

New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy 2025 Annual Report



Department of
Agriculture and Markets

Contents

- Introduction..... 1
 - The Council’s Approach 1
 - How to Use this Report 1
- Understanding the Nuanced Problem 2
 - Food Insecurity in New York State 2
 - Systemic Drivers of Food Insecurity 3
 - Compounded Economic Impacts 5
- Navigating Near-Term Challenges 7
 - Federal Government Shutdown 7
 - Changes to Longstanding Federal Policies 8
- Evaluating Existing Solutions 10
 - Federal Government Programs 10
 - New York State Programs 12
 - Charitable Food Assistance Networks 15
- Developing New Solutions 16
 - Communication 17
 - Crisis Mitigation 18
 - Partnerships 19
 - Looking Ahead 20
- Appendix 22
 - Council 2025 Members and Affiliates 22
 - Council 2025 Activities Summary 25
 - State Agency 2025 Activities Summary 32
 - Tables and Figures 38
- References 41

Introduction

The New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy was codified into law in 2023¹ as a group of state agency representatives and food system stakeholders charged with developing comprehensive, coordinated state food policies that ensure all citizens of New York State can eat a healthy diet and avoid food insecurity while consuming New York-grown and produced foods as much as possible.

The Council's Approach

Cross-sector collaboration, targeted investment in agricultural value chains, and the promotion of food equity are essential in reaching the Council goals. As a major agricultural state, New York's food system is uniquely diverse, involving a wide range of commodity production, interlinked geographies, and cultural food needs. While such complexity and vibrancy can improve the system's resilience and adaptability, it also requires careful, collaborative, and contextual governance to avoid unintentionally perpetuating vulnerabilities and inequities. To that end, the Council coordinates across four work groups, a strategy that sets the stage for its recommendations to shape adaptive, collaborative policies that address ongoing challenges.

Economic Vitality	Ensure New York farms are thriving and can sustain food production long-term.
Food As Medicine	Improve the nutritional quality of foods provided to people in need.
Food Assistance Networks	Strengthen connections between supply chains and organizations helping people in need.
Food Access Programs	Leverage public dollars to address the needs of food insecure people across New York state.

How to Use this Report

The Council's 2025 Annual Report is intended to inform policymakers, state agency employees, researchers, community organizers, advocates, and any other groups or individuals working to build a more resilient food system for New York State. Specifically, the report provides an overview of the nuanced problem of food insecurity, summarizes how the state is navigating near-term challenges, evaluates how existing solutions might be optimized, and proposes new solutions to address food insecurity across New York.

Special thanks to Council members, affiliates, and partners for their diligence at meetings over the course of the year to gain consensus on the contents of this report. Four key themes emerged from the Council's work group discussions in 2025. The section on [Developing New Solutions](#) provides a deeper investigation of how to address these critical recommendations.

Communication	Ensure accurate and timely communication between government and stakeholders.
Crisis Mitigation	Evaluate resources to address overload on the food assistance network during crisis.
Partnerships	Optimize the system by providing resources that help partners connect and collaborate.
Looking Ahead	Proactively address funding cuts and issues that may surface in the future.

Understanding the Nuanced Problem

Food Insecurity in New York State

Approximately 1 in every 7 New Yorkers reports a lack of reliable access to sufficient food.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as the household-level economic and social condition of “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” According to this metric, 14 percent of New Yorkers (approximately 1 in every 7) faced food insecurity over the most recent period reported from 2022 to 2024. Of these approximately 1.1 million food-insecure households, 8.4percent are classified as having “low” food security, meaning that obtaining enough food to avoid “substantially disrupting eating patterns or reducing food intake” requires that these families “us[e] a variety of coping strategies, such as eating less varied diets, participating in federal food assistance programs, or getting food from community food pantries.”ⁱⁱ

While the USDA does not directly measure hunger, which it defines as an “individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity,” it does classify the remaining 5.6 percent of food-insecure NYS households as having “very low” food security, meaning that “normal eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake was reduced at times during the year because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.”ⁱⁱⁱ At a national level, three-quarters of households classified as having very low food security in 2024 experienced these conditions recurrently in three or more months of the year.^{iv} These households are the most vulnerable to sudden shocks that disrupt their regular food supply. Research conducted in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic showed that fewer than 1 in 5 adults with very low food security reported being able to comply with public health recommendations to purchase and stock two weeks of food at a time.^v

Notably, the USDA announced on September 20, 2025 that it would immediately discontinue annual surveys that evaluate food insecurity prevalence across the nation^{vi}, with the last round of data collected in 2024 released after significant delay on December 30, 2025. National and regional food security advocates have responded with concern that the loss of reliable, comprehensive data contained in the annual *Household Food Security in the United States* report will reduce the ability to understand the prevalence, trends, and causes of food insecurity.^{vii} State agencies and prominent anti-hunger organizations are stepping forward to fill the data gap to the extent feasible, an effort that will be investigated further in the [Developing New Solutions](#) section of this report.

An increasing number of New York households report not having enough food to eat each week.

USDA data collected between 2022 and 2024 shows a statistically significant increase in the number of New York households experiencing both low and very low food security compared to 2019-2021, representing approximately 300,000 more families who are struggling with having enough to eat. Data collected through the *U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey* through October 2024 provides another estimate of the prevalence of hunger at a population level, showing that 10.3 percent of households in New York State sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat over the previous seven days.^{viii} In their analysis of this data, the New York Health Foundation refers to this measure as “food insufficiency.” As of October 2024, food insufficiency in New York was at its highest level in the last five years.^{ix} Experts attribute this to the expiration of temporary pandemic-era federal initiatives such as expanded Child Tax Credits, SNAP benefits, emergency allotments, and universal free school meal programs.* This most recent increase in food insecurity was directly observed

by food assistance networks across New York State. Annual reports from food banks across the state show that most of the pantries these groups serve experienced increased service levels in 2024, a trend which member programs primarily attribute to inflation and increasing costs of living.

** Notably, New York has since provided for free breakfast and lunch for all schools in the fiscal year 2026 budget and return on investment will be shared in the next annual report.*

Informal New York food pantry survey in November 2025 illuminates high demand for food assistance.

More recently, an informal survey launched by The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York in November 2025 produced responses from 262 food pantries across 45 counties statewide. A large majority of the respondents (90 percent) self-reported an increase in overall service levels in response to the federal government shutdown and an announcement from the USDA that SNAP benefits would be cancelled or delayed. The overall average reported increase in service was 56.7 percent with service level increases reported between 1 percent and 500 percent.^x A more detailed analysis of federal policy changes and federal government shutdown impacts is provided in the [Navigating Near-Term Challenges](#) section of this report.

Systemic Drivers of Food Insecurity

Low wages, unemployment, and high living costs are primary contributors to food insecurity.

In the United States, food insecurity is largely driven by economic, social, and systemic inequalities, rather than scarcity or a lack of food supply. While a one-to-one relationship between poverty and food insecurity does not exist, the primary factor making it difficult for individuals and households to afford adequate food is limited financial resources. At a national level, 39.4 percent of households with annual incomes below the federal poverty line were food insecure in 2024, compared with only 7.9 percent of those with incomes at or above 185 percent of the poverty line.^{xi} In New York, the state's lowest-income residents are 13 times more likely to face food insufficiency than residents making more than \$100,000.^{xii} Financial limitations are driven by a combination of low wages, unemployment, and high costs of living, which are experienced unevenly across the state. For example, although New York State's overall unemployment rate remains relatively stable at about 4 percent in August 2025, data shows slight upticks in several upstate counties outside of metropolitan areas, illustrating complexities in local economic conditions.^{xiii}

According to Feeding America, people facing food insecurity in New York are estimated to collectively need \$2,026,262,000 more per year to adequately meet their food needs. The true cost of broader economic security is especially high in New York City, with a November 2025 report estimating that 62% of New Yorkers do not have enough resources to cover their daily needs while saving and planning for future needs or emergencies.^{xiv} Rising grocery prices are further eroding purchasing power,^{xv} with recent volatilities in the global supply chain contributing to a 38.6 percent average increase in food costs between 2019 and 2025.^{xvi} Fruits and vegetables tend to be more expensive relative to starchy staples and processed foods,^{xvii} a price disparity which can lead to poor dietary quality and worsen health outcomes among food insecure individuals.

A November 2025 Hunger Free America survey of 204 New York families with an annual income below \$100,000 found that 75 percent of these families faced higher costs of living in the past year. Half of such families said it was harder for them to afford the amount and quality of food they and/or their household needed. Fifty percent said the food they bought just didn't last, and they did not have money to get more, while forty-eight percent said they could not afford balanced meals. The report further shows that even many families earning between \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year (previously considered to be solidly middle class) are struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table.^{xviii} . This finding is consistent with federal data demonstrating a

statistically significant increase in very low food security from 2.6% to 3% among households with incomes at or above 185% of the federal poverty line.

Race, sex, education, family size, and geography influence frequency of food insecurity in New York.

Importantly, experiences of food insecurity vary significantly based on demographic factors at both the federal and state levels. Effective policy interventions must be attentive to these differences. Using a broader definition of food insecurity than the USDA, for example, the New York State Department of Health found in its most recent *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)* brief that 32.3 percent of women in New York were food insecure in 2023 compared to 25.3 percent of men. Similarly, Black and Hispanic New Yorkers were more than twice as likely to experience food insecurity compared to white New Yorkers in the same year, at rates of 39.7 percent, 49.7 percent, and 19.7 percent, respectively.^{xix}

Education level also plays a major role, with more than half of New York residents without a high school degree surveyed in 2023 reporting that they were at least sometimes worried about not having enough money to buy nutritious meals in the last 12 months. Although food insecurity is experienced in every county of the United States, geographic characteristics also play a significant role in its prevalence. Within New York, rates of food insecurity are higher in New York City compared to the rest of the state, with the highest overall rates in the Bronx (39 percent) and Queens (30.9 percent). Rural and urban residents also experience food insecurity differently. In cities, limited transportation and inadequate cooking equipment are the main barriers to food access, while affordability is a greater challenge for rural New Yorkers.^{xx}

Underfunded public services and transportation correlate with higher food insecurity.

Systemic and structural injustices, including racial disparities, influence how these issues manifest, leading to some groups being much more likely to face economic challenges exacerbating food insecurity than others. A lack of resources in underserved areas worsens these issues, with underfunded schools, erosion of public services, and a lack of reliable transportation all further hindering access to healthy food. Preliminary research from Binghamton University suggests that several other socioeconomic indicators, particularly related to housing, may be strong predictors of food insecurity levels at the county level. Influencing factors include the percentage of the population that rents their homes, the median rent, the average rate of homelessness, and the median year that a structure in the county was built (a proxy for economic development activity).^{xxi}

Overall cost of living forces tough choices, leading to poor health and cyclical economic hardship.

At the household level, experiencing food insecurity has multifaceted consequences in both the short and long-term, forcing individuals to make financial, nutrition, and health-related trade-offs to meet immediate needs. A common strategy used to cope with the threat of hunger is to delay or skip paying utility bills, rent, or other expenses to afford food,^{xxii} which can exacerbate cycles of economic hardship. To further stretch their limited budgets, households facing low or very low food security often resort to purchasing less expensive, energy-dense foods, limiting portion sizes, and skipping meals. New Yorkers living in rural areas report engaging in these behaviors more frequently than urban or suburban peers.^{xxiii} This can have devastating effects on children, negatively impacting academic performance, cognitive development, and social behavior.

Relationship is cyclical for economic hardship, chronic food insecurity, and higher healthcare costs.

