



# FOOD SECURITY IN NEVADA

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Nevada's Plan for Action

*In March 2012, The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Grants Management Unit (GMU) implemented a strategic planning process intended to address food security in Nevada. The purpose was to bring together stakeholders across the state to develop a plan designed to increase food security in Nevada. This plan is a result of those efforts.*

# Food Security in Nevada

## NEVADA'S PLAN FOR ACTION

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## ENDING HUNGER BEFORE IT BEGINS

From the depths of the Great Recession, a movement to improve food security in Nevada has emerged. Over the past several months, leaders from government entities and the private sector have joined forces to better understand the root causes and negative impacts of hunger and to explore potential strategies to reduce it. The over-arching conclusion of this effort is that progress can be made through collaborative partnerships that weave separate threads together into a single, robust fabric.

From small, rural towns to inner-city neighborhoods, communities in Nevada possess an unrealized potential to strengthen sustenance and nutrition programs and ensure a robust and affordable food system for the entire state. This can include the promotion of local businesses that grow and distribute food to create economic vitality. Nevada's future can be one where farmers work with school districts to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for students' meals, and where neighbors coordinate with neighbors to start community-supported agriculture projects. It can be a place where service providers from across the state help their clients obtain food and nutrition resources, while also providing skills and information to prepare healthy, nutritious meals. By leveraging their strengths and relationships with one another, communities in Nevada can vastly reduce or eliminate the hunger gap.

The community food security movement encourages all members to invest and be active in the wellbeing of the community at multiple levels. Through a network of local and corporate supermarkets, farmer's markets, community gardens, and anti-hunger initiatives, Nevada can create a distinct food web that minimizes barriers to food access. This system enables more families to purchase nutritious and culturally-sensitive ingredients that allow them to prepare wholesome meals for children and the elderly. Beyond the family sphere, local institutions such as schools and health centers partner with other community actors, area farmers, social justice workers, and religious leaders to construct programs and services that improve the overall quality of life. This is possible in Nevada.

## MISSION STATEMENT

### **IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND HEALTH OF NEVADANS BY INCREASING FOOD SECURITY THROUGHOUT THE STATE**

Difficult economic conditions in Nevada have led to an increase in the number of households that are food insecure, meaning that they do not have "access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members." From 2007 to 2010, Nevada experienced a 50 percent increase from 10 percent to 15<sup>1</sup> percent in households that were food insecure, compared to the number of households prior to the recession (Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; see chart on pg. 20).

PRINCIPLES

- 1. Incorporate economic development opportunities into food security solutions.**
- 2. Use a comprehensive, coordinated approach to ending hunger and promoting health and nutrition, rather than just providing emergency short-term assistance.**
- 3. Focus on strategic partnerships between all levels of government, communities, and nonprofit organizations including foundations, private industries, universities, and research institutions.**
- 4. Use available resources in a more effective and efficient way.**
- 5. Implement research-based strategies to achieve measurable results.**



## A PROBLEM WE CANNOT IGNORE

Hunger is about missing meals – a coping strategy when there is not enough money to cover all of one’s basic needs. Nevadans are missing a lot of meals. Most people are able to purchase some food through work or other income. Some people receive federal nutrition benefits, which add a few more meals. Some receive emergency or regular assistance from food banks, soup kitchens and food pantries, which contribute even more meals. After all these sources of food are counted up, more than 16 percent of Nevada’s population still misses meals. Missing meals are the calculated number of meals/year that corresponds to the food budget shortfall reported by food-insecure individuals. In other words, this is the number of meals the food insecure could not afford to purchase in 2010. That’s what we call the meal gap – 81,367,395 missing meals in Nevada, to be exact.

Too many people in Nevada are unaware of the food and nutrition resources and services that they are eligible to receive. Key informants noted that at least 50 percent of children in Nevada are eligible for free and reduced-cost lunch. This says a lot about the level of poverty in our state. Children who are hungry or poorly nourished are less able to focus on learning. Schools, child care centers, family day care homes, and after-school programs need to improve the meals they serve. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Children Act of 2010 requires school districts to meet new meal pattern requirements. School districts participating in the National School Lunch Program are currently implementing the new meal pattern. As many as twenty rural schools in remote locations lack the facilities and resources to participate.



A lack of good nutritional education leads many people in the state to spend money on less healthy fast food options instead of spending the same amount of money on locally produced sources of food that could be prepared at home and would be healthier. Some people who have food insecurity issues will try to take in as much food as possible without considering the nutritional value of the food they consume. This can also impact their children by leading them to form poor eating habits that will influence their food choices throughout their lives.

Children are not the only vulnerable population in Nevada. Insufficient access to healthy food reduces the health and wellness of children and adults in Nevada. The population of seniors in the state has increased over the past three years. When seniors retire and adjust to a fixed income based on Social Security, they may not be able to access all the foods they are used to purchasing. Inadequate access to fresh vegetables and fruit can prevent seniors from being as healthy as possible and drive up their medical costs.

Nevada’s high desert environment and arid climate makes farming here more challenging. It takes a lot of water to grow and process food crops. Increasing production, processing, and the purchase of locally grown food in Nevada are essential to making healthy food accessible

and affordable for all Nevadans. Families that are economically insecure are especially vulnerable. The decline in the economy has forced people that are used to being self-reliant to reach out for help. Many people are asking for food now that have never had to ask for food before. A hungry workforce is less productive than one that is nourished and has access to healthy foods. Food security also affects how many people are attracted to work and live in Nevada. Insufficient access to food and other basic necessities of life will make people less likely to move to Nevada or stay in Nevada. If basic needs are not met, then it is nearly impossible for individuals to improve other areas of their life.

There are many logistical challenges in Nevada that impact food security. For example, Nevada is separated from California by a mountain range that is covered by snow in the winter. This can affect commerce and the movement of goods and people to and from this region. Some populations are particularly impacted by logistical challenges. Because they may have to travel greater distances to buy groceries, people who live in remote communities must sometimes add significant mileage expenses to the cost of obtaining their food. Some rural areas only have one place to buy groceries, which may contribute to higher food prices and less food variety. Because many seniors have reduced mobility, they may also have a reduced ability to access food. All of these logistical factors contribute to the variation of costs associated with obtaining nutritious products, and are particularly significant in Nevada.

