey Answers by Primary Language (BRFSS)



Boston residents at greatest risk of food insecurity, BRFSS 2017



Boston Subpopulations at Highest Risk of Food Insecurity, BBRFSS 2017



III. SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. Health starts in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. Our health is also determined in part by access to social and economic opportunities; the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships. The conditions in which we live explain in part why some Americans are healthier than others and why Americans more generally are not as healthy as they could be. Understanding the conditions that impact health and access to food is critical to understanding the drivers of food insecurity and its economic impact. The five key areas of the SDOH are outlined and shown below, as created by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Healthy People 2020 Plan.

These five key areas (determinants) include:

- Economic Stability
- Education



- Social and Community Context
- Health and Health Care
- Neighborhood and Built Environment



IV CITY OF BOSTON'S COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY AND RESILIENCE

On January 31, 2019, Mayor Walsh signed an Executive Order Relative to Racial Equity and Leadership reaffirming his commitment to ensuring Boston is an equitable city for all. This Executive Order strengthens the City of Boston's commitment to enhancing the city's collective resilience by advancing racial equity, prioritizing social justice and strengthening social cohesion across all city agencies. The Mayor's Office of Food Access will build on this commitment and utilize a racial equity, social justice, and resilience lens as the implementation plan is built to meet the goals outlined in this strategic plan. Feedback from stakeholders and community members emphasized this as well, and OFA will carry this commitment through the strategic plan.

V. MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FOOD ACCESS HISTORY

Food insecurity is an issue that affects us all. It is because of this reality, that in 2014, after Mayor Walsh took office, the Mayor's Office of Food Initiatives was reorganized into the newly created Health and Human Services (HHS) cabinet in the City of Boston. In 2016, the Mayor's Office of Food Initiatives became the Mayor's Office of Food Access (OFA). The new name of the office signified a shift in mission to focus more intentionally addressing the food access challenges that many low-income and otherwise marginalized Bostonians face on a daily basis.



4. MOST PRESSING ISSUES

The staff at the Mayor's Office of Food Access engaged in a strategic planning process to help advise and set the Mayor's Food Access Agenda for the City of Boston. Along with one on one interviews with key staff members, a series of interviews were conducted with stakeholders and members of the Boston Food Access Council. The themes from those interviews were synthesized and included in this Strategic Plan.

One of the questions asked was: "what issue around food access is the most pressing to address in Boston?" Four major themes emerged. They are:

1. Affordability
2. Accessibility
3. Underutilization of Programs
4. Awareness of Food Insecurity

I. AFFORDABILITY

Fresh, healthy foods tend to be more expensive than unhealthy foods. Fresh foods are not subsidized the same ways that unhealthy foods are. A 2013 study from Harvard School of Public Health found that eating a healthy diet (rich in fruits, vegetables, fish, and nuts) cost about \$1.50 more per day per person than eating an unhealthy diet (the kind full of processed foods and refined grains). That's an extra \$2,200 per year for a family of four.

In addition, healthier foods appear more expensive when compared to the cheaper alternative of hyper-processed, sugary, salty, additive-laden food. Those foods are more often subsidized, last longer, and are more available in low-income communities, which leads into the second issue of accessibility.

II. ACCESSIBILITY

The main challenge underneath accessibility is transportation. The MBTA subway and bus system can be unreliable and difficult to utilize when carrying bags of groceries. Often, families have to take multiple bus lines to get to a grocery store that carries affordable and culturally-appropriate foods. It creates an undue burden on those without access to a car. Transportation is just one factor that reduces food budgets. People spend part of their income on getting from their home to the stores, leaving less money available to buy their groceries.

Beyond getting to a physical location to access food, other challenges include accessibility of services to those who need them. For example: undocumented immigrants that can not apply to WIC or SNAP, seniors, non English speakers, people with disabilities, those that don't know how to navigate the system, and people that are over the income requirements for these



programs but still can not afford buy food. There are significant barriers to access food benefits and this is another challenge around accessibility.

In addition, corner stores abound throughout the City of Boston, but healthy, fresh foods are not available at most corner stores, thus providing additional challenges for residents trying to access fresh food.

