

# NEVADA COUNCIL ON FOOD SECURITY 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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## 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 Governor's Executive Order, which established CFS and codified NRS 232.4968 into state law in the 80th Legislative Session in 2019, there have been numerous accomplishments over the years, with continued progress being made in 2024. The CFS is tasked with reviewing legislation and protocols at the federal, state, and local levels for feedback affecting 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. According to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), in Fiscal Year 2023, 455,200 Nevada residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits with 62% of the participants being families with children. 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.<sup>1</sup>

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. Assisting Nevadans navigate food-related resources has been a major activity in the state. Nevada continues to make significant strides in addressing food insecurity and has established a public database through the [DHHS Nevada 211, allowing residents to search for food banks and pantries in their area.](#)

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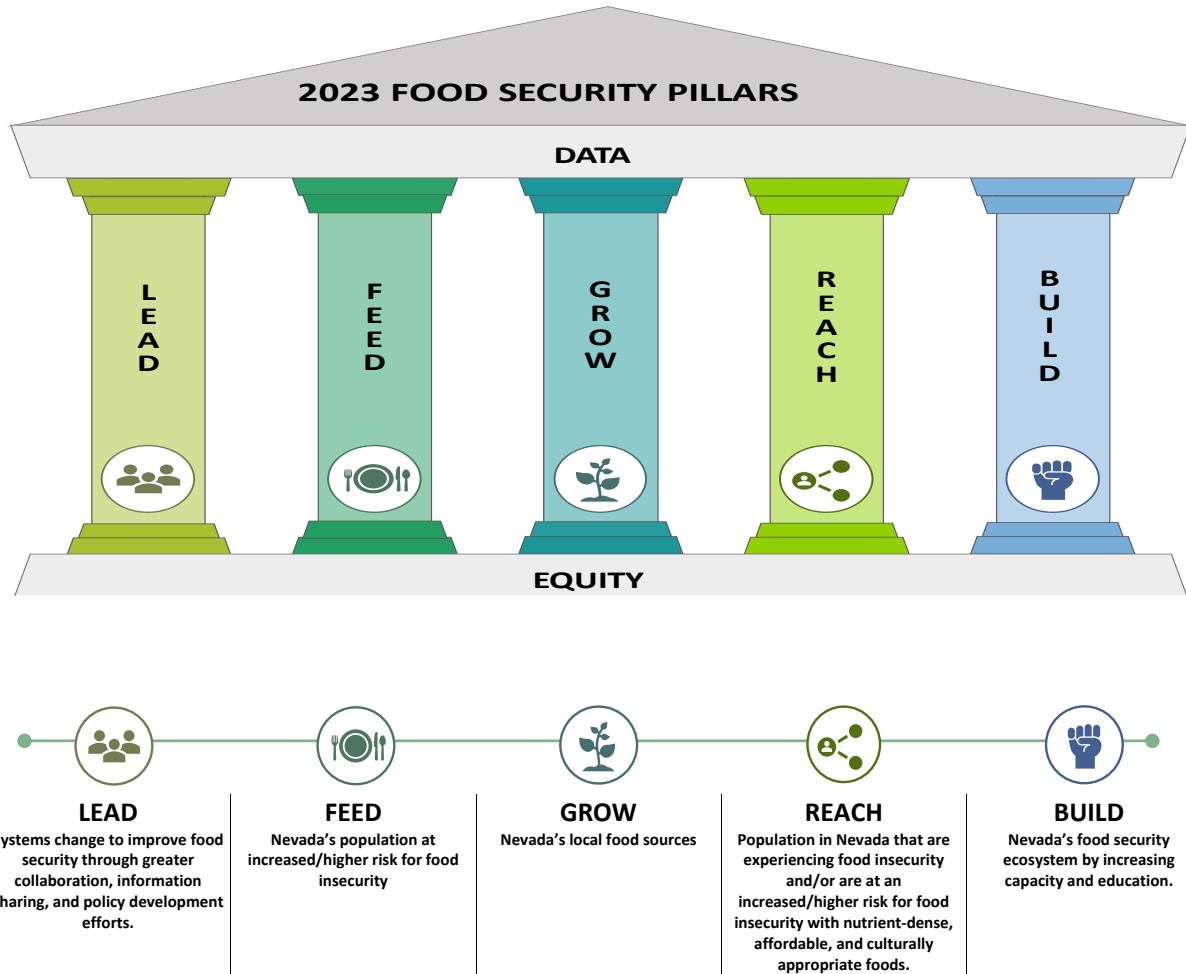
<sup>1</sup> 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan

## 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 2013 Food Strategic Plan called the [Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action](#). In 2018, a work plan was developed with updates to the goals and objectives. Between July 2021-November 2022, a Food Security Work Group conducted a needs assessment including surveys, strategic planning sessions, focus groups, and interviews. In 2023, the Food Strategic Plan was updated and published on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Food Security (OFS) website. [The 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#). The Pillars (Figure 1), identified in [the 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#), address the root causes of hunger and to generate a healthier food security ecosystem.

Over the past eight (8) years, the CFS members have captured the council's yearly progress. Each year, CFS sends their recommendations to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau on Food Security in Nevada. This report includes information on community gardens and urban farms per [NRS 232.4968](#).

Figure 1



### FOOD INSECURITY IN NEVADA

Food Insecurity is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (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 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3,4</sup> For example, Feeding America indicates the total excess health care cost associated with food insecurity is \$518,266,000 in Nevada. Feeding America reports the food insecurity rate in Nevada was 13% (409,540) in 2021.<sup>5</sup> To assuage these health and economic effects of food insecurity, the Funds for Healthy Nevada (FHN)<sup>6</sup> agencies continue to allow for more options and availability to better meet dietary and medical needs, preferences, and restrictions. 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.<sup>7</sup> The USDA extended these free services through the 2022 school year from the 2021 Universal School Meals Program Act. The Nevada Interim Finance Committee approved \$28 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to continue

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

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> H.R.3115 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Universal School Meals Program Act of 2021 | [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) | [Library of Congress](#)

offering the free meals. This allowed Nevada students to continue universal free meals at school for the 2023-2024 school year.<sup>8</sup>

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 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 impacting 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.

As of June 2024, 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.<sup>9,10</sup> SNAP assisted low-income families in purchasing nutritious foods from approved stores. In the beginning of 2024, 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 Nevada Division of Welfare and Support Services (DWSS) issuing over \$1 billion to Nevada households during the PHE. This was in addition to the USDA Food and Nutrition Services bolstering budgets for food banks throughout the country following the pandemic to help further public and private funding sources 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. Nevada food banks and food pantries are reporting an increase in clients receiving food related services since the SEA ended.

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

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

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

The State of Nevada expanded the Nevada Community Food Access (NCFA) grant through the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA). On April 1, 2022, 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. NDA also purchases food grown and produce in Nevada for distribution through the Home Feeds Nevada program.<sup>11</sup> This program was established to help Nevada become more food secure by processing and distributing directly to food banks.<sup>12</sup> Throughout 2022-2023, NDA awarded \$500,000 to six (6) partners. In 2023, NDA released the second round of grant funding to fourteen (14) organizations totaling \$6 million that focused on the food distribution and food storage infrastructure enhancement for households in rural, tribal, and underserved communities.<sup>13</sup> 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.

NDA reported to the Council they analyzed the locations of the current meal sites and have been able to fill identified gaps. Due to the 2023 release of the rural non-congregate feeding, some sponsors could have new meal service sites that had never been serviced before, as far as eastern Nevada, with a population that had not been reached in previous years. An assessment has been completed to target other community organizations and food authorities could help fill those gaps for more rural parts of Nevada.

### **FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENTS AND PLANS**

The [2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan \(SHIP\)](#) was published in February 2024, and aligns with 4 strategies from [the 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#), address the root causes of hunger and to generate a healthier food security ecosystem. The goal is to reduce food insecurity and improve the overall food security ecosystem in Nevada to help

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<sup>11</sup>[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%20Ott](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%20Ott).

<sup>12</sup> [https://agri.nv.gov/Food/Home\\_Feeds\\_Nevada/Home\\_Feeds\\_Nevada/](https://agri.nv.gov/Food/Home_Feeds_Nevada/Home_Feeds_Nevada/)

<sup>13</sup>[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_million_awarded_to_community_organizations_to_fight_food_insecurity_and_improve_food_access/)



eliminate the existing hunger gap. Over the years, CCNN and Three-Square Food Bank have conducted environmental scans of rural communities in Northern and Southern Nevada to assess additional existing food rescue/donation efforts and/or opportunities. The Food Bank of Northern Nevada (FBNN), contracted with the Nevada Center for Surveys, Evaluation and Statistics (CSES) at the University of Nevada, Reno, and conducted a yearlong surveillance survey which 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).