Increasing gas prices put even more upward pressure on the cost of food. Some stakeholders have noted that “rural Nevada does not want to be dependent on Washoe and Clark Counties because, when resources shrink, the rural communities are hit the hardest as funding contracts back to the urban areas of Nevada.” Another food service provider stated that, “all of our services are in the Reno/Sparks area, but there are some clients that live outside of that area [who] are hard to reach because of the vast distances involved and the higher costs of transportation required to reach a small population.”



## **Hunger is Expensive for All of Us**

Hunger is a symptom of poverty and directly affects health. Basic nutrition is essential to be healthy. Inattention to this basic need indirectly increases or exacerbates the challenges and costs of other health care programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, mental health, general medical services and education.<sup>i</sup>

More than one in six persons (17 percent)<sup>i</sup> in Nevada is considered food insecure.<sup>ii</sup> Federal nutrition programs are designed to help address hunger and are beneficial to the state for the following reasons: they feed qualified hungry people, they improve health through improved nutrition, they bring back Nevada's tax dollars from the federal government, and they create jobs and generate economic stability.

Nevada lags behind most states in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation rates. According to a recent USDA report, even a small increase in the SNAP participation rate can make a big difference to Nevada's economy:

- In Nevada, the fiscal year 2009 SNAP participation rate for those eligible was 61 percent and there were about 333,000 participants.
- If the SNAP rate rose so that 27,000 more low-income people could participate, it would allow for \$16 million more per year in additional benefits to purchase nutritious food. In addition, this would bring \$16 million of federal dollars to the state.
- Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates \$9.20 in total community spending. As a result, almost \$30 million in total new economic activity would be generated in Nevada.<sup>iii</sup>

Food security – access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life – is one of several conditions necessary for a population to be healthy and well nourished.

While it is not mandated that breakfast be offered in schools, 90.6 percent of the Nevada schools that provide the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) also offer breakfast, ranking Nevada 29th in the nation. But, Nevada ranked last in the nation (51st out of all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia) in the percentage of students eligible who received both free or reduced price lunches and breakfasts.<sup>iv</sup> The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) also ranked Nevada last in the nation (53<sup>rd</sup> out of all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico) for participation in NSLP with 47.1 percent of eligible children participating in the program and 52nd for participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) with 15 percent of the eligible children participating in the program. The national average participation for NSLP is 62.31 percent and the national average participation for SBP is 26.26 percent.

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<sup>i</sup> Percent may vary depending on year and source of data available

## Hunger is a Public Health Concern

The emergency food system was initially created to provide supplemental food assistance to individuals and families at risk of hunger. Over time, “hunger” has come to mean not just a lack of food, but a lack of access to healthy food, the kind that promotes health and wellbeing and guards against obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related illnesses. More than half of adult Nevadans (60.1 percent) were overweight or obese in 2010.<sup>v</sup>

## Rural Communities Hit Hard

Access to healthy food in Nevada varies by geographic area.<sup>vi</sup> Food insecurity is a top issue identified by both providers and community members throughout the state in the Interim Summary of Results of the Statewide Needs Assessment, conducted by the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Grants Management Unit (GMU). Identified concerns include:

- 1) Inadequate income to obtain food.
- 2) Lack of access to grocery stores due to the demographics (including geographic remoteness) of communities.
- 3) Lack of local access to public offices to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).<sup>vii</sup>

## Some Experience Hunger at Higher Rates

Special populations can be particularly vulnerable and at risk to experience hunger. The percentage of Nevada households with food insecurity among children is 8.6 percent (2001-2007 average). Several studies indicate that children who are food insecure are more likely to have higher risks of health and developmental problems than children in otherwise similar food-secure households.<sup>viii</sup>

Breastfeeding has been acknowledged as the preferred feeding method for most infants. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Children Act of 2010 includes breastfeeding support and promotion as one of the specific services to be provided under the WIC Program. The WIC Program has established a goal to increase the number of postpartum women who participate in the program and breastfeed. However, the average rate of monthly participation in Nevada has declined from 58 percent in 2009 to 49 percent in 2011.<sup>ix</sup> This decline is likely due to funding as WIC is not an entitlement program but a discretionary eligibility program.

*I'm a senior. I have a Section 8 voucher and recently my rent was raised by Nevada Rural Housing Authority (NRHA) to almost half my income. I'm on social security and have a limited income. By the time I pay my rent and all my bills, I only have about \$100 left. I get food stamps but it doesn't go far because of my diet due to medical problems and allergies.*

*-Elko County Focus Group Member*



Nevada ranks 10th in the nation when it comes to senior hunger. As of 2010 (the latest year for which data is available), 16.5 percent of Nevada's seniors faced the threat of hunger, surpassing the national average of 14.85 percent.<sup>x</sup>

- 16.5 percent of Nevada seniors, age 60 and older, live in Threat of Senior Hunger in 2010. This equates to 78,421 seniors and ranks Nevada 10th worst in the nation for number of seniors at threat of hunger.
- Since the onset of the Great Recession in 2007 to 2010, the number of seniors experiencing the threat of hunger has increased by 34 percent.
- Data suggests that the Great Recession had more enduring effects relevant to food insecurity for older Americans. For example, the number of seniors affected increased 78 percent versus 39 percent for the portion of population younger than age 60.
- The increase in senior hunger will likely lead to additional nutrition and health challenges for the nation.
- The threat of hunger is more than three times higher among disabled seniors than among the retired.
- When one or more grandchildren live in the home, the threat of hunger for seniors greatly exceeds households with no grandchildren.
- The majority of seniors at threat of hunger have incomes above the federal poverty level (FPL).<sup>xi</sup>

As part of the development of this plan, 1,673 surveys were completed by Nevadans to help define the scope of the problem (1,622 English and 51 Spanish versions). Of Nevadans surveyed, 56 percent indicated that hunger was a big problem in their community. Surveys came from 14 of Nevada's 17 counties, reinforcing that hunger and food security is a big problem across the state. More than half of the respondents (58 percent) indicated they struggle almost every month to put food on the table, with an additional 34 percent responding that they struggle some but not every month.

In addition to the 1,673 consumer surveys that were completed, a separate survey for providers was distributed to representatives from organizations related to food security. Providers from the following nine counties returned 81 surveys: Carson, Churchill, Clark, Elko, Humboldt, Lyon, Mineral, Nye, and Washoe. Of providers surveyed, 56 percent indicated that hunger was a big problem in their community and 82 percent of providers indicated that more people are now seeking services than compared to the past.

