



2024 REPORT

SAN FRANCISCO
Food Security Task Force
Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Food Security Task Force (FSTF) was created by the Board of Supervisors with the purpose of making recommendations on policies, programs, and funding to improve food security. The Task Force’s membership consists of representatives from City departments, San Francisco Unified School District, and community-based organizations. The Task Force meets monthly, and meetings are attended by public agencies, organizations and individuals working to address the diverse food needs of San Francisco residents.

The 2024 Recommendations were developed by reviewing and analyzing data presented in the 2023 San Francisco Biennial Food Security & Equity Report (BFSEER) published by the Department of Public Health in collaboration with the FSTF. The Task Force also reviewed their previous recommendations and modified them based on current conditions.

Food insecurity exists when people do not know where their next meal will come from primarily due to a lack of money. Unfortunately, food insecurity persists in San Francisco. The FSTF believes everyone has the right to food and should have dignified access to high quality, nutritious food that meets their dietary and cultural needs. Public funds should support food for the greatest number of residents with the highest quality of service. San Francisco cannot achieve our shared vision of a just and prosperous city without a food secure population.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

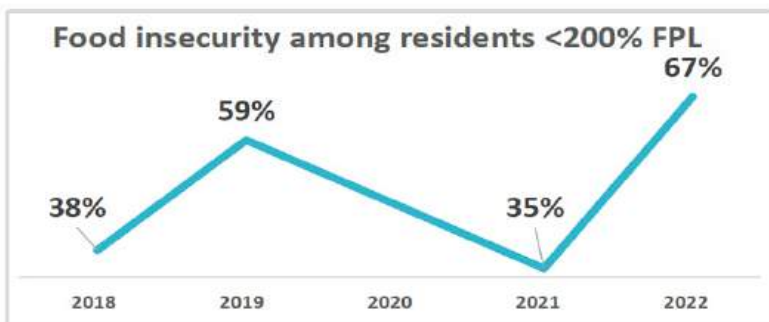
With the ending of much of the pandemic level food support, food insecurity among low-income San Franciscan households increased drastically between 2021 and 2022. **In 2021, food security among this population was 32%, and by 2022 increased to 67%** (about 116,886 residents) - an increase of 109%! ¹

According to the Economic Research Institute, **the cost of living in San Francisco is 109% higher compared to the national average** when factoring in costs like food, rent, utilities, transportation, etc. ² Recent data reveals that **in 2022, Americans spent more on food than they have in 30 years**, on average 11.3% of their disposable income. ³ As echoed in previous FSTF reports, current food programs are not designed or funded to meet all the food needs of a household, and multiple programs are needed to ensure a family is food secure. **Despite participating in City-funded and community food programs, 32% to 83% of people report still being food insecure.** The scaling back and ending of programs will exacerbate food insecurity and the associated health disparities we are seeing, disproportionately impacting low-income communities.

Food insecurity has a strong negative impact on health; and in San Francisco, nutrition-sensitive health disparities are also increasing. The United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service shows that “[a]dults in U.S. households that are less food secure are significantly more likely to have one or more chronic diseases, and the likelihood increases as food insecurity worsens.” ⁴

Locally, nutrition sensitive health disparities are stark. Data from 2017 – 2021 indicates that **hospitalizations due to diabetes, hypertension, or heart failure were nine times higher for Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander residents, and about four times higher for Black/African American residents than the average rate for all San Francisco residents.** For Black/African American residents, hospitalization rates were highest in 2021 for hypertension and heart disease since 2017, and the rate of hospitalizations increased the most for them compared to any other group. ⁵

Food insecurity among low-income San Franciscan households increased drastically between 2021 and 2022.



Despite participating in City-funded and community food programs,



of people report still being food insecure.

1. California Health Interview Survey, 2022
 2. Economic Research Institute, 2024
 3. Ibid.
 4. Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 2024
 5. California Department of Health Care Access and Information, 2017-2021

2024 RECOMMENTATIONS

CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

Income inequality and racial wealth gap - Data from the 2023 BFSEER highlight a persistent and systemic racial wealth gap, income inequality, and communities not meeting Self-Sufficiency Standards (SSS) to live adequately in San Francisco. The SSS developed by the University of Washington determined that **an annual income of \$60,232 is needed for a single adult to live adequately in San Francisco.** ⁶ **About 20% of San Francisco residents** (approximately 174,457) **have a household income below 200% FPL, which equates to \$29,160 for an individual.** ⁷

Significant decrease in food funding and programs - Between FY 22-23 and FY 24-25, public funding for food programs in San Francisco will be reduced by \$35.4 million, largely coming from reductions in local funds even though the need is still incredibly high. This will likely exacerbate the level of food insecurity in San Francisco. The programs with the largest cuts were Human Services Agency (HSA) Grocery Access, CalFresh Administration, and HSA Meal Support. Because of federal and local funding cuts, **the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (SFMFB) plans to phase out of all pop-up pantries by June 30, 2025, impacting 18,000 households. They will also reduce their home delivered groceries by 40%, impacting another 5,200 households.** These funding cuts are also impacting the large network of community-based organizations that receive food from SFMFB for distribution in different neighborhoods and districts.