III. UNDERUTILIZATION OF PROGRAMS

There are a number of programs that exist for Boston residents to participate in to help them overcome the barriers to food security. Many of the programs suffer from underutilization for a variety of reasons. Either there isn't enough public awareness that the programs exist, there isn't enough education on who is eligible for the programs, or there is a stigma attached to accessing these programs. The programs mentioned during the strategic planning stakeholder interviews included:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. The SNAP Gap is the difference between the number of low-income Massachusetts residents receiving MassHealth who are likely SNAP eligible and the number of people actually receiving SNAP. In Massachusetts, the size of this gap is currently 763,827 people. In Boston, the SNAP Gap is 74,277 people.
- Boston Double Up Food Bucks: Double Up Food Bucks is a SNAP incentive program. If you pay for fresh fruits and veggies with your EBT card at participating corner and grocery stores, you get a dollar-to-dollar match up to \$10 per day per customer.
- Boston Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services: Nearly three-quarters of BPS students live at or below poverty, yet only 40% of students participate in school breakfast and only 68% in school lunch. Moreover, there are many anecdotes from the cafeteria and janitorial staff in schools of garbage cans full of food at the end of meal periods each day because students are taking meals but not eating them.

IV. AWARENESS OF FOOD INSECURITY

While the individuals and organizations interviewed for the OFA Strategic Plan are all intimately aware of and well-versed in the issues surrounding food insecurity and food access, there was an acknowledgement that this awareness and education doesn't always extend out to other city departments and community organizations and agencies. Making food insecurity and food access a priority in Boston means extending this knowledge and awareness of the issues to those outside of this current network.

Food insecurity is not an isolated issue. Working together to ensure that other departments and organizations understand the importance and magnitude of the problem will be critical as OFA works to implement the goals of this strategic plan.



5. CURRENT INITIATIVES

The Mayor's Office of Food Access wants everyone to have access to nutritious food and offers a variety of current programs, services, and initiatives to meet that mission. These are outlined below.

I. ENSURE ACCESS TO FOOD FOR ALL BOSTON RESIDENTS

Boston Eats

The Boston Eats program is designed to make meals accessible to City kids and youth with no ID or registration required. It provides free meals to youth 18 and younger when they are outside of school, including summer meals and afterschool meals.

Food Resources Maps

The Food Resource map displays free, low-cost, and emergency food outlets including: food pantries and meals sites, affordable fresh fruit and vegetable sources (Fair Foods and Fresh Truck locations), senior dining sites, farmers market locations (where SNAP and HIP matching can be accessed), and SNAP enrollment assistance locations, as well as other general information. On one side, the information is organized by neighborhood to allow users to easily locate resources that are convenient for them and on the other side a map shows the locations of these resources. The map is available in five languages including English, Spanish, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Haitian Creole, Russian and Vietnamese. Additionally, printer-friendly maps (in PDF format) classified by neighborhood are also available to print at any time from the OFA website.

BOSFoodLove

The goal of BOSFoodLove is for Boston Public Schools students to love school food. Nearly three-quarters of BPS students live at or below poverty, yet only 40% of students participate in school breakfast and only 68% in school lunch. Moreover, there are many anecdotes from the cafeteria and janitorial staff in schools of garbage cans full of food at the end of meal periods each day because students are taking meals from the service line but not eating them.

BOSFoodLove will improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables among BPS students through increased participation in and consumption of school meals. Emphasis on student and parent engagement, to solicit input into the school food programs, will ensure that all BPS students have access to free, healthy food that meets their dietary needs and preferences and supports their ability to perform well in school.

Farmers Markets in Boston

The Mayor's Office of Food Access supports farmers markets with outreach throughout the city during the season. They help to bring new programming, such as summer meals and promoting



farmers market week. In addition, they support the farmers markets with permitting requirements, and provide technical assistance for any SNAP-related issues.

II. INCREASE BUYING POWER FOR FOOD IN BOSTON

Boston Double Up Food Bucks

Double Up Food Bucks is a SNAP incentive program. If you pay for fresh fruits and veggies with your EBT card at participating corner and grocery stores, you get a dollar-to-dollar match up to \$10 per day per customer.

Healthy Incentives Program

The Healthy Incentives Program, or HIP provides a 100 percent incentive – a dollar-for-dollar match – for each SNAP dollar spent on targeted fruits and vegetables purchased at participating farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs statewide. This is a state-run program, administered by the MA Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). OFA works in partnership with DTA to implement and promote this program to Boston SNAP users.