In addition to having negative impacts on mental health,^{xxiv} the poor dietary quality resulting from hunger risk coping behaviors has also been associated with increased prevalence of a wide range of diet-sensitive chronic illnesses, including diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. In fact, food-insecure New Yorkers are twice as likely to report unsatisfactory health^{xxv} and spend an average of \$173 more in annual healthcare costs compared to the general population. They are also more likely to underuse necessary medications due to their

associated cost, which can further exacerbate health conditions.^{xxvi} Economic hardship, food insecurity, and high healthcare costs thus become linked in a self-reinforcing cycle.

At a societal level, widespread experiences of food insecurity create a cycle of vulnerability that is challenging to break. The long-term effects of poor nutrition in childhood can significantly diminish lifetime earnings and limit workforce participation, perpetuating generational poverty, impeding societal productivity, and reducing overall economic output. The broad, systemic degradation of a population's overall well-being, resilience, and vitality also results in massive increases in long-term healthcare spending costs, with a 2016 review of existing literature estimating that the healthcare costs of hunger in the U.S. were over \$160 billion annually.^{xxvii}

While necessary for providing immediate relief, the crisis-oriented response mechanisms that these impacts often trigger may divert resources and attention from the crucial long-term investments necessary to address the root causes of food insecurity discussed earlier in the report.

Compounded Economic Impacts

Economic fragility and food insecurity impact long-term viability of regional food systems.

In addition to the apparent negative impacts on individuals and families, food insecurity may also threaten the economic vitality of New York's agricultural industry by destabilizing demand for local goods and reducing the overall well-being of rural communities. When people are financially strained or lack access to food due to other barriers, they tend to buy from discount stores that often do not carry regional fresh foods.^{xxviii} Upticks in regional food insecurity can thus result in income uncertainty for agricultural producers. This instability can discourage individual farm investment, especially in innovations such as climate-responsive farming techniques and new growing methods that can be costly up front but provide long-term benefits.

During the federal government shutdown in November 2025, the National Grocers Association noted that, "Independent grocers are often the only source of fresh produce, dairy, and other nutritious essentials for millions of families, veterans, and seniors who rely on federal nutrition assistance to make ends meet. With SNAP fueling over 389,000 American jobs and creating over \$20 billion in wages, the disruption to program funding may lead to reduced employee hours, perishable food losses, and declining sales for many community grocers across our nation."^{xxix} This publicly issued statement reinforces the need for SNAP benefits to not only stabilize food insecurity, but to ensure other aspects of the economy remain intact.

Investment in regional food systems produces positive impacts for farmers and people in need.

New York's investment in regional food marketing, food system infrastructure, and local food procurement incentive programs have provided positive momentum for the state's agricultural economy. Over the last five years, approximately \$500 million state and federal funding dollars have been dedicated to food banks, farms, schools, and food organizations and businesses at every point along the supply chain. The funding has been committed through 19 different programs and initiatives that were created to reduce hunger, strengthen the local food supply chain, and support the state's agricultural industry.^{xxx}

The state has also enabled farmers to make technological and infrastructural improvements that strengthen their overall operations by expanding capacity, gaining efficiency, and enhancing sustainability. This includes the continuation of existing initiatives, such as \$24 million made available for Round 9 of the Climate Resilient Farming Grant program,^{xxxi} as well as the implementation of new programs, such as \$21.6 million awarded to 103 farms across the state through the Dairy Modernization Grant program in 2025. Continued support for farmers at the state level is evident, with an additional \$10 million dedicated to funding a second round of the latter program in fiscal year 2026.^{xxxii}

New York State farmers are also benefiting from continued private sector investment in dairy manufacturing, with large-scale expansion of multiple processing facilities across the state in 2025.^{xxxiii} Supported by tax credits from Empire State Development, the upgrades will bolster the state's agricultural economy by increasing the amount of milk that is purchased directly from local producers. The expansion of Belgioso's manufacturing facilities in the Capital Region and Southern Tier, is expected to result in the utilization of an additional 100 million pounds of milk from New York State's dedicated dairy farmers.^{xxxiv} These investments signal the continuation of an existing trend, with New York having celebrated the establishment of \$650 million Fairlife production plant in Webster, a \$30 million expansion to the Agri-Mark cheese manufacturing facility in Chateaugay, a new \$1.2 billion Chobani facility in Oneida County over the last several years.

Together, these public and private investments in local agricultural economies are increasing farm income, creating jobs, and strengthening the overall food system by building supply chain resilience. Ongoing support and coordination across all state agencies and supply chain partners will be important to ensuring return on investment and vitality of the industry.

Nourish New York highlights positive outcomes for farmers, producers, and people in need.

Nourish New York, which is funded through the New York State Department of Health and administered jointly with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, reroutes New York's surplus agricultural products to the populations who need them most through the state's emergency food network. The program, which was launched as an emergency relief program during the COVID-19 pandemic, also provides much-needed support for food producers and farmers by requiring the purchase of agricultural products directly from New York farmers and food processors.

In November 2021, Governor Hochul signed legislation codifying the Nourish New York program permanently into state law.^{xxxv} Between May 2020 and December 2024, the program provided food equating to over 100 million meals to people in need^{xxxvi}, with another 25 million meals projected to be provided in 2025. Nourish New York received a \$55 million funding allocation in the fiscal year 2026 enacted state budget and in November 2025 an additional \$25 million in new funding was provided to support heightened needs, in response to the delay in SNAP benefits during the federal government shutdown. This investment was part of a \$65 million new investment that responded to the immediate crisis of the government shutdown.

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard A. Ball affirmed, "By providing additional, critical funding to our feeding assistance programs, such as Nourish NY, we will be able to help our food banks and food pantries purchase and make available more local farm products to our communities in need. This is one more step in New York's efforts to fight back and ensure we do everything we can to maintain support of our families and our farmers."^{xxxvii} However, given that 2.4 million New Yorkers face systemic food security – and that the SNAP Program provides nearly 3 million state residents more than \$7 billion in food support annually – Nourish New York is still meeting only a small fraction of the needs of food insecure state residents.

Details regarding other state programs are outlined in the [Evaluating Existing Solutions](#) section and the [Appendix](#) section of this report.

Navigating Near-Term Challenges

Federal Government Shutdown

Failed negotiations led to 43-day government shutdown and significantly delayed SNAP benefits.

On October 1, 2025, the federal government of the United States entered a shutdown after Congress failed to pass appropriations legislation for the 2026 federal fiscal year. A result of disagreements around proposed cuts to Medicaid and extending Affordable Care Act subsidies, the shutdown lasted for 43 full days – the longest in history – before ending on the evening of November 12, 2025.

As noted earlier in this report, the Council’s research concludes that “economic hardship, food insecurity, and high healthcare costs are linked in a self-reinforcing cycle.” Nonetheless, the stalemate among federal policy makers and the resulting federal government shutdown pitted healthcare and SNAP against each other. Since SNAP is an appropriated program, regular federal funds are not available to fund the program in the event of a shutdown. During previous federal shutdowns, SNAP remained operational in a variety of ways, ensuring that there would be no disruption in support for food-insecure households. During this shutdown, however, USDA declined to use its authority to issue SNAP benefits on time and went as far as to challenge court orders directing the agency to do so.

The shutdown and simultaneous inaction by the federal government resulted in SNAP benefits being delayed for the first time in the program’s history. Immediate and widespread impacts on New Yorkers’ economic stability also included the furloughing of tens of thousands of federal workers, an indefinite pause in the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), and a general slowing of local economies. These major challenges were exacerbated by inconsistent and politicized messaging from the federal government, which caused significant anxiety and uncertainty among both impacted individuals and the various organizations that serve them across the state. A full timeline of related events is provided in the [Appendix](#).

New York leaders responded to provide food for people in need in the face of SNAP delays.

As several legal cases were playing out related to the shutdown and non-issuance of more than \$600 million in SNAP benefits, New York Governor Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency on October 30, 2025. A public release stated, “By refusing to release this contingency funding, the federal government is leaving millions of New Yorkers without critical assistance they rely on to feed themselves and their families.” The Governor also authorized \$65 million in new funds for the Hunger Prevention and Nutritional Assistance Program (HPNAP) and Nourish New York to support food banks assisting during the period of emergency need while acknowledging that “no state government can replace SNAP benefits or backfill the program.”^{xxxviii}

At the same time, the Commissioners of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, Department of Health, and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance coordinated directly and received input from stakeholders. Food banks immediately stepped up to handle increased food purchasing and distribution required to implement HPNAP and Nourish New York funding that was provided in the face of the emergency declaration. Meanwhile, food pantries self-reported servicing significantly higher traffic despite low inventories and navigating high potential for conflict due to resource scarcity.^{xxxix} Philanthropic partners, including New York Health Foundation, began uniting statewide funders and developing plans for short-term emergency response. Advocacy organizations and SNAP navigators closely monitored legal proceedings and public agency communications, transposing complex and rapidly changing developments into plain language updates to help SNAP participants understand what to expect. Though all these efforts were impactful, many partners

called for the Council to engage as a centralized point for coordination and communication to elevate real-time recommendations and concerns to New York State agencies.

Subsequent work group meetings during the first week of November 2025 examined communication, crisis mitigation, partnerships, and looking ahead to develop proactive response plans. Although New York began to issue SNAP benefits on November 9 and a reopening of the federal government on November 12, 2025 allowed New York's November benefit issuance to be supported with full federal funding, it does not mark the end of significant challenges forecasted for New York's food systems and food-insecure residents.

Changes to Longstanding Federal Policies

In the Council's 2024 Annual Report, members cautioned that, "Changes in federal leadership may impact funding, programs, and policies related to nutrition safety net programs, farming, farm workers, food production, nutrition education, community programming, and emergency feeding at the state level." The report went on to prescribe that, "New York leaders must support the region's farmers, farm workers, and food insecure population by proactively mitigating challenges related to federal policy shifts, including funding reserves to bridge anticipated gaps in food access programming."^{xi}

Federal policy shifts are likely to exacerbate key drivers and impacts of food security.

Recent policy shifts at the federal level are projected to have significant impacts on food security across the country. These changes, enacted through administrative rulemaking, broad budget reconciliation bill H.R.1, and the fiscal year 2026 budget, have been masked as necessary measures for improving government efficiency and improving state accountability. Critical analysis, however, has shown they are highly likely to severely exacerbate several of the key drivers and impacts of food insecurity described in this report's [Understanding the Nuanced Problem](#) section. For example, the SNAP provisions included in H.R.1 are predicted by experts to not only increase food insecurity but also reduce the efficiency of the program by adding paperwork and administrative processes for families and implementing agencies. Without additional staffing and resources, many Departments of Social Services across the nation are likely to face challenges in navigating these new operational requirements.^{xii} Several significant impacts are summarized below, and a full analysis of food security impacts resulting from federal policy shifts is provided in the [Appendix](#).

Federal food assistance and nutrition education are targeted with deep funding cuts.

Food access programs have been a major target of federal budget cuts. H.R.1 reduces federal spending on SNAP by approximately \$186 billion over the next decade (the largest cut in program history) through significant changes to eligibility rules and state funding responsibilities. As a result, an estimated 300,000 New York households could lose some or all of their SNAP benefits due to expanded work requirements, including for people over 60, veterans, unhoused people, and parents, although an extensive body of research shows that stricter work reporting requirements do not improve employment outcomes.^{xiii} The bill also jeopardizes SNAP access for as many as 41,000 refugees and asylees in New York who may lose eligibility for SNAP if they do not have legal permanent resident status. At the same time, cuts to federal funding for SNAP administration, outreach, and benefits could shift up to \$1.4 billion in annual costs to the state budget, a level of expenditure that the state cannot absorb without facing a significant budget shortfall.^{xiiii}

SNAP-Ed is a program providing evidence-based nutrition education for people eligible for SNAP. This program has also been eliminated under H.R.1, forcing a significant reduction in programming in federal fiscal year 2026 and a complete end to programming as of September 30, 2026. In New York, this represents a loss of \$29 million annually that was implemented by 18 community-based organizations reaching more than

200,000 individuals at nutrition workshops in 2024 alone. Surveyed participants of these programs self-reported being more likely to exhibit behaviors that lead to improved health outcomes, such as eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking less sugar-sweetened beverages, and increasing physical activity.^{xliv}

Federal funding cuts will exacerbate stresses faced by food assistance organizations trying to serve as stopgap solutions for addressing food insecurity, with many pantries in New York already expressing concerns about not being able to meet the needs of clientele in 2026.