Few programs focus on nutrition sensitive medical conditions - **There are eight City food programs that specifically focused on addressing nutrition-sensitive medical conditions, with a total budget of \$6.6 million for FY 22-23, which is only 1% of total food funding from all sources.** More funding needs to be dedicated to food programs focused specifically on addressing nutrition-sensitive medical conditions.

Wide range in costs - Data from the 2023 BFSEER revealed significantly different costs per unit. **Across City programs, meal costs ranged from \$1.88 to \$11.22 per meal, while costs per grocery bag ranged from \$7.54 to \$45 per bag.** The City's largest grocery program, the Community Centered Grocery Access Program which funded 70% of City-funded grocery bags had a cost per grocery bag of \$21.87 in FY 22- 23. As funding for this program decreases, the program projects a cost per grocery bag of \$56.04 in FY 24-25.

Need for improved coordination around food - There are nine City departments providing food-related resources and programming through 36 programs. As a result, **food efforts in San Francisco are at times siloed** and collaboration between departments is limited.

State level budget cuts - The governor's current proposed budget removes \$35 million dedicated to the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP), which funds critical programs like Market Match. Market Match is CNIP's largest program providing low-income Californians access to fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets by matching federal nutrition assistance benefits like CalFresh and WIC. **Market Match distributed almost \$2.5 million in benefits through farmers markets in San Francisco in FY 22-23.**

Planned loss of Safeway in Fillmore - **The closure of Safeway in the Fillmore in January 2025** will have a major impact on the surrounding community, which is home to many seniors and families. This Safeway has served the community for 40 years and **is the only full-service grocery store in the Fillmore.**

6. Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington, California Dataset, 2021
7. U.S. Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2023

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

SUCCESSES

Despite the challenges, listed below are bright spots and successes in San Francisco’s work towards food security.

- Mandated by a City Ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors in June 2021, the Department of Public Health published the very first BFSE in December 2023 which collected and analyzed data related to food security and health equity. Data was collected from City Departments and community-based organizations to identify populations in San Francisco that are food insecure and receiving City food-related services, whether the services address health, racial, geographic, age, or other inequities, and what barriers to food security exist. The report provides insight and transparency on food programs and resources and is intended to be used as a tool to inform community members and to be used by City government for strategic and equitable allocation of resources.
- The Ordinance also called on the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) to publish a companion report to the 2023 BFSE to analyze the economic development potential of community food system and food security initiatives. As a result of the report’s findings, OEWD has begun internal department conversations around their role in programming within food infrastructure systems, such as support for restaurants as well as their Healthy Retail Program and are assessing department investments in business owners who want to pivot their business model to add healthier options for residents based on available funding.
- The FSTF is convening the Reimagining Food Coordination subcommittee to develop detailed recommendations for a new food organizing structure that will be presented to City leaders in Summer 2024. This builds on the FSTF’s past recommendations calling for an increase in coordination of local government policy and programs related to food systems, and to elevate the community’s voice in the development and implementation of food policy. The subcommittee is meeting with food policy groups across the country to learn best practices and incorporate them into recommendations.
- The San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) manages 41 of the 112 food producing gardens in San Francisco and supports residents to grow their own food. RPD hosts pop-up Garden Resource Days several times a year to provide material

“The root causes that are creating the line outside our food distribution site are poverty, lack of work (people’s hours are being reduced and are making less than minimum wage), and the lack of affordable housing. On top of discussing how much food prices have gone up, food insecurity also has so much to do with the fact that people are struggling to pay rent. On days we’re not doing food distribution, we help community members apply to CalFresh, WIC, Medi-Cal, affordable housing, and support with workforce development”

**Excelsior Strong Hub Manager,
Latino Task Force**



“I’ve lived in San Francisco for 36 years and never struggled to afford food until now because food, gas, electricity, and medication costs are so high. My friend convinced me to reach out to the food bank for help. I got on a wait list for a pop-up pantry, but a few weeks ago I received a letter telling me that I won’t be able to get groceries because all their pop-up pantries are closing by next year. I then applied for CalFresh, but the process has been difficult to navigate. Luckily, I have been able to get some groceries from an organization in San Mateo County. I’m thankful, but what happens to the people that can’t drive to another county to get food?”

