

NEVADA COUNCIL ON FOOD SECURITY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023



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DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governor's Council on Food Security (CFS) aims to fight hunger among Nevadans who are at increased and/or higher risk of food insecurity, including children and older Nevadans. Since the inception of the 2014 Governors Executive Order creating the Council and Food Security and codifying the CFS into state law in the 80th Legislative Session in 2019, there have been many accomplishments over the years with continued progress in 2023. The CFS is tasked with reviewing legislation and protocols at the federal, state, and local levels for feedback that affects the food policy infrastructure. The CFS meetings are held quarterly along with special sessions, which help partners remain aware of various funding streams and assist with improving the quality of service and meals to Nevadans through education, recommendations, and feedback. Ongoing meetings also help ensure partners remain aware of emergency response plans and streamline food access to provide excellent services to Nevadans.

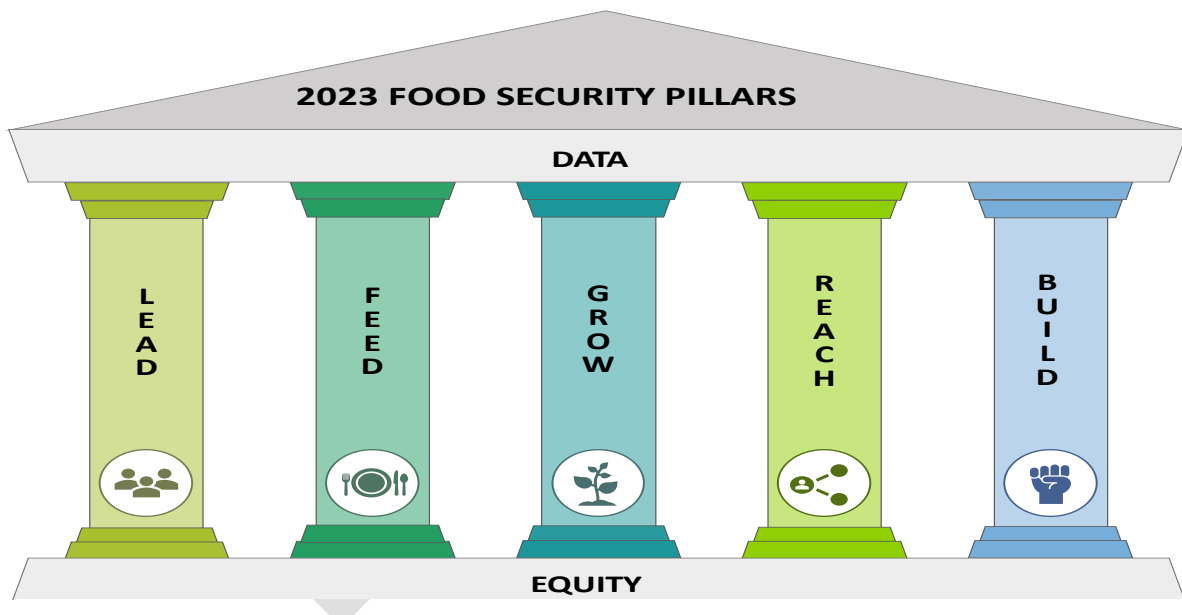
The CFS continues to recognize the need for systemic collaboration between all partners to adequately reduce hunger and improve a person's overall well-being. The 2022 Needs Assessment estimated that by 2025, almost 100,000 older Nevadans will need supplemental nutrition and/or emergency food services. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, in Fiscal Year 2021, 453,300 Nevada residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits with the majority of the participants being families with children (281,046). Participants continue to steadily increase over the years with a concern for the senior population since the rural and small towns fall behind the national average.¹