The Office of Food Security (OFS) has partnered with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) Public Health AmeriCorps to hire two ongoing part time workers for 2023-2024 to support the Council's involvement with [2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan \(SHIP\)](#) food initiatives and the [Nevada's 2023 Food Security Strategic Plan](#). These positions assist the Council with the following:

- Planning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting of projects that align with three (3) of the five (5) foundational themes otherwise known as the “pillars” (LEAD, FEED, and BUILD) of the [Nevada's 2023 Food Security Strategic Plan](#) and the specific actions steps in the SHIP related to Food Security
- Reviewing processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities
- Designing and developing data collection and program evaluation tools
- Conducting routine analysis of program processes
- Providing outcome data to the program and stakeholders
- Monitoring, and evaluating measures on program activities
- Providing technical assistance to Food Security stakeholder

## **NEVADA CFS 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

In 2024, the CFS continued to focus on the execution of [The 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan](#). Ongoing meetings were (January 16, Feb 2, July 16, and October 15) to expand knowledge and understanding around food insecurity in Nevada and to prepare presentations for the 2025 Nevada Legislative Session.

More accomplishments are listed below for 2024:

- Established a workgroup to aim at planning and holding a statewide food security conference. The goal of the conference is to convene local food ecosystem partners,

community members, and policymakers, featuring keynote speakers and discussions while offering. The workgroup developed and distributed a survey to assist in planning the 2025 Northern Nevada Food Security Conference.

- CFS presented one (1) presentation to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Health and Human Services (HHS) related to food insecurity and seats needed for CFS.
- An in-person CFS meeting option, either Carson City and/or Las Vegas Office(s), to enhance collaboration, cohesiveness, and increase efforts in reducing councils' vacancies.
- Distribution, support, and general food access.
- Presentations focused on the food insecurity statistics (pounds of food distributed, people served, etc.), food distribution, general food access, awareness on food insecurity programs and existing food databases to access food related resources statewide. More specifically the following:
  - The Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) on the Community Food Access Project, gaps analysis on food security, Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA), and the Summer Food Program (SFP).
  - Southwest Regional Food System Project
  - Home Delivered Meals Program
- Reviewed the Home Feeds Nevada Program Annual Report, the state nutrition statics such as the pounds of food distributed, and people served, survey to determine federal standards or policies in places that are creating barriers resulting in a possible increase in food insecurity and analyzed where the Council can advocate for change.
- Ongoing discussion on how food insecurity is being addressed in hard-to-reach areas and/or food deserts in Nevada.
- Continues to monitor the FFPNL Subcommittee reestablished by CFS in 2023 to increase the amount of food diverted from landfills and use to increase food security in Nevada. FFPNL is also intended to establish the eligibility criteria for a food donor to participate in the program and create an official seal for the program per [NRS 232.4969](#).

### CFS FUTURE FOCUS

In 2025, the CFS will continue to focus on [2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan \(SHIP\)](#) food initiatives 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. In 2025, the CFS in collaboration with DPBH and community partners, intends to host the Northern Nevada Food Conference focusing on Northern Nevada. In 2027, the Council on Food Security aims at holding another similar conference with a focus on the Southern Region of Nevada. An ongoing workgroup will continue to remain in place by the Council to assist in planning conferences aligned with the SHIP. The Council will also continue monitoring the progress of The Food for People Not for Landfill (FFPNL) to increase food insecurity by decreasing food waste and redirecting excess consumable food to vulnerable communities throughout the state. The CFS has selected anticipated members of the FFPNL subcommittee and CFS is working towards establishing members for the agencies identified in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Name/Agency
United States of Department of Agriculture (USDA) or Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)
Three Square
University of Reno, Extension
Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada, Includes Food Rescue
Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada,
Food Bank of Northern Nevada, includes Food Rescue
North Gaming Industry
South Gaming Industry
Retail or Grocery
Reno Gleaning Project
A representative from an organization that does farmers market buy back and/or food rescue from agricultural producers
Helping Hands of Vegas Valley
A representative from food service

The Council would like to focus on the following for 2025:

- Deliverables for the SHIP and the 2023 Food Security Strategic plans.
- 2025 Food Security Conference in Northern Nevada.

