



Food Security Council

December 19, 2023

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

Healthy People. Healthy Communities.

Agenda

- Welcome
- Progress Update
- Recommendations Discussion + Voting
- Next Steps



South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
Healthy People. Healthy Communities.

Welcome

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Director, DHEC

Progress Update



Convene Council + Establish Goals

August 2023

Review proviso requirements, establish goals, and determine timeline.



Inventory + Other Resources Feedback

September 2023

Each agency to provide feedback on current state of existing services, and any other relevant information. DHEC to provide document.



Draft Recommendations

October 2023

Council discusses and drafts recommendations.



Identify Gaps, Draft Recommendations + Draft Report

November 2023

Council determines gaps and discusses initial recommendations. DHEC begins drafting report.



Finalize Gaps + Recommendations, Draft Report

December 2023

Each agency provides and Council votes on final recommendations and gaps. DHEC will incorporate and finalize draft report.



Finalize Report + Submit to Legislature

January 2024

Council reviews and finalizes report containing final recommendations and submits by January 31, 2024.

Recommendations

- Process
 - Discussion for each
 - Followed by vote

Recommendation #1

- **Fund Change SC Program Expansion**
 - Currently a pilot program in the Pee Dee area. Requesting increased funding to expand the program to:
 - Boost infrastructure
 - Raise awareness
 - Increase demand for healthy foods
 - Conduct baseline research

Recommendations #2 and #3

- SC Food Policy Council Funding
 - Serves as robust state-level, cross-sector organization that has capacity to enhance and act on FSC's work.
 - Requesting funding for a state director, program coordinator, and other associated costs.

Recommendations #4

- **Promote + Expand Summer Break Café (Summer Program Food Service)**
 - Increase the number of sponsors and sites; specifically, more non-profit sponsors
 - Improve collaboration between SFAs and sponsors to address transportation barriers, adding more sites, and promoting all sites
 - Establish specific resource/staffing to track data
 - Use SCDE funds for more targeted marketing and outreach
 - Encourage sponsors to use mobile feeding sites
 - Apply for Excessive Heat/Advisory Waivers to allow for non-congregate meals during National Weather Advisory
 - Encourage SFAs to extend dates of operations
 - Encourage sponsors to have open sites vs. closed-enrollment sites

Recommendation #5

- Support for statewide organization to facilitate implementation of the Food Security Council findings and recommendations
 - The Food Security Council sunsets on Jan. 31, 2024
 - This recommendation supports a statewide organization to facilitate implementation of the Council's finding and recommendations provided for in the report to the General Assembly
 - Requests funding for an FTE position within the statewide organization for a specified and limited timeframe

Recommendation #6

- **Establish a statewide web-based care coordination referral system that addresses food insecurity, among other social determinants of health**
 - Investment in of a web-based care coordination system (i.e., multi-directional referral system) to facilitate the coordination of care and address social determinants of health
 - Address the social determinants related to increasing health care access and quality, economic stability, and education resources
 - Identify gaps in service and support systems and facilitate policy level change at the local level
 - Seamlessly connected to programs and services that can address social needs (e.g., housing, food, medicine, transportation)

Recommendation #7

- Address challenges facing food donation including liability protection and education
 - An estimated **40% of food** produced in the U.S. is wasted
 - Food is the number one thing that goes into South Carolina's landfills, making up about **24% of landfill waste**
 - Food donation programs can help combat both food waste and food insecurity
 - Exploring changes in state law related to liability protection and increasing education and resources on donation liability protection

Recommendation #8

- **Expand community garden programs in the state**
 - Work with partners, including Clemson University PSA, to help expand these programs by providing necessary resources through at its DHEC's local health departments and Clemson Extension's county offices
 - DHEC health departments and Clemson Extension offices are located in each of the 46 counties
 - Resources would help DHEC clients and their families as well as the public connect with community garden efforts

Recommendation #9

- **Increase the availability of fresh produce at variety stores**
 - One of the largest variety store brands has over 18,000 stores nationwide and sells fresh produce in 16% of the location
 - Variety stores are located throughout the state, particularly in rural areas. Many variety stores do not carry fresh produce
 - Of the stores that do sell fresh produce, many of them do not meet the requirements to be a WIC vendor
 - The state should explore ways that variety stores could offer more fresh produce and also expand acceptance for programs such as WIC
 - The state should further explore where variety stores are located, whether they offer fresh produce, and what programs they participate in, e.g., WIC, SNAP