III. SUPPORT FOOD ACCESS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Urban Farming in the City

Urban farming gives residents better access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. It also cuts down on transportation costs and carbon emissions. The City passed Article 89 in 2013 to support commercial urban farming in the city. OFA helps farmers to expand their business to stores and farmers markets, thus making farming a profitable profession. OFA can also support farmers to navigate the system and remove some of the barriers to implementing Article 89.

Boston CANshare

This annual fundraising campaign helps to fight hunger and increase access to fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables for all Bostonians by raising money for the Healthy Incentives Program and Boston Double Up Food Bucks program.

Boston Food Access Council

The Boston Food Access Council (BFAC) is a network of local leaders addressing food insecurity and related issues in Boston. The goal of the Council is to eliminate food insecurity in Boston by 2030. This will be accomplished by improving physical, financial, and cultural access to food - in particular for residents who are disproportionately impacted by food access issues, including people of color, children, and older adults - through the creation of a unified, strategic plan.



6. VISION AND GOALS

I. OFA VISION

The Mayor's Office of Food Access will take on a **bold vision to end food insecurity in Boston by 2030**. Along with the ideas within the Imagine Boston 2030 plan to make Boston the healthiest city, OFA will work towards the strategic goals outlined in this plan to reach this bold vision.

COLLECTIVE VISION

As a part of the strategic planning process, stakeholders and key OFA staff were asked what success looks like with respect to food access in Boston. It's important to know what we are all working towards. It became clear that there is general agreement on our collective vision. **We are working towards equitable access to affordable, fresh, healthy, and culturally connected foods for every Bostonian.**

II. STRATEGIC GOALS

These goals were developed with a comprehensive and collaborative process which allowed feedback from the greater food access network in the city. Each goal is expanded upon in the next section with initiatives and objectives within them. Because so much of this work is collaborative, in nature, the goals and objectives will be classified according to which stakeholders will be leading and implementing them. This framework will outline **City-owned** initiatives which require the City to lead and implement them; **City-led** initiatives, with the City sharing ownership and implementation with partners; and **City-catalyzed** initiatives, where the City may endorse ideas and convene stakeholders, but the action plans will be owned and implemented by other partners because their strategic priorities and existing programming allows them to have greater impact.

The five strategic goals are:

6. Ensure food access issues are prioritized within community organizations, city agencies, and other key partners, emphasizing a racial equity and resilience lens
7. Strengthen citywide food access network by developing shared resources and strategic collaboration opportunities
8. Develop and support a policy and advocacy agenda to eliminate food insecurity



9. Build public awareness of food insecurity and available resources, programs, and services
10. Implement strategies to make healthy and fresh foods more affordable and accessible throughout Boston



7. ACTION PLAN 2019-2021

I. GOAL 1: ENSURE FOOD ACCESS ISSUES ARE PRIORITIZED WITHIN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, CITY AGENCIES, AND OTHER KEY PARTNERS, EMPHASIZING A RACIAL EQUITY AND RESILIENCE LENS.

1. Partner with community health centers and other partners to implement a comprehensive process for sharing resources with all Boston clients. (City-led)
 - a. Work with partners to develop a process and protocol for food access referrals.
 - b. Ensure food insecurity screenings lead to referrals to food access resources and services.
 - c. Promote alignment with MassHealth ACO transition by including relevant stakeholders.
2. Use IB2030 platform to connect with other city departments about prioritizing food access services. (City-owned)
3. Work with meal sponsors to ensure all children have the food they need to grow, learn and reach their maximum potential. (City-led)
4. Collaborate with Boston area colleges and universities on their programs and services to ensure every student has access to healthy and fresh food. (City-catalyzed)

II. GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN CITYWIDE FOOD ACCESS NETWORK BY DEVELOPING SHARED RESOURCES AND STRATEGIC COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

1. Organize opportunities to convene and develop the food access network in Boston. (City-owned)
 - a. Convene annual Food Access Summit.
 - b. Provide ongoing professional development and skill-building opportunities to build on best practices as a network
2. Develop a comprehensive database for partners and stakeholders that includes all organizations working on food access and all resources and services available to help identify gaps in services. (City-owned)
3. Make all data and research produced and compiled at the OFA available to the entire food access network, including data from food insecurity screenings. (City-owned)
4. Restructure Boston Food Access Council (BFAC) to reach strategic goals by 2021. (City-owned)



