

2022 Working Groups

The five working groups coordinate focused efforts on the following topics with purposes aligned with their titles:

1. *Economic Vitality & Institutional Purchasing of Local Agriculture*
(Leader: Julie Suarez, *Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences*)

Food policy stakeholders often have a gap in knowledge regarding agricultural supply chains and their environmental, economic, and social determinants. To assist public policy decision-making, it is helpful to gather feedback from a diverse yet farmer-centered stakeholder group that focuses on maximizing local foods purchasing and economic opportunity to ensure a vibrant and healthy food system.

2. *Strengthening Food Assistance Networks*
(Leader: Natasha Pernicka, *Food Pantries for the Capital District*)

There is a consistent demand for nutritious foods in the emergency food network. Because these foods are often highly perishable, there is a need for increased logistical innovation and coordination among partners in order to bring these foods to the communities that need them most. Facilitating access to locally-grown, fresh food within emergency food supply chains has the potential to alleviate numerous nutritional barriers to those communities and families that rely on the emergency food network, while simultaneously providing an alternative market for New York State producers.

3. *Expanding Food Access*
(Leader: Sherry Tomasky, *Hunger Solutions NY*)

The affordability and spatial accessibility of fresh food are among the greatest barriers affecting food insecure populations in rural and urban spaces. Lack of access to nutrition assistance programs and transportation options, insufficient infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities contribute to food insecurity, as well as food deserts and food swamps. Coordinating stakeholders can help alleviate these geographic and economic barriers and improve access to healthy, fresh food and reduce hunger among New Yorkers.

4. *Improving Nutrition and Promoting Food as Medicine*
(Leader: Ellie Wilson, *Price Chopper Supermarkets*)

Several factors impact a consumer's ability to purchase healthy food and their desire to consume it. When this ability and desire is hindered for a consumer, there may be negative short- and long-term consequences for their mental and physical health. Improving healthful food access supports growth and well-being and prevents chronic illness. Food as Medicine initiatives have shown that the collaboration between government and community-based organizations may enhance access to targeted nutrition care and medically-tailored food solutions. These innovations advance state goals to improve health and reduce costs. Furthermore, alignment with agricultural capacity supports development of infrastructure that will maximize value and quality of life for New York State residents.

5. *Cultivating Food Equity*
(Leader: Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, *NYS Dept. of State-Office for New Americans*)

Individuals and communities should have equitable access to, and equal ability to grow, fresh culturally appropriate foods no matter their race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, religious affiliation, or mental and physical health condition. Structural barriers to food equity must be acknowledged and addressed in order to holistically focus on improving the food security of New Yorkers.