Farmers face lost revenue from federal funding cuts to food assistance and food system programs.

Federal policy changes will also directly impact farmers, threatening the economic vitality of agriculture in New York State and making it more difficult to address food and nutrition security issues through local sourcing. Stricter program eligibility requirements under H.R. 1 will result in lost revenue of up to \$900 million^{xlv} for the 18,000 retailers that accept SNAP, including local farm stands and farmers' markets across the state. These producers will also lose matching dollars from the state-funded Fresh Connect program that matches SNAP dollars toward fresh produce, as well as other SNAP-eligible incentive programs.

New York farmers experienced further losses from the USDA's termination of the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) and Local Food for Schools (LFS) programs in March 2025. The LFPA program already provided nearly \$50 million to 114 organizations in 2023 and 2024 to purchase New York food for underserved communities. The cancellation of an additional \$24 million originally awarded to AGM to continue these programs in 2025 is likely to both exacerbate food insecurity by disrupting supply chains for food banks and strain local economies as farmers across the state lose access to this market. Termination of the Regional Food Business Centers program in July 2025 has resulted in a further loss of critical technical assistance helping small producers navigate regional markets.

U.S. tariffs implemented on imported goods from a variety of other countries in 2025 are likely to exacerbate financial challenges, raising farmers' production costs by driving up the prices of fertilizers, machinery, and other essential inputs. Additionally, farmers around the country have lost export markets, causing reported harm to New York producers either by the direct loss of export market income or, in some cases, significant downward price pressures due to a glut of domestic product. Small and medium-sized farmers, representing much of the producer population in New York, typically have fewer financial resources, less bargaining power with suppliers, and more limited cash reserves, exacerbating their vulnerability to these changes.

Future of scientific research is uncertain, threatening solutions to climate change and pest pressure.

In the face of accelerating impacts from climate change, the resiliency of farming across New York is further threatened by cuts to agricultural research programs. Reductions in and relocations of USDA staff, along with funding cuts to associated research agencies and land grant universities, have directly led to the cancellation of projects dedicated to helping farmers adapt to climate-related challenges, such as pest pressures and increases in extreme weather events.^{xlvi} The Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities Program, through which New York's Department of Environmental Conservation awarded nearly \$40 million in funding in 2023 to support farmers and private forest landowners in implementing climate smart practices,^{xlvii} has also been restructured. These programmatic changes will most directly impact the high-value specialty crops and products that dominate New York's agricultural economy, such as dairy, fruits, and vegetables. Survey data collected from the emergency food assistance network shows that these are also the products that are most often selected by clients,^{xlviii} suggesting that the funding cuts will have cascading impacts on the ability of emergency food providers to meet the demand for healthy and culturally preferred food items.

Evaluating Existing Solutions

Federal Government Programs

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against hunger.

Federal food access initiatives have historically played a significant role in addressing food insecurity and its impacts by providing benefits that help lower-income individuals and families purchase healthy and culturally preferred foods. Since its establishment more than 50 years ago, SNAP has acted as the nation's first line of defense against food insecurity, with analysis from Hunger Free America showing that the over \$7 billion in benefits disbursed across New York in 2025 exceeds the dollar amount of food provided by every food pantry, soup kitchen, and food bank by at least a factor of nine. A 2015 study showed that participation in SNAP for a period of approximately six months decreased the percentage of SNAP-eligible households that had very low food security by 12 to 19 percent.^{xlix} These figures underscore the need for SNAP as a foundational tool for fighting food insecurity.

As of 2022, 91 percent of eligible New Yorkers (a total of nearly 2.9 million individuals and 1.7 million households) were estimated to be enrolled in SNAP. New York ranks 27th nationally on this metric.ⁱ However, food access program accessibility and impact continue to be major issues. Not all people who are eligible for food assistance programs are enrolled due to lack of awareness, complex application processes, or social stigma.ⁱⁱ These obstacles disproportionately affect immigrants, who may face language barriers or avoid applying due to fear of jeopardizing their immigration status,ⁱⁱⁱ as well as the elderly and people with disabilities who may face challenges related to transportation or technology access. Timeliness of enrollment poses an additional barrier, with New York's application processing timeliness rate of 60.45 percent in 2023 ranking low compared to the rest of the country.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Delays in processing times, which may be caused by staffing shortages or applicant error, could potentially discourage eligible individuals from applying.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program provides additional access to nutritious foods for 460,000 income-eligible pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children statewide. Although participation in the program has increased 25 percent over the past five years – a growth rate approximately three times the national average – participation rates amongst eligible families across New York State are still estimated to remain below 75 percent. Given budget shortfalls and capacity constraints at local WIC agencies, the Department of Health ended a statewide outreach contract that helped fuel the dramatic growth in program participation, posing further challenges to increasing enrollment.^{lv}

Federal food assistance spurs economic activity, stabilizing more than just households.

SNAP benefits tend to circulate quickly through local economies, supporting grocery retailers and strengthening regional supply chains. A 2019 USDA report estimates that at the national level, each \$1 allocated in SNAP benefits generates an average of \$1.54 in economic activity.^{lv} The largest impacts of urban SNAP spending tend to be on the farm and food processing sectors, stimulating employment effects that strengthen rural economies.^{lvi} While recent data on local SNAP spending in New York is limited, earlier research suggests that public programs and policies that facilitate the use of SNAP benefits at direct-to-consumer market channels bolster these economic impacts and related community development.^{lvii} Research conducted over the last 15 years has also consistently demonstrated that participation of eligible individuals in SNAP is also associated with both reduced healthcare spending and improved health outcomes.^{lviii}

The above data informed a \$10 million investment by New York State into the Retail Food Access Expansion Grant that supports the development and expansion of supermarkets, food co-ops, and farm stands that

enhance affordability for families while strengthening the food supply chain. The program was developed following a Request for Interest (RFI), which gathered input from stakeholders to guide the Department on how best to shape the program. Nine projects were awarded statewide in June 2025.^{lix}

Food assistance levels based on Thrifty Food Plan do not match the current cost of food.

With 141,440 SNAP recipients in New York receiving less than \$100 a month for food in 2025,^{lx} benefit levels may be too low for many of those enrolled to fully meet their nutritional needs. In fact, studies show the average SNAP benefit is insufficient for covering the cost of a moderately priced meal in every county across the state.^{lxi} Experts attribute this discrepancy to the assumptions underlying the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), the monthly food budget developed by the USDA that is used as the basis for setting the maximum benefit amount for SNAP. Established in 1975 and remaining virtually unchanged for 45 years since, the plan assumes that households have adequate food preparation time and access to food preparation space or equipment. These assumptions may be unrealistic for working families, single parents, or those with inadequate housing.

Re-evaluation of the TFP in 2021 based on updated data on food prices, consumption patterns, and current dietary guidance helped to address the gap, keeping nearly 2.3 million people out of poverty nationally in the fourth quarter of 2021. Of the impacted individuals, 129,000 were New Yorkers, resulting in a 4.1 percent decrease in poverty rates across the state, with 52 percent of the increase in benefits going to households with children.^{lxii} Modifications to the TFP in 2021 also reduced the depth of poverty among SNAP recipient families who remained below poverty despite the benefit increase.^{lxiii} However, the statewide average benefit of \$7.25 per individual per day is still low for adequately addressing food security issues considering the current affordability crisis. At a national level, food-insecure households report spending an average of 6% more on food than the cost of the TFP for that household in 2024.^{lxiv}

H.R.1 restricts the USDA's authority for future TFP updates, requiring the TFP to remain cost-neutral regardless of future changes to dietary guidelines and actual food prices. The Congressional Budget Office projects this provision will reduce SNAP benefits by \$37 billion over the next ten years, further exacerbating benefit inadequacy.^{lxv}

Eligibility criteria lack geographic context on cost of living, creating economic disparities.

Furthermore, strict eligibility criteria lacking geographic specificity prevent many people with financial need from being eligible for food access programs in the first place, with only 43.4% of households experiencing food insecurity nationwide participating in SNAP in the 30 days prior to 2024 survey data collection^{lxvi}. In New York, the gross annual income cutoff to be eligible for SNAP for households with earned income, no dependent care costs, and no elderly or disabled members is 150 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$48,228 for a family of four, as of October 1, 2025. The increasingly high cost of living, especially in highly urbanized areas, means that many families making above this amount may not be making enough to cover all their basic needs.

A 2023 report from United Way suggests that the true, "bare bones" cost of living for a family of four is 2 to 3 times this limit across the five boroughs of New York City (depending on specific location). The report also shows that income adequacy, a measure which considers a broader and more realistic set of expenses needed for a basic standard of living compared to a traditional poverty line, tends to be higher among people of color.^{lxvii}

Childcare also plays a particularly significant role in income inadequacy for families with children, with high costs effectively pushing over half a million families nationwide into lower income brackets.^{lxviii} Although there is a higher income eligibility threshold for households that incur dependent care costs (200 percent of the federal

poverty level), this may not be enough given the increasingly high costs of care. In some counties, particularly in the New York City metro area, over 50 percent of food insecure households are estimated to be above the SNAP threshold due to a combination of these factors.^{lxix}

New York State Programs

The development and implementation of judicious hunger and food policy in New York State creates meaningful opportunities for simultaneously supporting the region's farmers, farmworkers, and food insecure population. This section highlights policy initiatives and programming across the state which have worked together to bolster food systems resiliency in the face of the social, economic, environmental, and political challenges described above, successes which can be built upon to maximize impact and ensure long-term sustainability. A full summary of programming and 2025 impacts from New York State agencies associated with the Council is available in the [Appendix](#) section of this report.

State investments in food access bolster New Yorkers' food security.

In addition to administering SNAP (OTDA) and WIC (DOH), New York State agencies fund and manage several programs that expand where, when, and how New Yorkers can reliably access healthy food. AGM's Food Access Expansion Grant Program, for example, provided \$10 million in 2025 to support the development and expansion of supermarkets, food cooperatives, permanent farm stands, and mobile markets in previously underserved areas across the state. These initiatives are well suited to address the transportation barriers which exacerbate food insecurity for many households.

Similarly, the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), funded by USDA and administered by OTDA, enables SNAP households where all members are age 60+, disabled, or undomiciled to utilize their SNAP EBT card at participating restaurants to purchase a hot meal, which is normally not allowed under SNAP guidelines. In other states, the program has been shown to increase SNAP uptake among households with older members, particularly younger seniors, by over 20%.^{lxx} Launched statewide in January 2025, OTDA reports that the program has over 300 participating restaurants in 37 counties to date, with hundreds in the queue for approval and more added weekly.

OTDA also administers the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program, which reduces food insecurity among low-income households with school-age children^{lxxi} by helping them purchase food over the summer when families cannot on access to free/reduced price school meals. Research on a pilot version of the program demonstrated that families prefer the flexibility of models which allow them to purchase needed food at authorized retailers, rather than the constraints of fixed-site summer meal programs, which typically have lower participation.^{lxxii} In 2025, more than 1.9 million children in New York received Summer EBT benefits totaling \$232 million (\$120 per child). Most eligible households were automatically enrolled in the program, a "passive consent" model which maximizes program reach and impact.^{lxxiii}

Diverse nutrition-related programming improves New Yorkers' health and well-being.