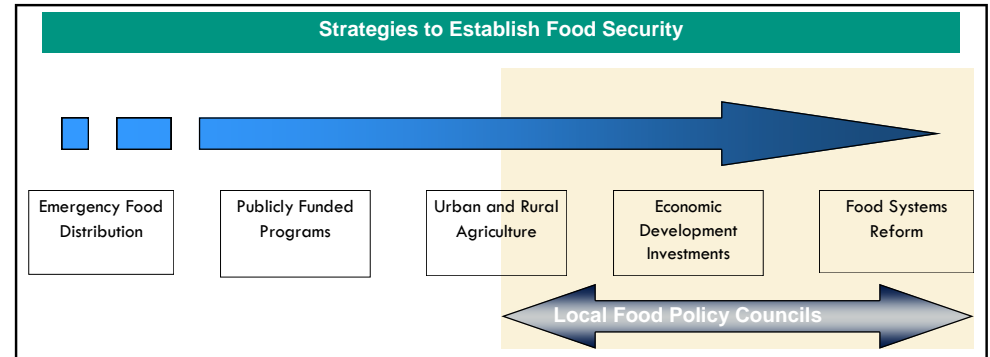
Children, low-income working families, senior citizens, and single-parent households were the four populations that consumers identified as being most affected by hunger. These are also the top four populations that providers indicated that they provide services to most often.



## Food Assistance Programs Have Short-term Impact

The relationships among the food system activities and strategies to establish long-term food security are complex. Nevada needs leadership to ensure the various programs function together effectively as a hunger and nutrition safety net, while building a system to ensure they complement and supplement each other. To that end, workgroups were developed to design and implement the strategic plan. The Grow Nevada workgroup addressed food issues related to economic development and agriculture business; Feed Nevada focused on eligibility, outreach, access, and nutrition education; Reach Nevada dealt with logistics, execution, purchase, storage, and distribution; and finally the Lead Nevada workgroup addressed policy and leveraging related to food security.

By crafting short, mid and long-term strategies, Nevada has created a plan to lead Nevada to food security.



## DESIRED SYSTEM

Making progress at anything usually requires two things: 1) knowing where you are starting from, and 2) knowing where you want to go. Research, focus groups, surveys, and interviews with key informants provided the workgroup members with a more comprehensive understanding of where Nevada stood in terms of food security. In response to survey questions, providers and consumers rated “food pantries and soup kitchens” and “SNAP” as two of the most effective programs at reducing hunger. Providers and consumers suggested the following strategies to address food security in Nevada. The responses to open-ended questions are grouped and summarized here.

**Improve and expand existing programs.** Suggestions included making it easier for people to access programs, and simply making more programs available to help people in need. More meals, neighborhood-based services, and streamlined eligibility were a few of the improvements suggested.

**Provide education and experiences that improve the health and decision making of children and their family around food.** Examples included health and nutrition education for all children K-12 and gardens in schools.

**Encourage donations and incentivize businesses to improve food use and food recovery.** Many identified the importance of reducing waste (the throwing away of food by businesses) and enhancing what is available for people to eat. More support from the private sector (e.g. business, or individuals) was identified as a potential solution.

**Get people to work.** Jobs are important because they allow people to generate the income needed to purchase food.

**Change policies.** Providers stressed the importance of changing restrictive policies that affect consumers and food availability.

**Provide financial education.** Financial education and budget counseling would help families with all of their needs, including hunger.

**Enhance collaboration.** People identified the need to develop solutions within and among community partners to leverage existing resources and innovative solutions.

**Support small businesses.** Several respondents suggested this strategy. One provider stated that this would considerably affect hunger.

The information from the community, coupled with the background and expertise of the workgroup members, helped them to articulate a vision for Nevada's future. The workgroups vision of a future food security system in Nevada included the following key attributes:

**Access** – All Nevadans would have an appropriate supply and convenient access to healthy and nutritious foods. Nevadans eligible for food and nutrition assistance would receive it in an efficient, timely manner. The system would include a “one-stop” or “single point of entry” approach to link people to a broad array of services they might need beyond food, such as jobs, housing, etc. Additional state staff would enable timely processing of federal assistance applications and help to avoid federal penalties. Staff could be cross-trained to help guide clients during the process and reduce duplication of effort. The one-stop-shop concept would alleviate the problem of services offered in silos and provide one location for determining eligibility for multiple programs based on one application.

**Availability** – Nevada's food security system would allow for a variety of healthy foods to be produced in the quantities required, transported when and where they are needed, and delivered at a cost that would be affordable, thereby improving economic viability so people can afford to purchase food along with their other basic human needs. It would provide access for Nevadans who are frail, disabled or live in remote, rural areas of the state. To ensure availability, the system would have the capacity to produce, process, distribute, and purchase the goods in an affordable and sustainable manner while creating jobs and financial stability.

*Being able to feed my family healthy and nutritious food is very important. It is just expensive. Having more business and jobs in smaller communities would be ideal.*  
-Lyon County Focus Group Member

**Collaboration** – State leadership would work closely with service providers, growers, education and economic development to support all efforts to improve food security in Nevada. This would involve an increased level of engagement between stakeholders and an efficient leveraging of existing resources. An ideal system should operate efficiently and effectively. Existing components of the food security pipeline would be connected and work together to meet the needs of the community rather than operating in silos. This collaborative approach to addressing food security would also involve the sharing of data and information in order to link services to needs in the various communities. Duplication of efforts would be reduced by such a system, because it would track the frequency, type, location and volume services received by individuals for each partner. Data from the system would inform community planning and decision making. Such a food system would increase access, community engagement, and entrepreneurial food and agricultural activities, and improve the capacity of farmers to grow and sell food in Nevada.



**Education and Outreach** – Awareness in communities about the issues related to food security and available programs are essential. An improved system would help teach the public about principles of nutrition as well as key food security strategies that they could support. Public education campaigns would be used to promote the use of SNAP to purchase seeds, plants and fruit trees, as people are generally unaware of this benefit. SNAP education would also increase utilization of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) benefits at Farmers' Markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. Farmers and retailers would understand how to become an EBT vendor. Public education campaigns would also be used to increase acceptance of and encourage Nevadans to choose healthy, local foods and understand how to prepare them.

**Sustainability** – Sustaining a food security system requires a vision and leadership from the highest office in the State. This begins by ensuring that sufficient infrastructure is in place to promote access. A strategic financing approach would leverage all available resources, build infrastructure and technology to maximize federal funds to bring in new resources. Pursuing opportunities for efficiency in purchasing, transportation and delivery would lead to sustainability and a coordinated food security pipeline. All parts of the system must recognize the importance of continually improving their operating models in order to remain as efficient and effective as possible. Regular assessment of whether public and private resources are being used effectively is essential to sustainability.