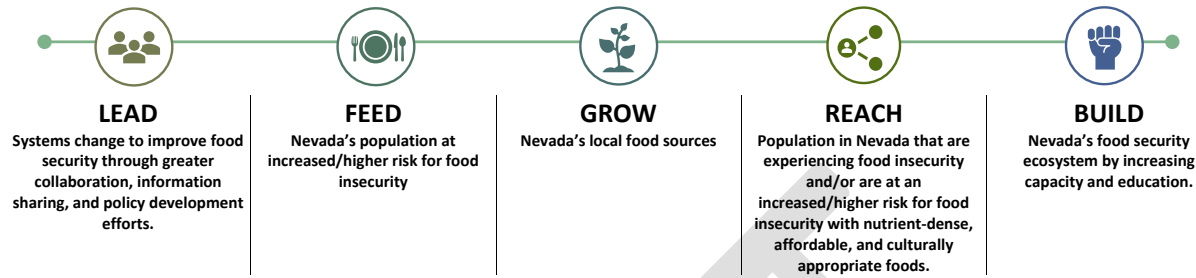
The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) stunted Nevada's progress in addressing hunger and completely changed the landscape of food insecurity in Nevada. At the height of the pandemic, food security partners statewide saw an unprecedented increase in the need for food and nutrition services, due to high unemployment rates, limited access to resources, and social distancing guidelines. Nevada continues to make significant strides in addressing food insecurity and has a public database for Nevadans to search for Food Lines and Pantries in their area through the [DHHS Nevada 211](#).

¹ 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Council was initially created by Nevada's governor to reshape food security and help residents living in food-insecure households by implementing the goals of the 2018 Food Strategic Plan called the [Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action](#). The 2018 Food Strategic Plan was modified to [The 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#) and published on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Food Security (OFS) website in April 2023. The 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan (2023) "demonstrates a continued commitment to lead conversations with a broad set of food security ecosystem stakeholders; discuss policies that help reduce food insecurity; and create ideas to build capacity of agencies, nonprofits, and families. While this plan leverages the work already undertaken and will serve as the guiding strategy for food security ecosystem stakeholders, it is not defined just by goals. Rather, it is defined by the commitment and actions of those individually and collectively, and by the Silver State's potential to build healthier communities." The Pillars in the plan described below are designed to address the root causes of hunger and to generate a healthier food security ecosystem.





Per the [NRS 232.4968](#), the CFS is to create a report to “...review the accomplishments and recommendations of the Council concerning food security, including, without limitation, any recommendations concerning community gardens and urban farms.” This report is called the CFS Annual Report, which is submitted to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau annually by January. The CFS 2023 Annual Report is written in collaboration with DHHS OFS who provides administrative support and technical assistance as requested. The CFS 2023 Annual Report reporting period is Jan 1, 2023-Dec 31, 2023. The CFS Annual progress is available on the Governors Food Security Council Website that can be found [here](#). This link also identifies the Executive order 2014-03 and the past four (4) years of the CFS meeting information.

FOOD INSECURITY IN NEVADA

Food Insecurity is defined by the USDA as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited/uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations states that a person is food insecure when “they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life.”² Food insecurity goes beyond empty refrigerators, pantries, and needing food to survive. Food insecurity impacts an individual’s overall health, well-being, and culture and is influenced by the social, political, and economic environment one lives in. It is a significant public health concern associated with adverse health outcomes and a poor quality of life, including chronic diseases and mental health issues.^{3, 4} For example, Feeding America indicates that the total excess

² <https://unric.org/en/unric-library-backgrounder-food-insecurity/#:~:text=A%20person%20is%20food%20insecure.of%20resources%20to%20obtain%20food.>

³ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf?v=42942>

⁴ <https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/145/3/622/4743717>

healthcare cost associated with food insecurity is \$518,266,000 in Nevada. Feeding America reports the Food Insecurity rate in Nevada as 13% (409,540) in 2021.⁵ To assuage these health and economic effects of food insecurity, the Funds for Healthy Nevada (FHN)⁶ agencies continue to allow for more options and availability to better meet dietary and medical needs, preferences, and restrictions. One of the eleven (11) FHN providers, the Food Bank of Northern Nevada (FBNN), reported in 2021 aligning with local medical centers to reduce client AIC levels and reported a 66% of patients had a downward trend.