New York State programs also improve the quality of food available to food-insecure New Yorkers at various access points, supporting better diets and long-term health. The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), for example, uses state funds to improve the quality of food distributed to an estimated 2,700 food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters, providing more than 425 million nutritious meals annually. Additionally, The Child and Adult Care Food Program, funded by USDA and administered through DOH's Division of Nutrition, provides approximately 372,000 nutritious meals and/or

snacks per day at 13,000 child and adult day care facilities across the state. Through New York's Medicaid section 1115 waiver, DOH also supports enhanced services to Medicaid beneficiaries that promote food and nutrition security, including access to Registered Dietitian-Nutritionist (RDN) services, medically tailored meals, nutritionally appropriate food prescriptions, and clinically tailored groceries. Although access to RDNs in these programs is less than 1 year old, they have significant potential to improve nutrition status and skills if adequately resourced over time. Many of these programs also include nutrition education components, which are critical to maintain in the face of lost SNAP-Ed funding.

The state also administers nutrition incentive programs that increase consumer purchasing power at markets and stores that sell fresh and healthy foods while fostering local economic development. The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program administered by AGM provides eligible consumers with coupons to buy healthy produce at more than 700 farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets. Similarly, the FreshConnect program doubles the buying power of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients at locations that facilitate direct retail sales of farm and food products, allowing families in need to purchase healthy food including produce, dairy, eggs, and meats. The USDA has previously acknowledged that these types of interventions more effectively support healthy purchasing behaviors than the SNAP food restriction waivers currently being adopted by other states.^{lxiv} OTDA is currently exploring ways to make nutrition incentives available on SNAP EBT cards to expand their reach and accessibility.

Ongoing program evaluation shows that addressing resource gaps experienced by implementing organizations may further optimize service delivery and amplify impact. For example, more than half of HPNAP providers responding to a 2024 DOH survey indicated the need for more cold storage equipment to support their operations.^{lxv} Similarly, a recent survey conducted by the New York State Food as Medicine Coalition indicates the need for more technical assistance to support community-based organizations providing services under the 1115 Medicaid waiver.^{lxvi} Ensuring the sustained success and scalability of these vital programs thus requires further investment in essential infrastructure and specialized support.

State programs that invest in regional supply chains build food system resiliency.

As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, state initiatives that strengthen regional supply chains play an especially critical role in ensuring that essential functions are maintained in the face of external shocks and uncertainties. In addition to the Nourish New York program, which increases the availability of New York State grown and produced foods throughout the emergency food network, the state also administers various grant programs that provide support for businesses and facilities producing, processing, or distributing New York grown foods. One example, the Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program, provides \$50 million over five years to support regional cooking facilities that will facilitate the use of NYS farm products in meal preparation for K-12 school children. This builds on the Farm to School Grants Program, which continues to support local food purchasing initiatives in local schools. The Urban Farms and Community Gardens Program further strengthens food access and the local food supply by investing \$2.5 million in supporting the development and expansion of school gardens, community gardens, and urban farms.

Many other state programs address food policy challenges from multiple angles.

The following table provides an overview of food and hunger-related programs by funding source and implementing agency. A full summary of programming and 2025 impacts from New York State agencies associated with the Council is available in the [Appendix](#) section of this report.

New York State Food Programs Overview

Program	Funding Source	Implementing Agency
Child and Adult Care Food Program	Federal	DOH
Commodity Supplemental Food Program	Federal	DOH
Executive Order 32	N/A	AGM/OGS
Farm to School Grants	State	AGM
Farm to School Infrastructure Grant	State	AGM
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for WIC and Seniors	Federal	AGM/DOH
Food Access Expansion Grant	State	AGM
Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law (Local Emergency Food Relief Equipment Grants)	State	DEC
Food and Fiber Small-Scale Processing Grant Program	State	AGM
Fresh Foods and Healthy Eating Program (FFHEP)	Federal	OMH
FreshConnect	State	AGM
Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)	Federal, State (Supplement)	DOH
Local Food for Schools (discontinued)	Federal	SED
Meat Processing Expansion Grant Program	State	AGM
New York Food for New York Families (NYFNYP) (Local Food Purchase Assistance – LFPA)	Federal	AGM
New York's Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver	Federal	DOH
Nourish New York	State	DOH/AGM
NYS Grown & Certified Program (Infrastructure, Technology, Research, and Development Grant Program – ITRD)	State	AGM
NYS Universal Free Meals Initiative	Federal, State (Supplement)	SED
Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI)	Federal	AGM
Restaurant Meals Program (SNAP)	Federal	OTDA
SNAP-Ed (discontinued)	Federal	OTDA
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Federal, State (Operations)	DOH
Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)	Federal, State (50% Admin)	OTDA
Summer Food Service Program	Federal, State (Supplement)	SED
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Federal, State (50% Admin)	OTDA
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	Federal	OGS
Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program	State	AGM

Charitable Food Assistance Networks

Combined economic pressures force reliance on charitable food assistance networks.

The limitations of food access programs, combined with the growing economic pressures described, increased strains on the charitable food system in 2025. At the national level, nearly two-thirds of food banks reported increased demand immediately following the expiration of temporary pandemic-era expansions to SNAP benefits in 2023.^{lxxvii}

Charitable food assistance groups are not designed to be primarily responsible for food security in a community, and the notion that they can entirely fill gaps left by SNAP cuts is unrealistic. An October 2025 analysis, for example, shows that entirely replacing SNAP with charitable food assistance in New York's Capital Region would require annual donations of over \$400 from every food secure individual in the area.^{lxxviii}

However, these organizations serve as vital stabilizers to alleviate immediate hunger, with over 50 million people across the United States receiving groceries from food pantries, local meal programs, or other private food assistance programs in 2023 alone.^{lxxix} The high quality, nutrient dense food provided by many of these organizations across New York State can help improve diet-related outcomes, including alleviating or preventing health conditions, particularly when equity-centered models such as client-choice are implemented.^{lxxx} Food is often sourced from local farms, federal and state programs, and donations of surplus food from across the supply chain.

Even as supplementary supports for food security, food pantries are not always able to fully meet the needs of their clientele, especially when faced with resource shortages or instability. A national survey of families earning less than \$100,000 per year conducted by Hunger Free America in October and November of 2025 found that of respondents who were forced to use such food charities, 60 percent had to wait more than an hour for food, 56 percent went to agencies that ran out of food, 51 percent said the agencies could not meet their dietary or cultural needs, and 56 percent did not have enough food to fully feed themselves and their families. While comprehensive, up-to-date research on the prevalence and lived experience of these challenges is limited on a state level, recent survey data collected by the Alliance for a Hunger Free New York confirms that the network is strained. Key issues observed by pantry staff include limited or inconvenient hours of operation and a lack of accessible transportation for patrons to food distribution sites. While home delivery programs can help address these barriers, they currently have limited capacity, with long wait lists in many counties across the state.^{lxxxii}

At a national level, research shows that experience of these barriers is highly influenced by demographics, with some populations – including people of color, those with disabilities or chronic illness, and older adults – facing challenges at disproportionate rates. For example, Black and Latino adults are more likely to find pantry hours inconvenient and face struggles with transportation,^{lxxxiii} while members of the LGBTQ+ community may avoid seeking out food assistance due to fear of discrimination (particularly at faith-based organizations). Kosher and halal observant communities also face gaps in service, as many pantries do not receive these culturally and religiously appropriate foods in their donated product and must therefore source them with limited private funding.^{lxxxiii}

Developing New Solutions

As described earlier in the report, recent federal policy changes have both highlighted and exacerbated vulnerabilities in New York's food system. These changes are triggering wide-ranging, deeply interconnected impacts on health, equity, and the economy. The Council consensus is that addressing these vulnerabilities and building resiliency to future crises requires the development of food policy that is simultaneously proactive, adaptive, and equitable. While few states can fully fill the gaps left by the loss of federal funds, strategic investments and improved collaboration across federal and state partners can better equip New York's food system to respond to crises, including the anticipated rise in food insecurity following H.R. 1.

The recommendations for decision-makers outlined below are organized around the four key themes that emerged from 2025 Council discussions. Within each focus area, recommendations are organized by priority level, highlighting the most pressing issues to be addressed first while establishing plans for making progress on longer-term initiatives.

Food systems are highly complex networks, shaped by a wide variety of economic, social, environmental, and political factors that operate at different scales. The interplay of these factors influences how food is produced, distributed, and consumed, resulting in a dynamic and constantly evolving system. As a result, crafting effective food policy often requires acknowledging interconnectedness, unpredictability, trade-offs, and the need for context-specificity rather than relying on simple, linear, one-time solutions. This is especially true when external forces add to uncertainty.

The Council also recognizes that working toward this vision for New York's food system requires formalized, strategic and sustained collaboration within and between networks of state, local, and community partners. In addition to the Council's public and work group meetings, this work is happening in an ad-hoc anti-hunger work group led by OTDA which provides space for interagency state partners to hear and discuss relevant programmatic updates, as well as more informal channels of interagency collaboration. While tracking progress on these recommendations, the Council will continue exploring strategies for stronger coordination of activity among involved stakeholders.

Council work groups will meet in early 2026 to develop more detailed action plans for each recommendation. Progress will be reported on in the Council's next annual report to be released by January 30, 2027.

Communication

Ensure accurate and timely communication between government and stakeholders.

The 2025 government shutdown underscored the urgent need for robust, state-level systems to ensure continuous and timely communication regarding benefit and food assistance availability during times of uncertainty. The Council has developed the following recommendations to support clear and concise communication in future crises, funding-related and otherwise, which can help prevent misinformation, reduce panic, and enable individuals and organizations to make informed decisions.

#	Recommendation	Work Group(s)
1	<p><i>Develop a statewide plan to clearly communicate the immediate impacts of upcoming federal funding cuts to impacted stakeholders and how they can best ameliorate them.</i></p> <p>As provisions of H.R.1 that impact food access programs, healthcare, and agricultural research continue going into effect in early 2026, the Council recommends that government agencies utilize and widely promote existing communication channels, such as the OTDA, DOH, and AGM websites, to clearly communicate the projected impacts of such changes on New Yorkers. The State should also work with the City of New York, counties, and nonprofit groups to better pre-screen low-income residents for disabilities (which would exempt them from work requirements) and increase their ability to meet Medicaid and SNAP work requirements through paid employment, job training, and or unpaid community volunteering. The Council also suggests that these platforms be used as spaces for broader public education and outreach, providing information about the most impactful ways to contribute for people who want to help affected communities.</p>	All
2	<p><i>Formalize a multi-stakeholder crisis communications infrastructure that prioritizes transparency, accuracy, and flexibility to respond to new information.</i></p> <p>In preparation for future food and nutrition related crises, the Council recommends developing a comprehensive, state-level crisis communication framework that is regularly reviewed and updated based on post-crisis analysis. The development process must ensure all relevant stakeholders are considered and consulted, including those with on-the-ground experience to anticipate realistic scenarios and communication needs. The Council recommends collaborating with the Office of Emergency Management to clearly define roles for various government agencies and partners when informing the public during an emergency.</p>	All
3	<p><i>Set up systems that allow on-the-ground partners to quickly and effectively convey observations to state decision-makers.</i></p> <p>To support timely and informed decision-making, improved problem-solving, and stronger public trust, the Council recommends developing regular surveys and listening sessions to gather community insights that may inform state-level response to regional and statewide challenges, including ways to strengthen the Council’s involvement in decision making next time there is a food or nutrition related emergency impacting NYS. The Council also supports the establishment of stable funding and an institutional support structure for community data intake and analysis to maximize long-term impact.</p>	Food As Medicine Food Assistance Networks Food Access Programs

Crisis Mitigation

Evaluate resources to address overload on the food assistance network during crisis.

Given ongoing stresses on charitable food assistance organizations, action is needed to ensure that these groups have the capacity to provide immediate, equitable, and effective aid amidst a continued surge in demand for food. The following recommendations, informed by work group discussions during the SNAP benefits delay, are designed to ensure that the network can meet these short-term needs while restoring its long-term role as supplements to – rather than replacements for – government assistance.