These characteristics are not intended to be a comprehensive list of attributes required to make Nevada food secure. Instead, this list of characteristics was designed to serve as part of a larger vision for the food security system in Nevada. Achieving this system can be realized through the accomplishment of the following goals:

## GOALS FOR A FOOD SECURE NEVADA

A Food Security Steering Committee was created to oversee the strategic planning process. In addition, four workgroups were created to address specific core areas of food security in Nevada. The four workgroups include: Grow Nevada, Feed Nevada, Lead Nevada, and Reach Nevada.

### Lead

**Goal 1** Establish the systems and positions necessary to implement a permanent, sustainable, accountable state leadership structure for food security to increase all Nevadans' understanding, value and support of food security solutions.

**Goal 2** Promote a policy agenda to increase food security in Nevada.

### Feed

**Goal 1** Maximize participation in each federal nutrition program available to the state.

**Goal 2** Establish and integrate an actual or virtual “one-stop-shop” system to increase access to food and other services for food insecure Nevadans.

### Grow

**Goal 1** Increase the number of servings of nutritious foods consumed by Nevadans – with emphasis on foods that are produced in Nevada.

### Reach

**Goal 1** Change the current models of purchase (commodities) and distribution of nutritious foods to increase economies of scale, and link frequency of deliveries, and availability of local food to the specific needs of communities throughout the state (rural, urban, and food deserts).

**Goal 2** Develop the technology to connect and share data among multiple state agencies, regional food banks, community agencies, and faith-based organizations for efficient and effective targeting of services and populations.



## GOALS AND STRATEGIES TO BUILD A FOOD SECURE NEVADA

Lead Goals and Strategies	
<b>Goal 1</b> Establish the systems and positions necessary to implement a permanent, sustainable, accountable state leadership structure for food security to increase all Nevadans' understanding, value and support of food security solutions.	<b>Target End Date</b>
1.a Secure technical assistance to evaluate and identify optimal business processes for Nevada's food security system including state agencies, food banks, and regional and local nonprofits in order to determine the role each plays in closing the meal gap.	July 1, 2013
1.b Establish an Office of Food Security in the Director's Office of the Department of Health and Human Services.	July 1, 2013
1.c Create a Statewide Food Policy Advisory Council that links to and leverages regional and local community-based efforts.	July 1, 2013
1.d Support the consolidation of appropriate USDA programs under the Nevada Department of Agriculture to improve efficiency and effectiveness.	July 1, 2013
1.e Fill staffing and technology capacity needs in state agencies to optimize and expedite access to resources.	July 1, 2013
1.f Determine baseline status for all goals in the Food Security plan.	January 1, 2014
1.g Promote a state policy encouraging outreach which draws down additional federal/grant dollars.	January 1, 2014
1.h Create an evaluation plan to measure progress on increasing food security in Nevada.	March 1, 2014
1.i Coordinate and resolve issues with state and non-state agencies, measuring and reporting on progress in increasing food security for Nevadans on an annual basis.	July 1, 2014
<b>Goal 2</b> Promote a policy agenda to increase food security in Nevada.	<b>Target End Date</b>
2.a Adopt a policy to authorize CNP, SNAP, and WIC to utilize all of the available opportunities established by USDA.	October 1, 2013

Lead Goals and Strategies	
2.b Establish a multi-agency resource team to pursue innovative solutions, demonstration projects and funding, available through the federal government, foundations or other sources to increase the number of people fed and close the meal gap.	October 1, 2013
2.c Research and develop a menu of model policies/regulation options to promote food security in Nevada.	January 1, 2014
2.d Promote policies on a state and local level to encourage Nevada farm products to enter systems that serve Nevadans including institutions, schools, senior centers, and child care centers by promoting policies (develop a menu of model polices/regulations).	March 1, 2014
2.e Develop and implement a campaign to increase the public's awareness of food and nutrition resources, remove the stigma associated with receiving food assistance, and ensure that Nevada policymakers are aware of benefits from available nutrition programs.	January 1, 2015
2.f Policy Council review and update plan.	January 1, 2016

Feed Goals and Strategies	
<b>Goal 1</b> Maximize participation in each federal nutrition program available to the state.	<b>Target End Date</b>
1.a Feed more children through increased participation in in-school meal programs and establish accountability measures.	January 1, 2013-2018
1.b Expand partnerships between regional food banks and commodities programs to effectively utilize and deliver all USDA commodities programs along with fresh produce	October 1, 2013
1.c Create a strategic partnership between WIC and SNAP to maximize caseloads.	October 1, 2013
1.d Create partnerships and sponsorships to feed more children through out of school meal programs and daycare centers using Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).	January 1, 2014

Feed Goals and Strategies	
1.e Replicate effective models to increase rural capacity for children's out of school meal programs.	January 1, 2014
1.f Assist school districts and charter schools with implementing the state's wellness policy and support the Office of Child Nutrition Programs' enforcement of the policy.	January 1, 2015
<b>Goal 2</b> Establish and integrate an actual or virtual "one-stop-shop" system to increase access to food and other services for food insecure Nevadans.	<b>Target End Date</b>
2.a Increase the number of services providers and places within a community and neighborhood to increase access points to healthy food by food insecure people who may be ineligible for federal nutrition programs.	January 1, 2014
2.b Assess and implement a single, statewide database system that integrates with other information and service systems (e.g. 2-1-1, Federal Nutrition Programs).	July 1, 2014
2.c Collaborate with the Consumer Assistance Committee of the Silver State Health Insurance Exchange on a single point entry/application process for multiple assistance programs across systems.	January 1, 2015
2.d Strengthen partnerships and increase efficiency to implement a "one-stop-shop" for all assistance programs.	January 1, 2015
2.e Expand partnerships linked to a "one-stop-shop" to address risk factors that increase food insecurity.	January 1, 2015