III. GOAL 3: DEVELOP AND SUPPORT A POLICY AND ADVOCACY AGENDA TO ELIMINATE FOOD INSECURITY

1. Fully support the Mayor's legislative priorities that work to eliminate food insecurity and lend support to other advocacy efforts during the legislative process that arise around ending food insecurity (City-Owned).
2. Partner school food partners to implement programs that improve the underperforming participation, and consumption of all school meals offered district wide (City-Owned)

IV. GOAL 4: BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS OF FOOD INSECURITY AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES

1. Increase visibility of food access initiatives (City-owned)
 - a. Highlight demonstrated connections between food insecurity and health outcomes, academic outcomes, and other issues. (City-catalyzed)
 - b. Increase awareness of Boston Double Up Food Bucks program among residents (City-owned)
2. Develop a campaign to destigmatize food insecurity (City-led)
 - a. Tell the stories behind the issue and show faces of real Bostonians
 - b. Celebrate and share the success stories
3. Use special food access months to highlight food insecurity and resources and services available (City-led)

V. GOAL 5: IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO MAKE HEALTHY AND FRESH FOODS MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE THROUGHOUT BOSTON

1. Build out Double Up Food Bucks and other programs to further support small business and corner stores to offer fresh and affordable foods (City-owned)
2. Support implementation and sustainability of programs citywide that help Bostonians access healthy, affordable.(City-led)
3. Support efforts by stakeholders to address supply chain and food waste. (City-catalyzed)
4. Develop understanding of challenges to adhering to Article 89 and provide supportive services to overcome them. (City-owned)



8. APPENDIX

I. STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

This Strategic Plan was developed in conjunction with the staff from the Mayor's Office of Food Access. There were numerous opportunities for feedback and edits, particularly as the recommendations and goals were being developed. The plan was developed utilizing the steps outlined below:

1. Developed questions to be asked during one-on-one stakeholder and key staff interviews
2. Conducted interviews with 37 stakeholders, representing 30 organizations
3. Presentation and discussion with Boston Food Access Council (BFAC)
4. One on one interviews with key members of the OFA staff
5. Research and information collection on past OFA initiatives and food policy council models and successes from across the country
6. Synthesis of data and information from interviews and BFAC discussion
7. Food Access Map created for review at Citywide Food Summit
8. Strategic Plan drafted, with recommendations to review with stakeholders
9. Citywide Food Summit to present what we've learned, gather feedback, and develop an action plan
10. Feedback from the Citywide Food Summit incorporated; vision and goals revised and restructured
11. Video conference with food access stakeholders to gather additional feedback on the new vision and goals
12. Strategic Plan and Boston Food Access Map edited and finalized to be presented to OFA and HHS team



II. ABOUT JUDY PINEDA NEUFELD

This Strategic Plan was written by Judy Pineda Neufeld (of [Judy P. Neufeld Strategies](#)). She is an expert organizational and leadership development consultant, facilitator, and trainer, working closely with mission-driven organizations across the country. She is passionate about making teams, organizations, and individuals more impactful and building their capacity.

She has led organizations through complex strategic planning processes, transformative culture change, and has helped to reorganize, rebrand, and revise mission, vision, and values for nonprofits and political organizations.

Judy has held several roles with Emerge America, an organization that recruits, trains, and provides a powerful network for Democratic women running for office in 25 states. An alumna of the program, Judy went on to become the executive director of the Massachusetts affiliate, increasing the size and diversity of the classes and successfully designing and implementing the first candidate training bootcamp program, which is now replicated across the Emerge network.

Before starting as the executive director of Emerge Massachusetts, she was the Manager of Recruitment and Community Partnerships at Big Sister Association of Greater Boston, the largest and oldest mentoring organization in Greater Boston exclusively serving girls. While at Big Sister, Judy managed all volunteer and child recruitment for the agency, developed a Diversity Council to recruit more women of color, and created a thriving Alumnae Association.

A sought-after trainer, Judy leads trainings and facilitates retreats and meetings with an authentic style that allows attendees to stay engaged throughout the day, move outside of their comfort zones, and have fun in the process. She recently became a certified trainer with the National Democratic Training Committee.

Judy graduated *cum laude* from Tufts University and completed her MBA with honors at the Rollins College Crummer Graduate School of Business with a certification in Leadership Development.

Contact Information

E: judy@judypneufeld.com | P: 617-584-9882 | W: www.judypneufeld.com