#	Recommendation	Work Group(s)
4	<p><i>Leverage private sector, philanthropic, and county-level efforts to bridge short-term gaps left by federal funding cuts.</i></p> <p>The Council recognizes that while they cannot replace state and federal level funding and infrastructure, private and local financial investments will continue to be critical for providing immediate and flexible aid, especially via innovative strategies that the public sector may not be willing or able to quickly adopt. The Council will collect data about the current implementation and impact of these initiatives to inform future coordinated strategies.</p>	<p>Food Access Programs</p> <p>Food Assistance Networks</p>
5	<p><i>Continue to invest in building local capacity to enable a timely, effective, and decentralized response to future crises.</i></p> <p>The pandemic coupled with the recent delay in SNAP benefits have illustrated that decentralized food distribution infrastructure can bolster and speed up an emergency response. The Council supports continued state investment in these community-based solutions, including local food banks and pantries, to ensure that contextually, culturally, and medically relevant food needs are quickly and efficiently met in the event of a future crisis. The Council will also examine opportunities for NYS to direct funding to local governments to develop context-specific contingency plans, including collecting information on existing initiatives to identify gaps. Data collection may include involvement of community members with lived expertise to ensure outreach strategies are accessible and effective.</p>	<p>All</p>
6	<p><i>Develop integrated strategies to improve the reach of New York’s food access programs.</i></p> <p>The Council acknowledges the work of ITS, OTDA, and other State agency partners in developing an Integrated Eligibility System (IES) for enrolling beneficiaries into assistance programs. Modernizing public benefit systems to create efficiencies and improve customer service is a huge undertaking, and it remains a priority for New York State. The tool is expected to ensure all eligible individuals and families are maximizing enrollment and to streamline case management and communications to enrollees. Advancement of this work remains critical to helping New York residents access benefits and to make it easier for workers responsible for determining eligibility to do so accurately and in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Food Access Programs</p> <p>Food As Medicine</p>

Partnerships

Provide resources that enhance partner connection and collaboration.

Many initiatives are active across New York’s food system to address ongoing challenges, but these efforts often remain in silos, limiting their individual reach. Responding to an extended crisis presents opportunities for innovative collaborations, connecting groups that would not otherwise be working together to maximize collective impact. The Council has developed the following recommendations to facilitate stronger connections within and between the agriculture, health, and social services sectors and address the fragmented nature of current food systems efforts.

#	Recommendation	Work Group(s)
7	<p><i>Leverage asset mapping to identify and optimize opportunities for improved coordination across the food supply chain.</i></p> <p>Building on work initiated in 2025, the Council recommends expanding efforts to understand the baseline of food system assets – including production, processing infrastructure, distribution networks, food assistance networks, institutional procurement, and availability of qualified nutrition professional training. These assessments are critical for fostering new connections and illuminating possibilities for building on existing partnerships between producers and consumers. The Council recommends combining existing asset mapping efforts into a publicly available interactive map that can reveal opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.</p>	<p>Economic Vitality</p> <p>Food As Medicine</p> <p>Food Assistance Networks</p>
8	<p><i>Centralize food and nutrition insecurity data to facilitate solutions across government agencies, community stakeholders, private sector, and philanthropy.</i></p> <p>The Council supports ongoing efforts to make New York’s food insecurity data more visible and interactive. Council work groups will coordinate with appropriate state agencies to track and contribute to ongoing data centralization efforts, including the development of a food systems dashboard that provides a comprehensive overview of the intensity of food insecurity in specific regions across New York State. The effort is intended to inform geo-specific action toward addressing New York’s most urgent food access challenges.</p>	<p>Food Access Programs</p> <p>Food Assistance Networks</p>
9	<p><i>Develop a framework for ongoing evaluation and improvement of state-level programs and policies supporting agricultural production, food access, and nutrition literacy and security.</i></p> <p>Food insecurity is not a static issue, with needs and experiences always evolving. The Council recommends regular assessment of related policies and programs to evaluate and maximize their efficacy. The Council will identify existing sources of information to support this initiative, such as program administrative data, surveys of implementing organizations, client-level feedback, and indirect indicators like community health, to determine where gaps exist. The Council will also develop visual representations that outline each program’s inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes to serve as tools for accountability and public transparency.</p>	<p>All</p>

Looking Ahead

Proactively address funding cuts and issues that may surface in the future.

Supporting long-term food security and stability of the local food supply requires proactive preparation against future shocks, involving strategic investments in infrastructure, technology, and program design. The Council has developed the following recommendations to safeguard New York’s food system against further disruptions and external uncertainties.

#	Recommendation	Work Group(s)
10	<p><i>Protect and strengthen SNAP at the state level amid federal cuts.</i></p> <p>The Council recommends that lawmakers, state and local agencies, and other stakeholders seek every opportunity to minimize harm from federal policy changes that limit access to SNAP or reduce benefit amounts. Lawmakers must explore ways to backfill cuts to federal funding for SNAP administration, outreach, and benefits. Critical to mitigating cost shifts to local SNAP administrators is collecting thorough data on drivers of SNAP administrative costs and payment errors, and a commitment to invest in resources, training and technology to minimize future costs that the state may be forced to absorb. When implementing federal policy changes, state agencies should also develop guidance and resources that fully prioritize retention of benefits where possible, including supporting concrete ways to better help people meet new SNAP working reporting requirements. Advocacy and client service organizations should support clear communications and technical assistance to help families navigate new program rules. The Council also recommends state action to protect SNAP benefits from electronic benefit theft by transitioning to more secure EBT chip cards and exploring cardless payment options.</p>	<p>Food Assistance Networks</p> <p>Food Access Programs</p>
11	<p><i>Sustain and bolster state investments in non-SNAP federal nutrition programs, including WIC, school meals, Summer EBT, and food-as-medicine initiatives.</i></p> <p>Federal nutrition programs remain a critical resource for children and their families, especially amid SNAP cuts. New York has invested in the success of these programs, including by establishing universal school meals starting this school year. Lawmakers must sustain these investments and seek opportunities to reach more eligible families, including by increasing funding for WIC outreach and access efforts as well as supporting local WIC agencies currently struggling to keep up with increased demand. The state should also better enforce – and provide more technical assistance for the implementation of – school breakfasts to be served in all first period classrooms in most schools.</p>	<p>Food Access Programs</p>
12	<p><i>Ensure the continuation of nutrition education by securing alternative and diversified funding for population-level nutrition education, integrating education into existing programs, and prioritizing strategies with the highest return on investment.</i></p> <p>With SNAP-ED, the largest nutrition education program in the country, eliminated under recent federal policy changes, the Council recommends that state agencies, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and the philanthropic sector collaborate to minimize the long-term impacts of lost programming. To alleviate pressures on the state budget, the Council will examine opportunities to adapt existing nutrition education strategies to meet the needs of low-income and food-insecure communities, such as leveraging established community gathering spots.</p>	<p>Food As Medicine</p> <p>Food Access Programs</p>

	<p>The Council also recommends that more nuanced baseline data on typical dietary intake, healthful eating practices, food shopping and preparation skills, and workforce and healthcare adequacy for evidence-based medical nutrition treatment programs is gathered to ensure that interventions are effectively targeted. Simultaneously, recognizing that resource redirection can only go so far, Council members will continue advocacy efforts for restored funding at the federal level.</p>	
13	<p>Maintain New York State’s competitive advantage in agriculture by investing in specialty crop research and breeding, strengthening extension services, and offering financial incentives for farmers to adopt climate-resilient practices.</p> <p>To strengthen the economic vitality of New York agriculture and create new opportunities for local food production to support local food security, the Council recommends reinforcing state support for agroecological production that is adaptive to changing local contexts. In addition to supporting ongoing baseline assessments of the current costs, advantages, and disadvantages to farming in NYS, the Council will explore avenues to build the knowledge base and capacity required to promote these practices. State elected leaders should also reinforce land access and support for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers.</p>	Economic Vitality
14	<p>Address food insecurity by investing in solutions that address its root causes and in boosting economic mobility for all New Yorkers.</p> <p>As acknowledged throughout this report, food insecurity in New York is primarily an economic issue. Policies that address underlying drivers promoting financial stability, including some of those enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Child Tax Credits), are thus more likely to form the basis of long-term, sustainable solutions to the complex issue of food insecurity. The Council will develop and track relevant metrics to assess progress on these efforts.</p>	All

Appendix

Council 2025 Members and Affiliates

In 2025, the Council was coordinated by Kate Fullam and Kendall Hough of the Department of Agriculture and Markets. Special contributions were made by Ashmita Das, a Science Policy Fellow from the Rockefeller Institute for Government. Following is a list of members and affiliates.

* This member serves in a formal capacity per Section 16 of Agriculture and Markets Law.

Name	Affiliation
Richard A. Ball, Commissioner*	Department of Agriculture and Markets
Kristine Ellsworth, Environmental Engineer	Department of Environmental Conservation
Amy Gildemeister, Associate Director of Nutrition Policy and Partnership on behalf of James McDonald, Commissioner* Stacey Hale, Director, Division of Nutrition	Department of Health
Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Executive Director Elizabeth Hradil, CNY Immigrant Community Liaison	Department of State, Office for New Americans
Viviana DeCohen, Commissioner	Department of Veterans' Services
Allison Stark, Senior Director, Industry Development on behalf of Hope Knight, Commissioner*	Empire State Development
Greg Olsen, Acting Director*	Office for the Aging
Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner Dana Boylan, Special Advisor	Office of Children and Family Services
Jeanette Moy, Commissioner Nicholas Barber, Food Distribution Director Gabrielle Viens, Food Distribution Administrator	Office of General Services
Ann Sullivan, Commissioner Merrill Rotter, Medical Director Cheryl Gerstler, Prevention Specialist	Office of Mental Health
Susan Zimet, Food and Anti-Hunger Policy Coordinator on behalf of Barbara C. Guinn, Commissioner*	Office of Temporary Disability Assistance
Gemma Rinefierd, Assistant Commissioner for Student Support Services on behalf of Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner*	State Education Department
Kristen McManus, Associate State Director	American Association of Retired Persons
Steve Terzo, Director of Business Development*	American Dairy Association and Dairy Council
Allison DeHoney, Executive Director	Buffalo Go Green
Jerome Nathaniel, Director, Policy & Government Relations*	City Harvest
Justin Rogers, Executive Director*	Cornell Cooperative Extension Niagara County

New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy 2025 Annual Report

Angela Odoms Young, Associate Professor Tashara Leak, Associate Professor	Cornell University
Julie Suarez, Associate Dean for Land Grant Affairs*	Cornell University College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
Jeff Crist, Owner	Crist Brothers Orchards
Tessa Edick, Founder & Board Chair	FarmOn! Foundation
Dan Egan, Executive Director Kathleen Stress, Interim Executive Director	Feeding NYS
Karen Erren, President and CEO*	Feeding Westchester
Joshua McGuire, Program Director: Double Up Food Bucks	Field and Fork Network
Leslie Gordon, President & CEO* Camesha Grant, Vice President	Food Bank for NYC
Mark Bordeau, President & CEO Sarah DeFrank, Director of Advocacy & Education	Food Bank of the Southern Tier
Natasha Pernicka, Executive Director*	Food Pantries for the Capital District The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York
Judiann Carmack-Fayyaz, Executive Director*	FoodLab at Stony Brook University
Mitch Gruber, Chief of Strategy & Partnerships*	Foodlink
Kathleen Finlay, President	Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming
Fran Barrett, NYS Interagency Coordinator for Nonprofit Organizations	Governor's Office
Richard de Graff, Owner	Grindstone Farm
Marcel Van Ooyen, President & CEO*	Grow NYC
Kate Van Tassel, Director of Special Projects	Homes & Community Renewal
Joel Berg, CEO*	Hunger Free America
Krista Hesdorfer, Director of Public Affairs on behalf of Andres Vives, Executive Director*	Hunger Solutions New York
Randi Shubin Dresner, President & CEO	Island Harvest Food Bank
Dickran Jebejian, Director of Policy, on behalf of David Greenfield, CEO	Met Council
Larry Tse, Farm Organizer	National Young Farmers Coalition & Choy Commons
Kat Slye-Hernandez, Senior Associate Director of Public Policy, on behalf of Renee St. Jacques, Senior Associate Director of Public Policy and Promotion & Education* Jeff Williams, Director of Public Policy	New York Farm Bureau
Andrew Barrett, Program Officer Julia McCarthy, Senior Program Officer Liz Ward, Program Assistant	New York Health Foundation

New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy 2025 Annual Report

Caitlin Lazarski, Director of School Nutrition	New York School Nutrition Association
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Karen Washington, Co-Owner/Farmer	Rise & Root Farm
Sue Jaffe, Owner*	Snowdance Farms
Dr. Melony Samuels, CEO & Founder*	The Campaign Against Hunger
Cheryl Huber, Vice President, Food & Benefits Access, on behalf of Grace C. Bonilla, President & CEO	United Way of NYC
Brian Reeves, Co-Owner	Reeves Farm

Council 2025 Activities Summary

In 2025, the full Council on Hunger and Food Policy convened on May 13 and October 1, 2025, in person at the Albany office of the Department of Agriculture and Markets as well as virtually. The meetings, which support the development of a shared knowledge base across diverse food systems actors in New York State, included time for all members to hear important updates, share feedback across work groups, and provide critical input into the creation of this report. They also provided an opportunity to reflect on the challenges posed by recent federal policy shifts to NYS food systems and identify actionable next steps.