## Grow Goals and Strategies

<b>Goal 1</b> Increase the number of servings of nutritious foods consumed by Nevadans – with emphasis on foods that are produced in Nevada.	<b>Target End Date</b>
1.a Encourage local producers to establish aggregation centers to increase retail and wholesale sales.	January 1, 2014
1.b Support and expand model programs and partnerships (e.g. school gardens, community gardens, and small food plots) to supplement a household's supply of fresh produce or encourage entrepreneurial efforts, with a focus on individuals utilizing the food security network.	January 1, 2014
1.c Develop a food system asset map (inventory) to catalog existing food resources and potential resources in the state that could be leveraged further. (Refer also Goal 1.b under Reach.)	March 1, 2014
1.d Analyze the asset map, prioritize and recommend investment and collaboration opportunities to increase food security and its economic impact.	July 1, 2014
1.e Use identified aggregation, processing, and distribution capacity to pilot the utilization of local foods into the food security networks and Nevada institutions (e.g. Farm to School, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program).	January 1, 2015
1.f Work with producers and other stakeholders to identify and address barriers preventing the production, sale, and use or expansion of local foods.	January 1, 2015
1.g Develop an education and marketing plan to encourage consumption of nutritious, local foods, focused on individuals that utilize the food security network.	January 1, 2015

<b>Reach Goals and Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal 1</b> Change the current models of purchase (commodities) and distribution of nutritious foods to increase economies of scale, and link frequency of deliveries, and availability of local food to the specific needs of communities throughout the state (rural, urban, and food deserts).	<b>Target End Date</b>
1.a Conduct a comprehensive benefit analysis study of the current state and nonprofit commodity/food delivery system that includes cost efficiency, frequency of delivery, and recommendations.	March 1, 2014
1.b Develop a comprehensive client/community food supply assessment to determine what organizations, agencies and groups are providing services as well as the frequency and schedule of deliveries to determine efficiencies and opportunities for streamlining food distribution processes. (Refer also to 1.c under Grow.)	March 1, 2014
1.c Use food asset maps to develop a coordinated distribution delivery process, establish a network to enable a truck to reach several areas in a single trip and ultimately provide more food to communities.	July 1, 2014
1.d Establish a “one-stop-shop” for agencies to acquire produce and other foods from regional food banks and expand nutritious food options beyond what is available for free through commodities programs.	January 1, 2015
<b>Goal 2</b> Develop the technology to connect and share data among multiple state agencies, regional food banks, community agencies, and faith based organizations for efficient and effective targeting of services and populations.	<b>Target End Date</b>
2.a Use data and information from the shared software system to track client services, program utilization, and target new distribution points based on needs.	July 1, 2015

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## TIMING AND MILESTONES

### Lead Nevada

Work under Lead Nevada is expected to begin on Goal 1 first and Goal 2 beginning shortly after. All work for Goal 1 is expected to be completed by July 1, 2014 and work for Goal 2 is expected to be completed by January 1, 2016. Milestone includes: an adopted agency policy to improve efficiency, claims, and reduce errors; an Office of Food Security with a Deputy Director and Support Staff in DHHS; a Statewide Food Policy Advisory Council; an evaluation plan to measure progress on increasing food security in Nevada; and a public awareness campaign.

### Feed Nevada

Work under Feed Nevada is expected to begin on Goal 1 first and Goal 2 beginning shortly after. All work for Goals 1 and 2 are expected to be completed by January 1, 2015. Milestone includes: increased participation in in-school meal programs; a strategic partnership between WIC and SNAP; replication of effective models for out of school meal programs; a single, statewide database system; and expanded partnerships linked to a “one-stop-shop.”

### Grow Nevada

Because Grow Nevada only has one goal, all work is expected to be completed by January 1, 2015. Milestone includes: increased aggregation centers in Nevada; expanded model programs and partnerships; a Food System Asset Map; and an education and marketing plan.

### Reach Nevada

Work under Reach Nevada is expected to begin on Goal 1 first and Goal 2 beginning shortly after. All work for Goals 1 is expected to be completed by January 1, 2015 and work for Goal 2 is expected to be completed by July 1, 2015. Milestone includes: a “one-stop-shop” for agencies to acquire produce; a comprehensive client/community food supply assessment; a comprehensive benefit analysis study of the current state and nonprofit commodity system; and a shared data system to track client services and utilization.

## EVALUATING NEVADA'S PROGRESS

In keeping with the principles that guided development of this plan, accountability is essential to measure and demonstrate Nevada's progress toward achieving food security. Nevada's food security plan will be evaluated annually to measure progress toward goals based on benchmarks. Benchmarks were selected based on the ability to measure meaningful impact, ability to collect and report on change, and ability to make comparisons to other states. There are three benchmarks that will be used to measure the impact of this plan's implementation. They include:

Benchmark 1. Reducing Food Insecurity

Benchmark 2. Reducing Very Low Food Insecurity

Benchmark 3. Increasing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates

### Definitions of Benchmarks

Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum:

- The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).

The core objective in Nevada is to provide needed assistance, resources, training, and education to children, individuals and families to improve nutrition and reduce hunger. There are four benchmarks associated with addressing hunger:

- **Food Insecurity** Percent of households that do not have access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members
- **Very Low Food Security** Percent of households that had their food intake reduced or their eating patterns disrupted at some time during the year because the household lacked money or other resources for food
- **Participation Rate** Percent of eligible population that participates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Food Insecurity--is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.<sup>2</sup>

Low food security--Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.

Very low food security-At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food.

SNAP Participation Rates--one important measure of a program's performance is the ability to reach its target population. Poverty and employment rates help to track the long-term economic health of families and individuals, but both are indirect measures of economic hardship. A more direct measure of family economic need is the number of individuals and families participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the federal Food Stamp Program. The amount of assistance depends on household size, income, and expenses. Households are eligible for SNAP if their income is less than 130 percent of the poverty line. SNAP participation rates have increased dramatically in recent months and could increase even further as income levels drop and more families become eligible. A complicated and time-consuming program application process, complex renewal requirements, and the stigma attached to receiving food stamps have hindered SNAP participation rates in the past.<sup>xii</sup>