Single older adult in San Francisco

and educational support for over 19,900 residents who want to grow their own food, with many participants coming from immigrant and food insecure communities. RPD is also launching the San Francisco Garden Resource Outreach and Workshop (SF GROW) Center, a one-stop shop for urban agriculture technical support and materials, with site features to support deep-dive education, demonstration gardens, a greenhouse, backyard animal husbandry installations, and more. Lastly, RPD is working closely with the UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program to provide and expand technical assistance in San Francisco.

- The San Francisco Environment Department (SFE) convened a group of food recovery organizations to work on the CalRecycle Assistance Grant to better understand their needs to guide funding from the state. SFE was awarded \$2.1 million in new grant funding to support the City’s food recovery and security efforts by helping grow the network of food businesses to recover high quality food and distribute it to nonprofit and food pantry organizations.
- The Human Services Agency is piloting a new food access model, the D10 Community Market (formerly known as Food Empowerment Market), which centers client choice and culturally relevant food. This free store will have the look and feel of a grocery store and will connect clients to other agencies and programs to meet other needs.
- Some San Francisco food organizations are in active discussions with local Medi-Cal Managed Care plans and community clinics to integrate their Medically Supportive Food & Nutrition (MSF&N) services as a covered benefit to patients, with pilots already underway.
- Recently formed community-based coalitions such as the Tenderloin Food Policy Council and the Food and Agriculture Action Coalition Toward Sovereignty (FAACTS) are working towards improving local food systems through advocacy, education, and gathering and elevating community voices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations highlight that food security issues remain and are persistent and widespread in San Francisco. The Food Security Task Force calls on San Francisco's government to:

1. Invest adequate City resources to support equitable and coordinated solutions to food security

- Fully restore local budget cuts to sustain existing and new City food programs during the pandemic.
- Ensure adequate funding levels in new and existing contracts to support quality and variety in food.
- Decrease waitlists for programs including home-delivered meals and groceries, particularly for vulnerable populations such as older adults and people with disabilities, pregnant people, and residents with nutrition sensitive medical conditions, with special attention to culturally sensitive foods.
- Fund food programs for residents of permanent and SRO housing.

2. Support funding structures and programs that promote a holistic approach to food and nutrition security

- Ensure equitable and adequate funding through the City's procurement (RFP) process, and streamline funding processes.
- Ensure sustained, multi-year funding for community and neighborhood-based organizations, including small scale community-based organizations to provide food support.

- Invest in pilot programs targeted towards specific populations and communities experiencing higher rates of food insecurity, and test and evaluate effectiveness of programs.
- Provide direct financial support to households, such as anti-poverty cash first programs like Universal Basic Income.

3. Focus on health equity in funding opportunities

- Prioritize funding for programs for populations and neighborhoods that suffer the highest impact of nutrition sensitive medical conditions.
- Support and expand medically supportive food and nutrition interventions (e.g., medically tailored and medically supportive meals and groceries, produce prescriptions, food pharmacies).
- Determine the impact of current and future budget cuts on populations experiencing nutrition sensitive health disparities.

4. Invest in infrastructure to increase efficiency, coordination, and utilization of publicly funded food services

- Establish and maintain a centralized information & referral system across publicly funded programs.
- Support programs such as CalFresh and WIC to reduce barriers to service and improve wait-times.
- Ensure streamlined coordination of service delivery for publicly funded food programs.
- Improve public transportation to food programs and invest in additional delivery services.

Biennial Food Security & Equity Report Recommendations

As a partner to DPH in developing the BFSER, the Food Security Task Force is responsible for reviewing data sets, collecting data from non-City entities, and developing recommendations. Below are recommendations to improve the process and content for the 2025 BFSER.

1. Conduct a more in-depth analysis of program coverage, wait lists, and gaps by zip code, neighborhood, and demographic data, and provide summary data to the FSTF.
2. Evaluate underutilization of programs and develop a plan for how to expand outreach.
3. Include community voices in the evaluation of programs from the perspective of participant satisfaction and whether health outcomes are improving, and to better understand challenges and opportunities for improvement through a community-centered, health equity lens.
4. Collect information on City and community organizations' true costs to provide food-related services and use this to guide equitable funding decisions.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS



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