The State of Obesity 2022 report indicates, “For children and adolescents, food insecurity is associated with a lower quality diet and a range of poor physical and mental health outcomes—including higher odds of having asthma, anemia, and fair or poor health and a higher risk of cognitive issues, aggression, anxiety, depression, behavior problems, suicide ideation, and hospitalization.” Children experiencing food insecurity were also likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills and have more social and behavioral problems. To reduce these risks and concerns the 2021 Universal School Meals Program Act was established. This act permanently provides free breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack to all school children regardless of income, eliminates school meal debt, and strengthens local economies by incentivizing local food procurement.⁷ The USDA extended these free services through the 2022 school year from the 2021 Universal School Meals Program Act. The state’s Interim Finance Committee approved \$28 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to continue offering the free meals. This allowed Nevada students to continue universal free meals at school for the 2023-2024 school year.⁸

According to the [2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#), there were about 80,000 Nevadans aged 60 years and older who identified as food insecure. Data projections suggest

⁵ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/overall/nevada>

⁶ The Fund for a Healthy Nevada (FHN) is governed by Chapter 439, Sections 620–630, of the Nevada Revised Statutes to utilize 60% of tobacco settlement monies received or recovered by the State of Nevada. The DHHS uses the FHN funds to support health and social services activities that align with legislatively defined priority areas to address gaps identified in various needs assessments across the State of Nevada to promote public health and improve health services for children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

⁷ [H.R.3115 - 117th Congress \(2021-2022\): Universal School Meals Program Act of 2021 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](https://www.congress.gov/117/legislation/house/bills/3115)

⁸ <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Document/27744>

that Nevada will witness a 36% increase in the older adult population over the next ten years. This older adult population faces food security challenges with an increased risk of hunger due to poor health conditions, homebound needs, low fixed incomes, and limitations that impact their ability to obtain or prepare food. Seniors with low income are forced to purchase inexpensive and less nutritious foods to financially secure their housing, utilities, and prescriptions.⁹

As of June 2023, the USDA reports 262,890 Nevada households and 498,558 Nevadans had accepted the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, historically known as food stamps.^{10, 11} SNAP assisted low-income families in purchasing nutritious foods from approved stores. In the beginning of 2023, participants continued to receive the Supplemental Emergency Allotments (SEA) that were established throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020, following the Public Health Emergency declaration (PHE). The SEA allowed SNAP participants to receive a second monthly payment to address food insecurity throughout the pandemic. The SEA ceased on March 14, 2023, following the end to PHE (February 2023) with The Division of Welfare and Support Services (DWSS) issuing over \$1 billion to Nevada households during the PHE.^{10, 11} This was in addition to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services bolstering budgets for food banks throughout the country following the pandemic to help further ^{10, 11} Public and private funding sources are used to tackle food insecurity. The public funds are obtained through federal, state, and local agencies, as well as governmental units. Private funds are identified through charitable foundations, direct giving programs, voluntary agencies, and other community groups.

The State of Nevada continues to strive toward expanding programs such as the Nevada Community Food Access (NCFA) through the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA). On April 1, 2022, the NDA released NCFA to increase food access in underserved communities throughout Nevada with an emphasis on food distribution infrastructure enhancement and the provision of food to households in need. Noteworthy, the NDA purchases food grown and

⁹ 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan

¹⁰ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-households-9.pdf>

¹¹ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-persons-9.pdf>

produce in Nevada for distribution through the Home Feeds Nevada program.¹² This program was established to help Nevada become more food secure by processing and distributing directly to food banks.¹³ Throughout 2021-2022, NDA awarded \$500,000 to six (6) partners. In 2022, NDA expanded the scope of the grant by releasing the second round of grant funding to fourteen (14) organizations totaling \$6,000,000 that focused on the food distribution and food storage infrastructure enhancement for households in rural, tribal, and underserved communities.¹⁴ Four (4) of the eleven (11) FHN partners benefited from the NDA expansion funds to assist with increasing distribution and storage space: Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada (CCNN), Northern Nevada Dream Center, Food Bank of Northern Nevada, and the Keystone Enrichment Foundation.

FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENTS AND PLANS

Food Need Assessments have been completed over the years to track Nevada's Food Security and the progress toward addressing hunger in Nevada. The DHHS Grants Management Unit (GMU) completed a needs assessment in 2012 that resulted in the [2013 Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action](#) (i.e., the Food Security Plan). This plan was updated in 2018 and again throughout 2021-2023 otherwise known as the [2023 Food Security Strategic Plan](#). The latest strategic plan discusses the drivers of food security in Nevada and "was informed by an inclusive process that captured input over a nine-month period spanning 2021-2022 by a working group consisting of food security ecosystem experts, a statewide survey of both service providers and end users, focus groups, and interviews."

Additionally, the 2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan is under development with Food Security Action Plans that align with 4 strategies from the 2023 Food Security Strategic plan. The goal is to reduce food insecurity and improve the overall food security ecosystem in Nevada to help eliminate the existing hunger gap. Over the years the CCNN and Three-Square Food Bank have conducted environmental scans of rural communities in Northern

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[https://agri.nv.gov/News/2022/First food delivery for Nevadans in need made through Home Feeds Nevada/#:~:text=Home%20Feeds%20Nevada%20is%20a,said%20NDA%20Director%20Jennifer%20Ot](https://agri.nv.gov/News/2022/First%20food%20delivery%20for%20Nevadans%20in%20need%20made%20through%20Home%20Feeds%20Nevada/)

¹³

[https://agri.nv.gov/Food/Home Feeds Nevada/Home Feeds Nevada/](https://agri.nv.gov/Food/Home%20Feeds%20Nevada/)

¹⁴

[https://agri.nv.gov/News/2022/\\$6 million awarded to community organizations to fight food insecurity and improve food access/](https://agri.nv.gov/News/2022/$6%20million%20awarded%20to%20community%20organizations%20to%20fight%20food%20insecurity%20and%20improve%20food%20access/)

and Southern Nevada to assess additional existing food rescue/donation efforts and/or opportunities. The Food Bank of Northern, contracted with the Nevada Center for Surveys, Evaluation and Statistics (CSES) at the University of Nevada, Reno, conducted a yearlong surveillance survey that consisted of two parts: 1) a needs assessment, and 2) a neighbor satisfaction survey. This work looked at the entire FBNN service area (13 Northern Nevada counties and parts of eight (8) counties in California).

NEVADA CFS: 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The CFS continues to acknowledge the importance of client-centered strategies, teamwork on federal policy changes, and integrating the private sector into the food banks to assist in food abundance for all Nevadans. The CFS continues to recognize farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers as a critical part of Nevada's Food Security and the economy that directly and indirectly impacts businesses such as food banks throughout the state and availability of fresh fruits and vegetables. Partnerships are pivotal in ensuring food insecurities are adequately assessed on an ongoing basis to end hunger and effectively resolve disparities in the State of Nevada.

The macro focus of CFS is the senior population, early education, and school age children. The CFS duties are listed in the [NRS 232.4968](#) and they have met five times in 2023; January 24, April 18, July 18, and August 18 (Special Session), and October 24. During these meetings, the CFS developed a presentation for the Interim Committee on Health and Human Services, was apprised on Nevada Office of Food Security Racial Equity Toolkit and FHN Funds, reviewed and discussed The Food Bank of Northern Nevada Equitable Access grant survey with Feeding America to better understand who and why people are food insecure not accessing services, reestablished the Food For People Not for Landfills Program (FFPNL) per [NRS 232.4969](#), assisted in the development of the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP),

reviewed the impact of the SNAP SEA Impacts, and monitored the following food related bills;

- SB341 Passed June 15, 2023: Assist food banks and food purchases to address the challenges around SNAP benefit reductions.
- AB109 No Action Taken, Died: Establishes a healthy soil initiative. The goal of this bill is to promote regenerative agriculture practices and improve soil health to increase the

quality of food, food nutrients and improve healthy soil. Bill would create an Advisory Board made up of nine voting members.