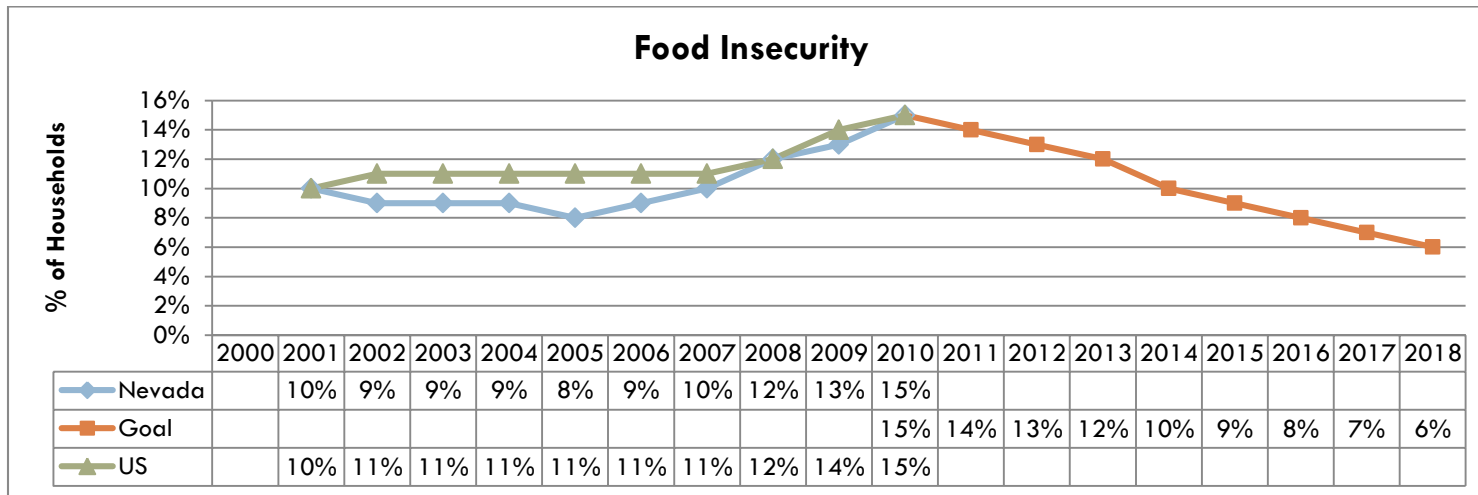
Baseline data exists for all three benchmarks in Nevada. Based on changes expected through the successful implementation of this plan, the following targets on the next page were established to be achieved by 2018



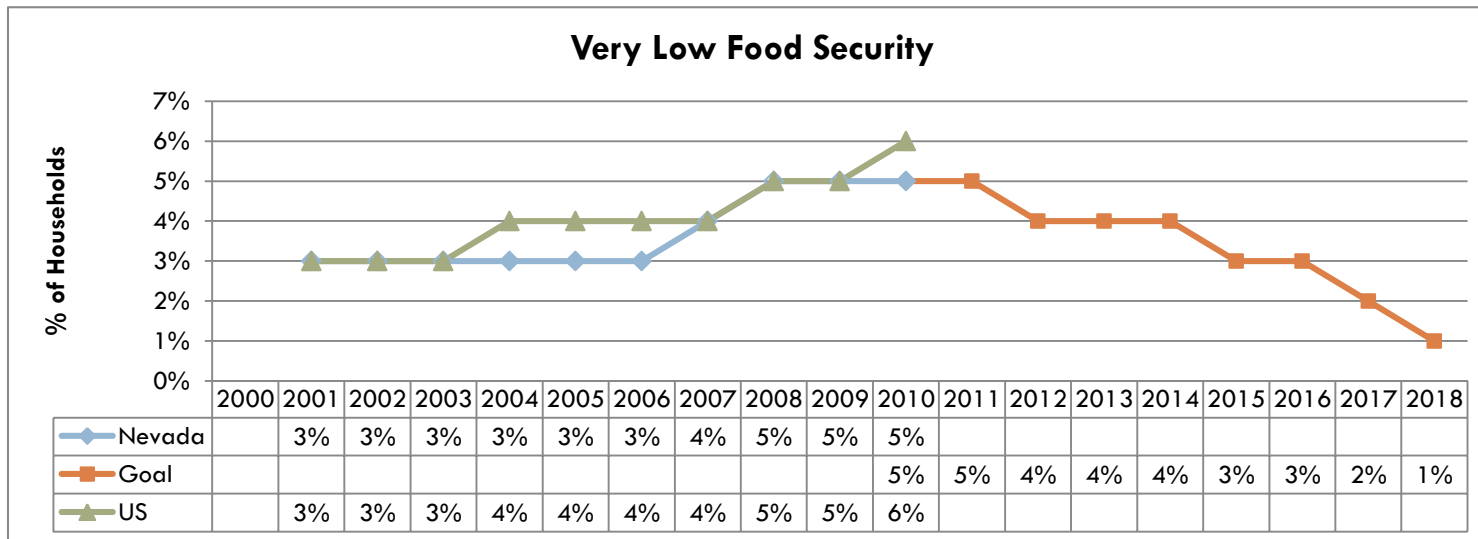
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<sup>2</sup> (Definitions are from the Life Sciences Research Office, S.A. Andersen, ed., "Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult to Sample Populations," *The Journal of Nutrition* 120:1557S-1600S, 1990.)

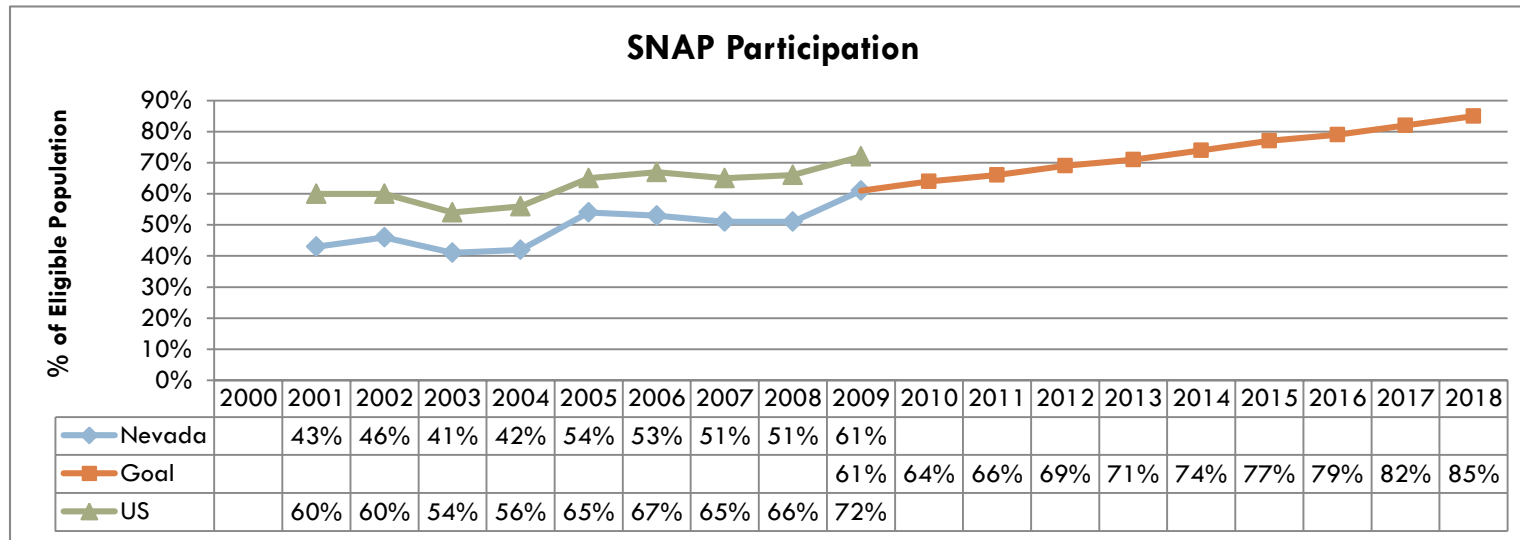
**Benchmark 1.** Reduce food insecurity to 6% by 2018.