At its May 13, 2025 meeting, attended by 50 members, affiliates, and partners and 18 members of the public, the Council:

- Heard updates from AGM on programs that are helping to connect local farmers to new markets, including New York Food for New York Families, Beginning Farmer and Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmer Grants, the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program, and Meat Processing (AGM).
- Discussed state, county, and local impacts of federal funding cuts to SNAP, TEFAP, and LFPA.
- Heard reports from each of the four work groups on progress on 2024 recommendations.

At its October 1, 2025 meeting, attended by 38 members, affiliates, and partners and 40 members of the public, the Council:

- Heard updates from AGM on programs that are increasing access to food for all New Yorkers, including the Food Access Expansion Grant, the New York State Grown & Certified Infrastructure and Technology Grant, and the Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant programs.
- Heard updates from partner programs and agencies on federal policy shifts and their impacts on New York, including those related to agricultural research funding (Cornell University), SNAP-Ed (CCE), and TEFAP (OGS).
- Discussed food systems challenges anticipated in the coming year and recommendations for helping to address them.

Economic Vitality Work Group

#	Recommendation	Progress
1	Address issues with New York farmer incentive programs so that the implementation of these programs matches their intent to support the industry.	Based on input from the work group and in compliance with new legislative requirements, AGM made improvements to the recently launched Overtime Tax Credit portal to enable farmers using a professional employer organization to register and apply.
2	Partner with state agencies to test the viability of proposed bid modifications that could streamline the procurement of New York produce and food products.	In 2025, the work group closely monitored the roll-out of Cornell University’s True Cost of Food calculator, which accounts for climate, environmental, fiscal, health, and equity implications of food production. The tool’s “economic multiplier” component, which calculates the additional business activity and tax revenue generated from purchases of specific local products, can be used to inform legislation around state subsidization of local procurement. Researchers have collaborated with school food associations to assess the tool’s viability. Further tailoring of the tool to meet the procurement needs of different state agencies is ongoing. The work group also engaged with various stakeholders advocating for and impacted by good food purchasing legislation to better understand ongoing efforts and challenges.
3	Expand existing food supply chain asset mapping to link farmers and suppliers with buyers serving food access programs.	After identifying and examining existing asset mapping initiatives, the work group drafted a preliminary needs assessment identifying current gaps, challenges, and recommended actions to centralize different asset mapping projects to improve accessibility for food access partners. Key issues identified include limited interactivity of and lack of interoperability between underlying data sets, which currently limit stakeholder engagement and impact. The work group will continue to mobilize stakeholders around these initiatives to expand existing efforts and build adaptive capacity in 2026.
4	Create and implement a comprehensive plan to increase food processing in New York, including new incentives, policies, and partnerships to meet demand for New York products.	<p>The work group partnered with Cornell University researchers to analyze the food processing landscape and assess OGS food purchasing to identify product opportunities that New York processors may be able to fill, an assessment that will continue being updated through 2026 with the recent launch of a new survey tool to collect information directly from firms.</p> <p>\$13.7 million awarded to 19 statewide farm and food organizations in June 2025 through the Regional Food Systems Infrastructure Program will bolster this expansion of middle of the supply chain work, supporting the modernization and construction of new agricultural facilities, improvement of food safety, and purchases of new equipment.</p> <p>As part of the grant program, AGM has also partnered with Tierra Viva Collective to provide technical assistance to producers and conduct supply chain coordination activities. The work group will continue monitoring grant outcomes to inform future initiatives to expand statewide capacity and infrastructure for the</p>

		aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storage, transporting, and wholesaling of New York grown food.
5	Contribute to New York’s climate change mitigation plans with a special focus on the impacts on food supply and food security.	During Earth Week 2025, Governor Hochul announced the launch of comprehensive planning efforts to develop a statewide climate adaptation and resiliency plan (NYSARP), led by DEC, DOS, DHSES, and NYSERDA. This initiative provides opportunities to create a unified climate impacts response strategy that is attentive to New York’s agroecological context and food security needs. In preparation for future opportunities to inform the plan’s development, the work group reviewed existing climate plans published by state agencies to identify relevant gaps and opportunities for enhancement. Key comments include the need for strengthening agricultural stakeholder involvement, maintaining awareness of socioeconomic impacts of resilience-building efforts, and balancing mitigation with adaptation strategies. The work group will formalize their feedback as an input into the broader strategic planning process in the coming months.

Food as Medicine Work Group

#	Recommendation	Progress
6	Develop a resource for food processors to evaluate whether their products could meet Food as Medicine nutritional standards.	The work group produced a flyer encouraging food producers to consider formulating their products to meet supply chain demands for Food as Medicine products with guidance from Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs). The resource has been circulated at food safety trainings across the state as well as through the New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
7	Connect food scientists with food processors to examine product formulations and increase the supply of eligible Food as Medicine products.	In 2025, Cornell's Food Venture Center and Institute for Food Safety partnered with Taste NY, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and product development specialists and educators to launch "Cornell Food Connections," a state-wide collaborative training program designed to increase awareness of and compliance with the FDA's Preventive Controls for Human Food rule among small food manufacturers. In its first year, the program utilized a "Train-the-Trainer" model, holding 3 in-person 2-day trainings across New York State for 36 educators who work directly with small food manufacturers in their regions. The curriculum was accompanied by the Food as Medicine nutritional standards resource developed by the working group for R6.
8	Collaborate with food retailers to improve consumer marketing of and education about various Food as Medicine eligible products.	To establish a baseline for future activities, the Council documented current initiatives focused on helping consumers navigate decision-making in retail spaces, including produce prescription programs, development of signage for grocery stores and farmers' markets, and education related to food labeling. The Council will continue these efforts in its 2026 work to minimize the impact of SNAP-Ed cuts.
9	Identify and mitigate obstacles for emergency feeding programs to procure culturally appropriate and religiously required foods such as Kosher and Halal.	Council coordinators visited The Met Council distribution sites in Brooklyn and learned about the nuances related to certifying and sourcing Kosher and Halal foods. The Council will continue to consider culturally appropriate and religiously required foods in its recommendations, especially as it relates to procurement via the emergency feeding network and New York State sponsored incentives.

Food Assistance Networks Work Group

#	Recommendation	Progress
10	Support New York’s food assistance networks by identifying and mitigating funding obstacles and gaps that weaken the system’s resilience.	Throughout the food access crisis resulting from the federal government shutdown, the work group maintained consistent communication with food assistance organizations to identify and address front line issues as they arose. Council stakeholders leveraged the platform to request emergency support and \$65 million in new funding for HPNAP and Nourish New York was fast-tracked by Governor Hochul.
11	Develop a resource for food assistance networks to highlight the benefits, best practices, and incentives for receiving recovered or donated food.	To encourage stronger connections between New York State food assistance providers and farmers, the work group is creating two accessible digital guides clarifying the benefits of and best practices for food recovery from the perspective of each stakeholder group. In addition to providing information on liability protections and acceptable donations, these resources outline key steps for maintaining a successful long-term partnership, such as communicating effectively, accurately tracking inventory, and gathering client feedback.
12	Optimize partnerships with food banks, food pantries, and food policy councils to streamline communication about state programs and funding.	The work group connected with a variety of relevant organizations, including the NY Health Foundation and local food councils, to discuss strategies for improving coordination of activities and messaging with the Council. Following these initial meetings, Council coordinators established monthly email communication to all members, affiliates, and partners, providing updates on state programs, funding opportunities, and the potential impacts of proposed federal policy shifts on organizational activities.
13	Combine multi-source survey data to identify critical issues within the food assistance network and integrate this information in forthcoming Council reports.	The work group began the process of centralizing survey data and impact metrics from emergency food assistance organizations across New York State. Since federal household food security data was cancelled in 2025, food security advocates and state agencies are evaluating ways to visualize and make public the data needed to track the intensity of food insecurity statewide. Council members are connecting with partners from other states to coordinate and share.
14	Adjust New York State policy to allow patrons of food banks and food pantries to receive assistance without signing a document attesting to their low income.	OGS met with work group members in 2025 to clarify that the attestation form for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is required by federal law and the Council’s proposed update would require an update to the Farm Bill as well as the Code of Federal Regulations. Guidance issued in December 2024 and a new form released in January 2025 indicate address is not required, which is a positive update.

Food Access Programs Work Group

#	Recommendation	Progress
15	Significantly increase state funding to expand the availability of food access navigators who will help enroll eligible individuals in federal benefit programs.	<p>\$5.64 million has been allocated in the FY2026 budget for NOEP, maintaining the \$2 million legislative add-on of 2024 and 2025 (which supports an additional 24 navigators in high-need and rural areas). H.R. 1 cuts federal funding for SNAP navigators in half, so to sustain the current reach of NOEP’s SNAP navigators, New York will need to increase its contribution to \$8.5M.</p> <p>Simultaneously, work group members have continued to advocate for the development of an integrated eligibility system (IES) to minimize paperwork for applicants, expedite benefit determinations, and improve overall service delivery, which is particularly crucial given the recent loss of federal funding. OTDA is currently analyzing code for IES from other states (California, Maryland) to assess compatibility and additional needs. The work group will continue advocating for and monitoring these efforts in 2026.</p>
16	Provide free school meals to all students attending New York schools participating in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs.	<p>The NYS FY 2026 Executive Budget amended state education law to require that beginning in school year 2025-2026, New York State School Food Authorities participating in the federal school lunch and/or breakfast programs provide reimbursable school meals at no cost to all 2.7 million New York students, allocating \$340 million to the initiative. This program, only the ninth of its kind in the country, closes the gap in meal access for the approximately 300,000 students who remained ineligible after the 2023 expansion to Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).</p>
17	Expand state and nonprofit partnerships to significantly increase Summer EBT applications and utilization during the program’s second year in 2025.	<p>OTDA has continued to expand their outreach around the Summer EBT program, including hosting public webinars and updating their website to improve the type and accessibility of resources offered. As of November 2025, \$232 million in summer food assistance has been distributed to 1.9 million low-income students across the state. Food security advocates have been acting in parallel to advise and support outreach to beneficiaries. Council members discussed a remaining barrier to benefit access: student data transmitted from schools to the state for Summer EBT purposes often includes outdated or inaccurate addresses, leading to returned EBT cards. To ensure children receive their Summer EBT benefits without undue delays, NYSED should issue communications to school administrators encouraging regular outreach to parents for address updates and sharing other best practices to improve data quality ahead of Summer EBT data transfers.</p>
18	Create a process map as an educational tool to highlight the needs and challenges of individuals who may be eligible for federal nutrition assistance benefits.	<p>The work group developed a draft of a food systems map which depicts the paths that food insecure New Yorkers could take in accessing federal and state nutrition assistance benefits. The resource is attentive to the varying experiences of food insecurity across the state, highlighting the unique needs of and challenges faced by different groups. The work group is currently in the process of improving the interactivity of these diagrams.</p>

19	Create a state-funded SNAP program that ensures all income-eligible New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, receive a monthly food assistance benefit.	The FY 2026 state budget did not include funding for this recommendation. Work group members will continue monitoring developments ahead of FY 2027 budget negotiations. In parallel, the SNAP4All campaign calls for New York State to prioritize two severely impacted groups: 1) 41,000 individuals with newly excluded immigration statuses under H.R.1 and 2) 65,000 households with children identified by the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council as excluded.
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State Agency 2025 Activities Summary

Department of Agriculture and Markets (AGM)

The Department of Agriculture & Markets increases access to fresh, local food for New Yorkers and supports the economic vitality of NYS producers. 2025 programming that worked to improve the resiliency of food systems while ensuring farmers could connect with new markets is as follows. Of particular importance is the Department's role in coordinating the New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy.