- An in-person meeting option, either in Carson City and/or Las Vegas Office(s), for CFS meetings to further enhance collaboration, cohesiveness, and increase efforts in reducing councils' vacancies.
- Distribution, support, and general food access.
- Presentations focusing on food insecurity statistics (pounds of food distributed, people served, etc.), food distribution, general food access and build awareness on food insecurity programs and existing food databases to access food related resources statewide.
- Home Feeds Nevada Program Annual Report.
- Review and discuss the state nutrition statics such as the pounds of food distributed, and people served.
- Review federal standards or policies in places creating barriers that result in a possible increase in food insecurity.
  - Determine where the Council can advocate for change.
- Continuing the discussion on how food insecurity is being addressed in hard-to-reach areas and/or food deserts.

## 2023 MEMBERS: NEVADA COUNCIL ON FOOD SECURITY

(As of 12/28/2023)

Name	Description	Position
Administrator: Cody Phinney:  Designee Vickie Ives as of Nov 29, 2023	<i>Administrator of the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health or his or her designee from within the Division.</i>	Designee; Health Bureau Chief; Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health
Charlotte Williams	<i>A person who is a representative of a food bank serving northern Nevada</i>	Research & Innovation Manager
Deacon Tom Roberts	<i>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</i>	President and CEO; Catholic Charities, Southern Nevada
Designee for Administrator: Jeff Duncan	<i>Administrator of the Aging and Disability Services Division of the Department or his or her designee from within the Division</i>	Designee; Agency Manager; Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division, Child Services
Designee for Administrator: Kelly Cantrelle	<i>Administrator of the Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services or designee from within the Division.</i>	Designee; Deputy Administrator; Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services
Designee for Director: Dr. Dorian Stonebarger	<i>Director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development or his or her designee within the Office.</i>	Director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development; Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development Proxy; Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs
Designee for Governor: Allison Genco	<i>State of Nevada Governor's Designee.</i>	State Public Health Resource Officer, Governor's Office
Designee for Superintendent: Pamela Juniel	<i>Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Nevada Department of education or his or her designee within the Department.</i>	Superintendent of Public Instruction; Nevada Department of Education
Dr. Sabina Malik	<i>A person who is a representative of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension</i>	Public Health Nutritionist; University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
Jenny Yeager  Term ended 02/28/2024	<i>A person who is a representative of a food bank serving northern Nevada</i>	Chief Operations and Programs Officer; Food Bank of Northern Nevada

Jesus Mendoza, Jr.	<i>Western Regional Director of the United States Department of Agriculture or designee from within the Department.</i>	Regional Administrator; United States Department of Agriculture Western Regional Office
Joe Miller	<i>One member who is a representative of farmers or ranchers engaged in food production</i>	UNR-Desert Farm Initiative
Julian Goicoechea	<i>Director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture or designee from within the Department.</i>	Nevada Department of Agriculture, Director
Kelli Kelly	<i>One member who is a representative of persons engaged in the business of processing or distributing food</i>	Director; Fallon Food Hub
Lisa Swearingen	<i>Director or his or her designee from within the Department of Health and Human Services</i>	Chief, Eligibility and Payments Unit, Division of Welfare and Supportive Services
Marcia Blake	<i>A person who possesses knowledge, skill and experience in the provision of services to senior citizens and persons with disabilities</i>	Executive Director; Helping Hands of Vegas Valley
Maria Menjivar	<i>One member representing community-based services (Rural Nevada).</i>	Environmental Health Division Manager, Carson City Health and Human Services
Marie Baxter	<i>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</i>	CEO; Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada
Maurice Johnson	<i>A person who is a representative of a food bank serving southern Nevada</i>	Director of Operations; Three Square Food Bank
(Tori) Samantha Lawson-Boffelli	<i>A person who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the provision of services to children and families</i>	Program Analyst – USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Dr. Kenneth Osgood, MD, MPH	A person who is a representative of a local health authority	Southern Nevada Health District Board of Health
Term end 04/05/2024		
VACANT as of 06/20/2024	A person who is a representative of those engaged in the business of processing or distributing food.	N/A

VACANT as of 06/20/2024	One member who is a representative of the gaming industry, hospitality industry, or restaurant industry.	N/A
VACANT as of 06/20/2024	One member who is a representative of manufacturing that is not related to food.	N/A
VACANT as of 06/20/2024	A person who is a representative of a local health authority	N/A