**Benchmark 2.** Reduce Very Low Food Insecurity to 1% by 2018.



**Benchmark 3.** Increase SNAP participation rate to 85% by 2018



## CREATING THIS PLAN

This plan is the result of efforts from public and private citizens across Nevada. The relationships among the food system activities and strategies to establish long-term food security are complex. Therefore, effectively addressing food security in Nevada requires various programs to function together efficiently as a hunger and nutrition safety net, while building a system to ensure they complement and supplement each other. To this end, the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services contracted Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. (SEI) to facilitate a comprehensive strategic planning process to address the issue of food security in Nevada and to answer the question “How are we, collectively, going to impact hunger in this state?”

A Food Security Steering Committee was created to oversee the strategic planning process and address policy issues as the Lead Nevada workgroup. In addition, three workgroups were created to address specific core areas of food security in Nevada. The three other workgroups included: Grow Nevada, Feed Nevada, and Reach Nevada. Lead Nevada met monthly beginning in April to understand the food security problem in Nevada, research potential solutions, and develop a plan to promote food security. Participation was broad and diverse:



- 50 participants, representing the public and private sector all across Nevada took part in workgroups to develop this plan.
- 17 national, state and local leaders from a variety of industries participated in key informant interviews.
- 90 Nevada residents from 6 counties provided input in focus groups.
- 1,673 Nevada residents, representing 14 of Nevada’s 17 counties provided input via surveys.
- 81 providers of emergency food and resources across Nevada completed surveys.

A number of activities took place in the development of this plan. They included:

**Key Informant Interviews** – Key informant interviews were conducted by SEI with 17 experts in a variety of fields related to economic development, agriculture, food distribution, policy, federal nutrition programs and health and human services. In addition, national and state experts that had engaged in similar planning efforts were interviewed to gain insights that could be leveraged during the planning project.

**Focus Groups Throughout Nevada** – Ten focus groups were conducted. Three were in Clark County, two in Washoe County, two in Carson City County, and one each in Churchill County, Lyon County, and Elko County. Focus group participants were limited to ten per group, and were given \$10 gift cards to either a local grocery store or Wal-Mart as an incentive. Initially, participants were invited to attend if they took the Food Security survey and selected the option to be selected for a focus group. However, the number of people who actually confirmed that they would attend a focus group remained low in each of the counties, so local providers, such as food banks and social services, were



contacted and asked to assist in recruiting participants. Focus groups were conducted at a Las Vegas Wal-Mart in Clark County, St. Vincent's Dining Hall in Washoe County, the Ron Wood Family Resource Center in Carson City, Churchill County Social Services, Silver Stage Pantry in Lyon County, and Friends In Service Helping (FISH) in Elko County. The length of the focus groups averaged an hour and a half, and incentives were distributed on-site.

**Resident Surveys** – Surveys were distributed in hard copy and electronically via list serves, food banks, meals on wheels programs, state agencies and nonprofit providers. Outreach was conducted to all 17 counties to promote broad participation across the state. Incentives were provided in the form of a gift card raffle for completing a survey.

**Research Brief** – Research was conducted on international, national, state and local plans addressing all aspects of food security to be considered in this plan. Best practices and evidence-based strategies were reviewed and presented to planning participants to inform their decision making.

#### **Work group planning meetings –**

- Lead Nevada met 10 times between April and December 2012 to guide all aspects of the planning project and to review and refine the final plan.
- Reach Nevada met five times between July and November 2012 to develop a plan to ensure that the food distribution system is flexible and meets the needs of food insecure individuals and communities.
- Grow Nevada met five times between July and November 2012 to develop a plan to ensure that Nevadans have access to nutritious foods, with an emphasis on those that are produced in Nevada.
- Feed Nevada met five times between July and November 2012 to develop a plan to ensure that participation in federal nutrition programs is maximized and an integrated system for accessing food and other services is in place to support food insecure Nevadans.



## GLOSSARY

TERMS	DEFINITION
After-School / Out-of-School Snack Programs	This type of program provides nutritious snacks and meals to low-income children participating in after-school programs. See Children Cafe.
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	A USDA-sponsored nutrition education that supports or provides funding, for healthy meals and snacks served to children and adults receiving day care.
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	The CSFP works to improve the health of low-income children, mothers and elderly people by supplementing their diets with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) commodity foods. USDA administers CSFP at the federal level, providing food and administrative funds to state, though not all states participate.
Community Garden	A community garden transforms empty lots into green spaces. Community gardens are collaborative projects created by members of the community; residents share in both the maintenance and rewards of the garden.
Cottage Industries	An industry where the creation of products and services is home-based, rather than factory-based. While products and services created by cottage industry are often unique and distinctive given the fact that they are usually not mass-produced, producers in this sector often face numerous disadvantages when trying to compete with much larger factory-based companies.
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	A federal refundable tax credit for low- to moderate-income working persons and families.
Elderly Food Programs	These programs specifically target at-risk elderly people and include home-delivered meals and congregate meal programs which provide meals at central facilities in group settings. Food relief organizations may be a primary source for the former, while the latter is likely to rely on the resources of a food bank such as Food Bank of Northern Nevada (FBNN).