The Food Access Expansion Grant Program provided \$10 million to help increase food access for New Yorkers living in areas without grocery stores and without options for healthy, reliable food.

The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Program provided \$13.7 million to enhance coordination across the food system and improve farmers' access to markets. The Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program provides \$50 million over five years to support regional cooking facilities that will facilitate the use of NYS farm products in meal preparation for K-12 school children. This builds on the Farm to School Grants Program, which continues to support local food purchasing initiatives in local schools.

The New York State Grown & Certified infrastructure, Technology, Research, and Development Grant Program strengthens businesses that produce, process, or distribute NYS Grown & Certified food or beverage products.

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides eligible consumers with coupons to buy healthy produce at more than 700 participating locations, including farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets. The FreshConnect Program and the FreshConnect Fresh2You programs double the buying power of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients at farmers' markets, allowing families in need to purchase healthy food, including produce, dairy, eggs, and meats. An additional \$2 million in reserve funding was fast-tracked to the emergency food network in October 2025.

The Urban Farms and Community Gardens Program invested \$2.5 million towards school gardens, community gardens, and urban farms, funding projects focusing on food safety, storage, and distribution.

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

DEC enforces the Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law,^{lxxxiv} requiring businesses and institutions that generate large volumes of wasted food (e.g., grocery stores, full-service restaurants, and supercenters) to donate viable excess food to organizations serving those in need. This law will expand in 2027 and 2029 to include additional businesses and institutions of smaller sizes. Feeding NYS and its regional affiliated food banks continue to be critical partners in this initiative and, with funding from DEC, have assisted in diverting 63 million pounds of food since 2021.^{lxxxv} DEC is providing \$6 million to support a renewed partnership with Feeding New York State to continue to support this initiative and the 10 regional food banks by funding critical staffing and essential operations at food banks and their local partners statewide. More than \$5 million in Local Emergency Food Relief Equipment grants were awarded to nearly 100 not-for-profit organizations, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and other programs dedicated to assisting New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity across the state.^{lxxxvi}

Department of Health (DOH)

The Health Department administers several programs focused on Hunger and Food Policy through the Division of Nutrition. For more than 40 years, the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program has utilized state funds to improve the quality of food distributed to an estimated 2,700 Emergency Food Relief Organizations in New York State. The pantry packaging guide provides guidance that promotes nutritionally

complete pantry packages. Food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters provided more than 425 million meals in 2025. Additionally, the Nourish New York program increases the availability of New York State grown and produced foods available through the emergency food network, improving access to fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and meat.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program reaches approximately 33,722 participants per month in New York City and Long Island, providing nutritious food, community referrals and nutrition education to low-income individuals at least 60 years of age. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, administered in collaboration with Agriculture and Markets, increases the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income CSFP participants.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is funded by USDA and administered through the Division of Nutrition. This program provides nutrition education and reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating childcare centers, afterschool programs, day care homes, emergency shelters, and adult day care centers. Approximately 372,000 meals and/or snacks are provided per day by 1,260 Sponsoring Organizations that oversee 13,000-day care facilities.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (commonly referred to as WIC) is administered by the Division of Nutrition and is primarily funded through USDA, with some additional state funding. Nearly 460,000 income-eligible pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk have access to nutritious foods, healthcare and community referrals, breastfeeding support, and nutrition education through the New York State WIC program. This represents more than a 25% increase in participation over the last five years, a growth rate approximately three times the national average. The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, administered in collaboration with Agriculture and Markets, increases the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income families at nutritional risk, and reached nearly 195,000 WIC participants this season.

Through New York's Medicaid section 1115 waiver, DOH supports enhanced services to Medicaid beneficiaries that promote food and nutrition security. With over 1,100 health related social needs (HRSN) providers in the state there is at least one in every county that is contracted to deliver enhanced services in the food and nutrition assistance domain. On average, 40-44% of members screened have an unmet need. Of those with unmet needs, 70-78% have an unmet nutrition need. Qualified members may receive enhanced HRSN services under the food and nutrition assistance domain including medically tailored meals, clinically appropriate home delivered meals, medically tailored or nutritionally appropriate food prescriptions, fresh produce and non-perishable groceries (pantry stocking), and cooking supplies. The HRSN services also support expanded access so that eligible members who are high risk under the age of 18 or are pregnant/postpartum may receive additional nutrition support services for other Medicaid Managed Care-enrolled individuals in their household.

Department of Veterans' Services (DVS)

In 2025, the New York State Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) intensified its statewide efforts to address food insecurity and expand access to essential services for all who served. Guided by the leadership and unwavering commitment of Governor Kathy Hochul, DVS advanced a coordinated, community-rooted approach to ensure New Yorkers who served are never left behind – particularly during a year marked by a record 43-day federal government shutdown, which placed significant strain on household budgets and access to federal supports.

The state's FreshConnect initiative played a key role in this approach. Through DVS offices and county and city partner distribution sites, DVS allocated 300,000 FreshConnect coupons, representing \$600,000 in assistance, to help Veterans purchase healthy, locally-grown food at farmers' markets. At a time when inflation and rising food prices disproportionately impact Veterans – as underscored by USDA data – FreshConnect remained a lifeline, strengthening both family food budgets and New York's agricultural economy.

Building on this strong foundation, DVS and its partners celebrated a major milestone in the statewide fight against food insecurity. On April 9, 2025, DVS, HelloFresh, the New York City Department of Veterans' Services, Campaign Against Hunger, and Black Veterans for Social Justice gathered in Brooklyn to commemorate the donation of two million meals through the Meals With Meaning: Veteran Feeding Veteran program. Since its launch in June 2020, this innovative public-private partnership transformed access to fresh food for Veterans in need. To mark the milestone, partners packed and distributed 8,000 HelloFresh meal kits in a single day, demonstrating the power of coordinated action and the depth of need across New York's Veteran community. The two millionth meal milestone arrived months ahead of schedule, underscoring the urgent need to continue addressing growing food insecurity among all who served.

Throughout the year, DVS strengthened and expanded partnerships with community food pantries and local hunger-relief organizations, ensuring that Veterans and Military Families had reliable access to nutritious foods during a period of heightened financial pressure. The launch of "Operation Baby," a new initiative created by DVS Commissioner Viviana M. DeCohen providing infant formula and essential supplies to Military Families, complimented these efforts.

DVS's food-security work was amplified by its mobile delivery system. From January to November 2025, DVS's award-winning Mobile Outreach Units traveled over 23,000 miles, providing confidential spaces for Veterans to meet with accredited Benefits Advisors, enroll in benefits, access FreshConnect resources, and receive direct support in the communities where they live. These mobile units also contributed to the Department's record outreach total year-to-date, with 670 events statewide – a 22% increase over the same period in 2024.

Together, these initiatives form a unified strategy: breaking down barriers, expanding access, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that every Veteran and Military Family can rely on New York State. Under Governor Hochul's leadership, DVS continues to stand firmly by its mission to serve all who served.

Empire State Development (ESD)

ESD incentive programs attract food manufacturers and agribusinesses to New York by offering tax incentives, training, loans, grants, and innovation development. This comprehensive support promotes a healthy economy and a resilient food supply chain. ESD has supported agribusinesses whose products are sold to institutions statewide, including food banks and food pantries. ESD coordinates The Interagency Food Manufacturing Strikeforce to bring together state agencies to help identify shovel-ready sites and expedite the approval process for food manufacturing facilities in the state.

Office for the Aging (OFA)

Office for the Aging administers the largest nutrition program for older adults in the country, serving almost 300,000 annually with more than 22 million meals in their homes and community settings. In addition, NYSOFA coordinates with AGM to implement the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) that gives eligible, low-income older adults \$25 in coupons to buy locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets in New York State. NYSOFA administers SNAP-Ed for older adults, providing one on one and group sessions on eating healthier, providing nutrition counselling and nutrition education to more than 50,000

individuals annually. These programs help to improve overall health and wellness as well as support farming, a major part of the state's economy.

Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)

OCFS serves New York's public by promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, families, and communities across the state. OCFS prioritizes primary prevention services, including the administration of the Trust Fund and the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant which supports 45 primary and secondary prevention efforts. Funded services include family resource centers, family opportunity centers, assistance with concrete needs, and linkages to other supportive services. Emphasis is placed on helping families experiencing food insecurity and inadequate housing. OCFS has also established the HEARS (Help, Empower, Assess Reassure, Support) Family Line. The HEARS Family Line assists parents and families by providing resources and referrals to a variety of services including food, clothing, housing, medical and behavioral health care services, parenting education and childcare.

Office of General Services (OGS)

OGS Food Distribution (OGSFD) administers The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in partnership with eight regional food banks to distribute USDA Foods to their network of pantries, soup kitchens, and other members across New York State. In Federal Fiscal Year 2025, \$70,298,072, equating to 59,959,103 pounds of USDA Foods were distributed through this network. OGSFD and the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY successfully piloted the use of USDA Foods in a school backpack program. Due to its success, the pilot can be expanded to other areas of the state.

Additionally, OGS Procurement provides centralized contracts for state agencies and other authorized users to purchase products, including food. To assist in meeting EO 32, OGS worked this year with food contract providers to accurately highlight products that meet New York sourcing requirements. In addition, OGS supports state-contracted service providers and state agencies, in collaboration with AGM, to assist them in meeting EO 32 annual milestones that support New York's farmers and food producers.

Department of State - Office for New Americans (ONA)

ONA assists all new Americans in accessing and navigating a variety of free immigration services and supports their inclusion as an integral part of New York State's diverse cultural fabric. The ONA hotline (1-800-566-7636) confidentially connects new Americans to ONA resources in over 200 languages. With a direct and comprehensive connection to new American communities and the organizations that serve them, ONA provides critical perspectives that shape food assistance offerings, ensuring representation of nutrition that adheres to the religious and cultural needs of New Yorkers.