- AB319 Vetoed June 16, 2023: Universal free breakfast and lunch
- Farm Bill- Recommended content to add?

The CFS also discussed what additional needs assessments were outstanding to improve Food Security in the State of Nevada. More specifically Nevada's current economy, the increased transportation cost for food distribution, and the state's food production. The council also discussed the federal programming standards and policies to identify opportunities to expand or allow better access to resources in different ways.

CFS FUTURE FOCUS

In 2024, the CFS will continue to focus on the execution of [The 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#), which is aligned with the 2023-2028 SHIP, Food Security Action Plan. The CFS will continue to hold ongoing meetings to expand knowledge and understanding around food insecurity in Nevada and participate in the 2025 legislative session.

The current Board Members would like to focus on the following discussions and topics in 2024:

- An In-Person option, either Carson City and/or Las Vegas Office(s), for CFS Meetings to further enhance collaboration, cohesiveness, and increase efforts in reducing councils' vacancies.
- Focus on distribution, support and general food access.
- Other recommended goals for 2024?

MEMBERS: NEVADA COUNCIL ON FOOD SECURITY

Appointed as needed

Such other representatives of State Government as may be designated by the Governor

Allison Genco, State Public Health Resource Officer, Governor's Office

The State of Nevada Governor's Designee

Brittany Price (End Date: 10/23/2023), Director of Sustainable Operations; MGM Resorts International

One member who is a representative of the gaming industry, hospitality industry, or restaurant industry

Cody Phinney; Health Bureau Chief; Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health

Administrator of the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health or his or her designee from within the Division

Deacon Tom Roberts, President, and CEO; Catholic Charities, Southern Nevada

A person who is a representative of an organization that provides community-based services, including, without limitation, services that focus on the social determinants of health, in southern Nevada

Dorian Stonebarger, Chief Policy Advisor for City Councilman Brian Knudsen

A person who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the provision of services to children and families

Dr. Sabina Malik, Public Health Nutritionist; University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

A person who is a representative of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

Jeff Duncan, Designee; Deputy Administrator; Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division, Child Services

The Administrator of the Aging and Disability Services Division of the Department or his or her designee from within the Department

Jenny Yeager, Director of Programs and Community Engagement; Food Bank of Northern Nevada

A person who is a representative of a food bank serving northern Nevada

Jesus Mendoza, Jr., Regional Administrator; United States Department of Agriculture Western Regional Office

Western Regional Director of the United States Department of Agriculture or designee from within the Department.

Jhone Ebert (Proxy: Pamela Juniel), Superintendent of Public Instruction; Nevada Department of Education

The Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Nevada Department of education or his or her designee within the Division

Dr. Julian Goicoechea, Nevada Department of Agriculture, Director

Director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture or designee from within the Department

Kelli Kelly, Director; Fallon Food Hub

One member who is a representative of persons engaged in the business of processing or distributing food

Kelly Cantrelle; Deputy Administrator; Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services

Administrator of the Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services or designee from within the Division

Dr. Kenneth Osgood, Director; Southern Nevada Health District Board of Health

A person who is a representative of a local health authority

Lisa Swearingen, Designee; Deputy Director, Programs; Nevada DHHS

The Director or his or her designee from within the Department

Marcia Blake, Executive Director; Helping Hands of Vegas Valley

A person who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the provision of services to senior citizens and persons with disabilities

Maria Menjivar: Environmental Health Division Manager, Carson City Health and Human Services

One member representing community-based services (Rural Nevada)

Marie Baxter, CEO; Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada

A person who is a representative of an organization that provides community-based services, including, without limitation, services that focus on the social determinants of health, in northern Nevada

Maurice Johnson, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives; Three Square Food Bank

A person who is a representative of a food bank serving southern Nevada

VACANT

Director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development or his or her designee within the Office

VACANT

One member who is a representative of farmers or ranchers engaged in food production

VACANT

One member who is a representative of retailers of food

VACANT

One member who is a representative of manufacturing that is not related to food

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