<b>TERMS</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)	Funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), EFSP supports organizations that operate shelters, food pantries and soup kitchens throughout Nevada. EFSP funding subsidizes meals, groceries, lodging at shelters and other programs, one month's rent or mortgage payment, one month's utility bill, repairs for program facilities and equipment necessary to feed and shelter individuals.
Emergency Food Program (EFP)	Emergency food programs (EFP's) distribute donated food items to hungry people through avenues such as shelters, soup kitchens and food pantries. Such programs typically are run by private, nonprofit community organizations. An EFP is differentiated from other programs where food is distributed, but not on an emergency basis, such as day care centers and group homes.
Farmers' Market	A public market where farmers and other vendors gather to sell various fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and other foods directly to consumers.
Feeding America	The national hunger-relief nonprofit that organizes more than 200 food banks and food rescue organizations.
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)	The USDA agency responsible for administering the nation's domestic nutrition assistance programs.
Food Bank	A nonprofit organization that distributes and/or stores food and related products that it solicits, collects and purchases from manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and government agencies to community and emergency food programs.
Food Hardship	Answering "yes" to a question posed in the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, a comprehensive national survey conducted from 2008 through 2010. "Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?"
Food Insecurity	The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods, including involuntarily cutting back on meals, food portions or not knowing the source of the next meal.

TERMS	DEFINITION
Food Pantry	A nonprofit organization (typically small in size), such as religious institutions or social service agencies, that receives donated food items and distributes them to hungry people for preparation at home. By contrast, a soup kitchen prepares and serves meals to their clients. A food pantry will often receive its supply of food from a food bank.
Food Poverty	Food poverty is the lack of access to food due to factors including low income and benefits, lack of access to grocery stores or transportation, and lack of availability of healthy, affordable foods within local markets and convenience stores. Families living in food poverty are likely to include members suffering from health conditions related to poor nutrition such as diabetes and heart disease.
Food Rescue Organization	As differentiated from a food bank that handles warehoused foods and grocery products, a food rescue organization specializes in soliciting donations of leftover perishable food from restaurants, catering halls, and the like, and delivering this food immediately to emergency food programs. Unlike food banks which must deal with the logistics management of bulk inventories, a food rescue organization is likely to consist of a dedicated corps of volunteers who use their own vehicles to make food pick-ups and deliveries in the same day.
Food Security	Access to enough food for an active, healthy life. At a minimum, food security includes: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging or other coping strategies).
Food Stamp Program – now referred to as <i>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</i>	The SNAP Program serves as the first line of defense against hunger. It enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Food stamp recipients are able to buy eligible food items in authorized retail food stores. The program is the cornerstone of the federal food assistance programs and provides crucial support to low-income households and those making the transition from welfare to work. It has been criticized, however, for being under funded, inadequate in terms of benefits offered, and ineffective in reaching and including all of the low-income people at risk of hunger.
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	FFVP is a federally funded program that provides all children in participating schools with a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables. Schools with greater than 50 percent free and reduce enrollment may participate in the program.

TERMS	DEFINITION
Hunger	The discomfort, weakness, or pain caused by a prolonged lack of food. In addition, many experts consider hunger to be chronically inadequate nutritional intake due to low incomes; that is, people do not have to experience discomfort, weakness, or pain to be hungry from a nutritional perspective. The long-term effect of hunger is malnutrition.
Hunger Relief Organization	A general term that can be applied to any charitable organization whose mission involves dealing with the immediate effects and underlying causes of hunger. America's Second Harvest, Three Square, and member agencies like food pantries and soup kitchens can all be termed hunger relief organizations.
Children Cafe	Children Cafe is an after-school and summer meal program that provides nutritious snacks and meals to children ages 5-18 who are at risk for hunger. Children Cafe programs often supplement food assistance with nutrition education activities as well as homework help, mentoring, and recreational opportunities.
Malnutrition	A serious health impairment that results from substandard nutrient intake. Malnutrition may result from a lack of food, a chronic shortage of key nutrients, or impaired absorption and metabolism associated with chronic conditions or diseases.
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	Provides cash and commodities to public and private elementary and secondary schools as a form of reimbursement for lunches. Students living at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty line receive free lunch, while those students living between 130 and 185 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible for reduced-price meals.
Obesity	An abnormal accumulation of body fat that may result in health impairments. Obesity is generally defined by the National Institutes of Health as having body weight that is more than 20 percent above the high range for ideal body weight. An obese person can experience malnutrition if obesity has resulted from dealing with food insecurity by relying on less expensive, less nutritious, high-calorie foods to stave off the sensation of hunger.
School Breakfast Program (SBP)	A federally sponsored program that provides reimbursements for breakfast in public and private elementary and secondary schools.
School Meal Programs	These programs are federally assisted meal programs operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. They provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to children each school day.

TERMS	DEFINITION
Soup Kitchens	A nonprofit organization (typically small in size), such as religious institutions or social service agencies, that receives donated food items and provides prepared meals served in a local agency kitchen for hungry people. By contrast, a food pantry does not serve prepared meals. A soup kitchen will often receive its supply of food from a food bank.
Special Milk Program	A federally sponsored program that provides milk to children in schools and childcare institutions who do not participate in other federal meal service programs.
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)	WIC is a federally-sponsored program that supplies low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and children five years of age and younger with vouchers for food, nutrition counseling, health screenings and referrals for health and other services.
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	The SFSP provides reimbursements to schools, local government agencies and community-based organizations for meals and snacks served to children during the summer months, when school is out and lunches are not provided to hungry school-age students. Geared toward low-income children, the SFSP is the single largest federal resource available for local sponsors who want to combine a feeding program with a summer activity program.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a federal program whose main purpose is to permit low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet...by increasing their purchasing power. It is the largest domestic food and nutrition assistance program administrated by the USDA Food and Nutrition Services.
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	Under TEFAP, commodity foods are made available by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to States. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn, distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public. Each state sets criteria for determining what households are eligible to receive food for home consumption. Income standards may, at the state's discretion, be met through participation in other existing federal, state, or local food, health, or welfare programs for which eligibility is based on income.
Under-Nutrition	The consequence of consuming food that is inadequate in quantity and/or nutritional quality. Chronic under-nutrition can be considered to be the precursor of malnutrition.
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	The federal agency responsible for developing and executing U.S. federal government policy on farming, agriculture and food. It aims to end hunger in the United States and abroad, and administers many programs

TERMS	DEFINITION
	— such as SNAP, TEFAP, WIC and school meals programs — to help reach that end.
Very Low Food Security	Percent of households that had their food intake reduced or their eating patterns disrupted at some time during the year because the household lacked money or other resources for food. Formerly known as “Food Insecurity with Hunger.”

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## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS PLAN

### **Acknowledgements**

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Special thanks to everyone who helped with this project, reviewed the plan and served on workgroups.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews were conducted to gain perspective from stakeholders across the state related to hunger and food security within their community. The key informants that participated in the interviews are:

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Special thanks to everyone who helped with this project, reviewing the plan and serving on workgroups.

## END NOTES

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