Recommendation #10

- **Develop a one-stop eligibility system for public programs and services**
 - Streamline access to public programs and services, eliminating redundant paperwork and reducing administrative burdens for individuals seeking assistance
 - Enhance efficiency, save time for both applicants and state agencies
 - Allow for better coordination and data sharing among different programs, enabling the state to optimize resource allocation and identify gaps in service delivery
 - Contribute to a more responsive and equitable public service infrastructure, ultimately benefiting the well-being and livelihoods of South Carolina residents

Recommendation #11

- **Allow qualifying persons with a drug felony conviction to be eligible to receive SNAP benefits in South Carolina**
- 29 states have fully opted out of the lifetime ban; 20 states have enacted a modified ban
- A drug conviction is the only type of felony conviction that bans a person from being eligible for SNAP benefits
- South Carolina is also the only state that has not passed legislation to modify or lift this ban
- Supporting access to SNAP benefits for those with felony drug convictions is an investment in rehabilitation, reducing the likelihood of recidivism and associated costs of incarceration

Recommendation #12

- **Create a centralized food resource map for combating food insecurity**
- Create a centralized statewide food resource map that would potentially include the following, among other considerations:
 - Food distribution centers, food pantries, and food banks
 - Farmers' markets, roadside markets, and community-supported agriculture (CSAs)
 - WIC and SNAP vendors
 - Community gardens and food cooperatives
 - Transportation networks
 - Food desert and food insecurity data
 - Food and nutrition educational programs
- The creation of a centralized food resource map could also be added to or combined with another recommendation

Recommendation #13

- **Promote farmers and farmers' market participation in the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)**
 - There are 374 farmers' markets and roadside markets that offer fresh produce in the state; 23% of those markets allow purchases by WIC participants
 - One-time funding is needed to promote farmer participation in the WIC FMNP program in the communities in the state most at-need
 - The campaign would educate farmers on the benefits of the program and why their participation matters
 - There are 287 farmers' markets in the state that do not accept WIC payment, which presents an opportunity to increase participation

Recommendation #14

- **Expand the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program**
 - \$1.1 million in recurring dollars in the 2024 budget to expand operation of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program
 - These additional state funds will allow the department to supplement the federal funding to serve approximately 10,000 additional seniors per year (35,000 total) and maintain a \$50 benefit level

Recommendation #15

- **Increase the Gross Income Limit for SNAP Benefits**
 - 44 states (including South Carolina) have elected to implement BBCE, and 37 states have chosen to increase the gross income limit, including three in the southeast region (Florida, Kentucky and North Carolina)
 - Raising the gross income limit to 150% FPL would significantly increase the number of South Carolina residents potentially eligible for federal assistance

Recommendation #16

- **Increase Coordination between SNAP and WIC**
 - Recommend DSS and DHEC collaborate to identify and implement strategies to maximize the number of eligible families enrolled in WIC
 - Potential items for the agencies to consider should include, at a minimum, targeted marketing and outreach activities, data sharing, and streamlining the application process

Recommendation #17

- **Barrier Removal Strategies**
- The council recommends state funds be provided to implement state and local level strategies that address barriers and increase access to nutritious food essential to health and well-being. Strategies to be considered include:
 - Grants to cover annual grocery delivery fees for elderly or those with a physical disability
 - Incentives for farmers to offer additional locations/venues for target populations to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables (e.g., senior centers)
 - Grants for non-profit organizations to test/implement local strategies (e.g., transportation services)
 - Grants/incentives to increase farmers' participation in state programs (i.e., Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Healthy Bucks, etc.)

Recommendation #18

- **Barrier Removal Strategies**

- Unlike P-EBT, which was 100% federally funded, the new law provides funding for only 50% of any administrative expenses associated with Summer EBT. This would include agency operating costs as well as changes to the state's EBT contract
- We anticipate the costs for Summer EBT to be considerably higher than for P-EBT
- It is likely that any state agency involved in Summer EBT would need to request additional funds in the state budget to cover the remaining 50%

Next Steps

- December 20th or 21st – public comment period begins
- January 2nd – public comment period ends
- January 4th – **Council meeting**, final draft report to Council for review
- January 17th – Council feedback and suggested revisions due to DHEC support staff
- January 22nd – **Council meeting**, report finalized + approved
- January 31st – DHEC submits report to legislature



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