Office of Mental Health (OMH)

The OMH Office of Prevention and Health Initiatives oversees the Fresh Food and Healthy Eating Program (FFHEP), which aims to address food insecurity and support healthy eating among individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) by connecting them with and educating them around the use of farmers market produce. To accomplish this goal, the project team collaborates with agencies that house New Yorkers with SMI to deliver six group-based, skills-building lessons adapted for their clients. Lessons include healthy meal planning, shopping for fresh produce, making healthy snack choices, and preparing raw, sautéed, steamed, and roasted vegetables. To increase physical access to farm-fresh foods, agency staff transport clients to local farmers markets. This activity helps to engage clients and housing staff in learning about, purchasing, preparing, and consuming fresh fruits and vegetables. To address affordability, AGM partners with OMH to

ensure clients have the purchasing power to enjoy healthy foods through its FreshConnect Check nutrition incentive program. In 2025, over 100 clients from six community-based agencies participated in the program.

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the state's primary food assistance program, administered by OTDA. SNAP provides monthly electronic benefits that can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores. In 2024, more than 1.7 million households in New York State relied on SNAP, helping children, seniors, people with disabilities, veterans and others afford the food they need.

OTDA administers the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), with support from the State Education Department. Summer EBT helps low-income households with school-age children purchase food over the summer when school is out of session and children can no longer rely on access to free/reduced price school meals. The program provides \$120 per child for the summer. OTDA ran successful Summer 2024 and 2025 programs. In 2025, more than 1.9 million children received a benefit to date, with almost \$232 million going to these households. OTDA expects to serve a similar number of children in 2026.

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) enables SNAP households where all members are age 60+, disabled, or undomiciled to utilize their SNAP EBT card at participating restaurants to purchase a hot and/or prepared meal, which is normally not allowed under SNAP guidelines. The program began with a pilot in Rochester and New York City and due to the success of the program, was rolled out statewide in January 2025. To date, there are over 300 participating restaurants in 37 counties and more are added weekly.

OTDA is leading the work to explore the ability to get the Nutrition Incentive Programs (FreshConnect, Double Up Food Bucks and Health Bucks) onto the SNAP EBT card. This effort recognizes that healthy food incentive programs provide significant health, educational, social, and economic benefits to the public, and will study ways to provide greater access to nutrition incentive programs through integration with EBT cards.

OTDA has been working with Fidelity Information Services (FIS) and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to expand access to card locking technology for our clients. Currently, clients can lock their EBT card from being used via the FIS ebtEdge mobile application on their phone or by using the ebtEdge portal on a web browser. The expansion will allow clients to also lock their card utilizing the FIS EBT hotline. This will expand a vital security feature to our clients that do not have access to the internet or a smart phone.

State Education Department (SED)

A key highlight for SED this year has been the work within Child Nutrition to implement the New York State Universal Free Meals initiative. In addition to the data and technical support provided on the budget and within program development, Child Nutrition also completed the extensive work of onboarding 52 districts/nonpublic schools in a short period of time who were added to the Statewide meals program. All 1,086 districts/nonpublic schools operating meal programs in 5,100 school buildings in New York State continue to receive ongoing support and leadership through SED for child nutrition where we are happy to support the wellness of the whole child.

In addition, SED also continued the Summer Food Service Program to provide free meals to over 436,000 young people statewide in 2025. An interactive USDA online map was available to help families search for a service site by address, city, or zip code. Children were able to visit one of the nearly 2,700 designated summer meal sites statewide, where free meals are available. SED advanced farm-to-school initiatives statewide, completing final disbursements of \$11.8 million through the Local Food for Schools program to

boost access to NY farm-fresh foods, strengthen food systems, and grow local markets. In total, 159 schools and districts partnered with 249 vendors, forming 96 percent growth in new business relationships.

Through New York's' Farm to School Grant, SED hosted the first statewide Farm to School Summit with 500+ attendees including K-12 food service, farmers, food producers, educators, district administrators, government agencies, and support service providers. The summit featured farm tours, a New York product trade show, panels, and hands-on learning. Additional efforts included launching the Regional Roots Culinary Training, which provides hands-on culinary training for school food service professionals using local ingredients and hosting Regional Farm to School Workshops to foster business-to-business relationships and reinforce the importance of providing fresh, local foods to New York State students while providing opportunities for New York State farms to grow and thrive.

Finally, SED has created an online training platform for food service staff to earn and track training hours. The platform offers a growing library of recorded and interactive content designed to support ongoing professional development.

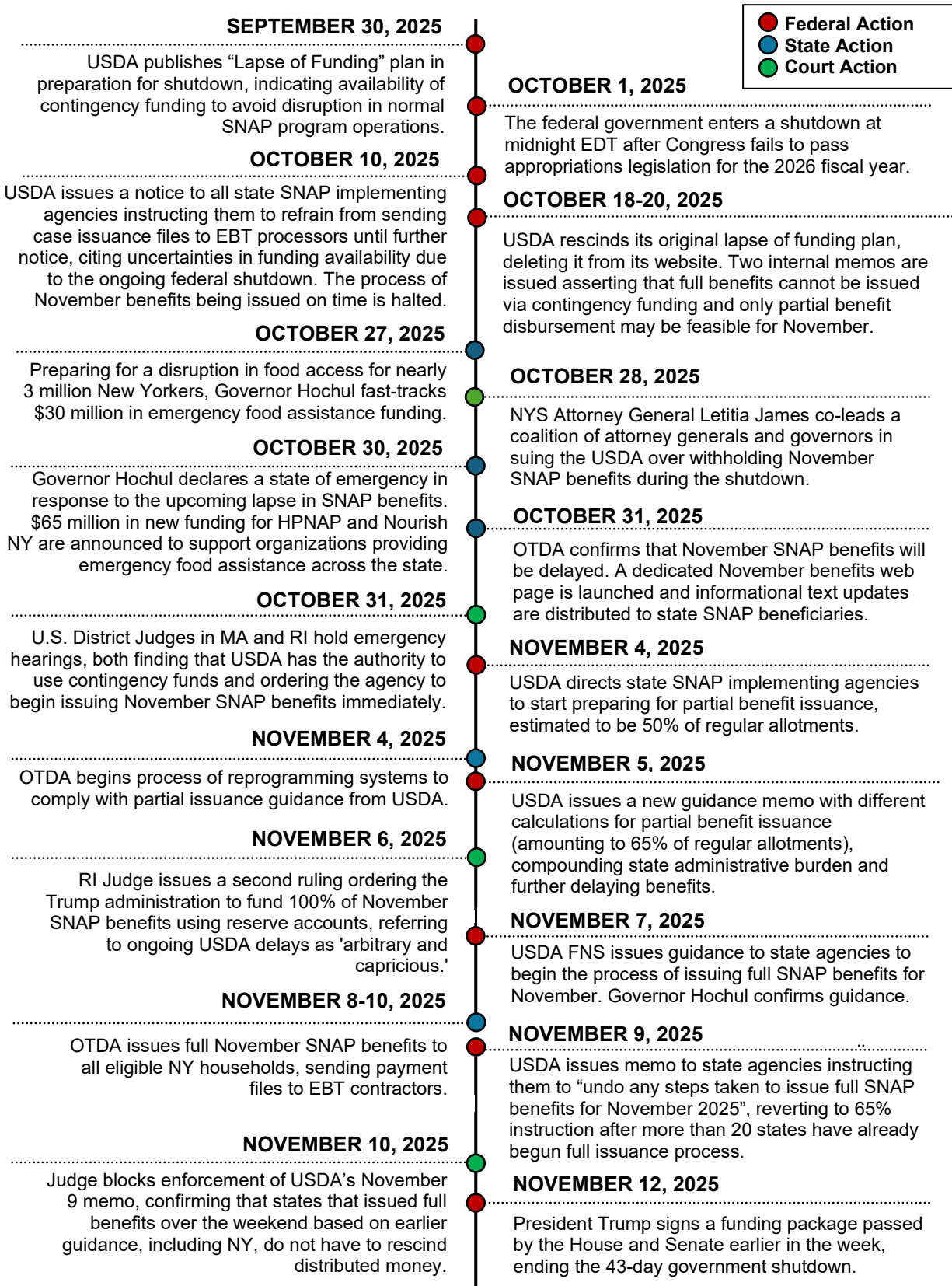
Tables and Figures

Table 1. Changes to SNAP introduced in H.R.1.

Area of Change	Summary of Change	Effective Date	Projected Impact on New York Food Security
Work requirements	The age range for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) subject to work requirements and time limits is expanded to include adults aged 55-64. Previously, the limit was up to age 60.	March 1, 2025	<p>Uncertainty for implementing agencies: The 3-month rule was suspended in most of the state until March 1. Implementing agencies originally thought they had until this date until new requirements went into effect, until it was announced on October 3 that the timeline had been moved up to November (later pushed to December due to federal shutdown), increasing the burden on program administrative staff. After the Rhode Island court decision, the original end-of-February deadline has been re-instated.</p> <p>Loss of benefits for food-insecure New Yorkers: An estimated 300,000 households will potentially lose their SNAP benefits entirely under these new work requirements, exacerbating food insecurity amongst already vulnerable populations. This is most likely to happen at recertification.</p> <p>Limiting relief in economically weak regions: According to the state Department of Labor, as of August 2025, the highest areas of non-seasonably adjusted unemployment in the state are the Bronx, at 7.8%, the New York City boroughs with each between 5% and 6% and St. Lawrence County at 5.3% — each far below the 10% threshold. This requirement is thus likely to exacerbate food insecurity in these regions.</p>
	The work requirement exemptions for parents or guardians caring for a dependent child now only apply to those with a child under age 14, reduced from under 18.	March 1, 2026	
	The work requirement exceptions for homeless individuals, veterans, and individuals aged 24 or younger who were in foster care have been removed.	March 1, 2026	
	Expanded work requirements tighten what counts as a “qualified work activity,” meaning many full-time students’ part-time jobs, unpaid internships, and required field placements no longer meet eligibility standards. ^{lxxxvii}	March 1, 2025	
	The criteria for states to waive work requirements in areas with high unemployment were made significantly stricter, limiting waivers to areas with unemployment rates of at least 10 percent.	March 1, 2026	
Non-citizen eligibility	Limits SNAP eligibility for noncitizens to only include Legal Permanent Residents, Cuban and Haitian Entrants, and those allowed to live in the US under the Compacts of Free Association. All other refugees, asylees, and humanitarian entrants will no longer be eligible for the food assistance program.	Undetermined	<p>Jeopardized food access for refugees and asylees: The change jeopardizes SNAP access for as many as 41,000 refugees and asylees in New York. However, this policy is currently under review. NYS will not finalize policy until federal clarification is provided.</p>
Funding responsibility	States will have to share the cost of benefits, with the percentage paid by the state depending on its SNAP payment error rate (PER).	FY 2028	<p>Benefit cost shift to state budget: The share of benefits paid by NYS will be calculated based on its’ SNAP error rate for FY 2026, which will not be published until June of 2027. At current error rates of between 14 and 16%, the state would be required to</p>

			pay 15% of SNAP benefit costs, more than \$1 billion annually. To balance the budget, the state could be forced to further reduce SNAP eligibility, cut other state programs, or increase taxes.
	The federal government's share of administrative costs for SNAP will be reduced from 50% to 25%, requiring states and localities to cover the remaining 75%.	FY 2027	Administrative cost shift to state/local budget: As a county-administered state, local districts pay for their share of SNAP administrative expenses, while OTDA pays for state incurred administrative costs. This will result in a combined \$200 million annual increase in costs across all affected agencies.
SNAP-Ed programming	Funding for the SNAP-Ed program, which helped individuals learn and develop skills to make healthy food choices and add physical activity into their daily lives, has been eliminated.	Significantly reduced in FY 2026; eliminated as of Oct 1, 2026	Threats to nutrition education: The cut will result in a loss of \$29 million annually which funded nutrition education work in NYS by 18 community-based organizations. Exacerbating health-related inequities: SNAP-Ed targeted populations most at risk for diet-related health disparities, including children, older adults, and communities of color. Elimination of the program will exacerbate the gaps in public health infrastructure that already exist for these groups.

Figure 1. Timeline of federal government shutdown impacts on SNAP benefit issuance in New York.



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