



**FOOD ACCESS
RECOMENDATIONS**

American Rescue Plan 2021

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This focus area was built off of the City's [Food Access Agenda](#) and an ongoing community process on gaps in the food access system that have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

The community process consisted of 5 different meetings held with different stakeholders of the food system. Stakeholders included community-based organizations, farmers market managers, community members, and local farmers. Across the meetings there were several recommendation themes that emerged:

- Support food access community-led solutions
- Increase education, outreach, and community engagement on food safety net programs
- Increase urban farming and growing areas in the City
- Increase capacity for growing across the City
- Continue to support the Farmers Market Coupon Program
- Create community kitchens
- Design and create neighborhood food hubs
- Support new and existing affordable healthy stores and programs

Community partners also raised the importance of pairing the above set of recommendations with cultural appropriateness, language access, and capacity building for the stakeholders involved in the implementation process. This will ensure all Bostonians can access the services or goods regardless of their race, ethnicity, or language spoken, while recognizing that community partners need additional support to navigate City processes (eg. City of Boston Vendor ID, grant applications, etc) and adapt to the requests made by the City to provide services and goods.

Below is some more detail on the potential solutions and concerns under each recommendation theme.

Support food access community-led solutions

Participants identified several community-led solutions. The Office of Food Access should support these by expanding the equity grant program and allowing each community to tailor the solution to their specific needs. This will give communities more power and maximize their agency.

Increase education, outreach, and community engagement on food safety net programs and other food access initiatives.

Participants identified several opportunities to spread the word about programs such as SNAP, HIP, WIC, Double Up Food Bucks, Farmers Markets coupons, and other related



initiatives or programs that the Office of Food Access leads or supports. The Office of Food Access should support these opportunities by expanding the outreach and destigmatization grant program and allowing each community to tailor the solution to their specific needs. Some of the ideas mentioned are:

- Paid Food Ambassadors that reflect communities that experience food access challenges.
- Customized neighborhood resources that include culturally appropriate foods, food resource guides, and targeted outreach based on neighborhood demographics
- Food and nutrition classes

Increase capacity for growing in the City

Community members, farmers, and growers identified different ways of creating these spaces and expanding the City's capacity:

- Expanding the raised beds program pilot
- Increase community gardens and food forests
- Increase innovative growing spaces in private and public land(eg. rooftop gardening, freight farms, greenhouses, school gardens, etc)
- Support infrastructure for new and existing farms.
- Capacity building and technical assistance funds for farmers and growers
- Increasing avenues for sale including distribution support

Some of the ideas can help create space where there is less urban space. Community members also highlighted the importance of providing the community with needed materials to grow (seeds, tools, making water connections affordable, etc), pairing this initiative with educational resources such as cooking, gardening, and preservation classes, and the importance of a climate readiness lens as well as integrating urban agriculture considerations into larger city plans for development and planning.

Continue to support the Farmers Market Coupon Program

Participants highlighted the success of the 2021 Farmers Market. With more than \$700,000 in redemptions, over 5000 households. All of the stakeholders mentioned the importance of continuing the support of this program as it supports families experiencing food insecurity regardless of their immigration status while supporting local farmers and businesses.

Create community kitchens

Community kitchens are places where residents can share cooking resources, including ingredients, tools, and physical space to either create their own business, partner with others to create a business, or cook their own food. Participants mentioned the ideal place



to have community kitchens would be existing underutilized kitchens, as well as the need to have youth and local employment promoted at these locations.

Design and build neighborhood food hubs

Food hubs are welcoming places where people could grow, cook, share, and find several food resources, ALL under one same roof. Programming and services available are decided by the community. Canada has already successfully piloted [community food centers](#) as an initiative to reduce food insecurity. Some of the services that participants mentioned could be housed under this model include community kitchens, food pantries, safety net sign-ups, community gardens, child care, and job fairs.

Support new and existing affordable healthy stores and programs

Participants highlighted the success of existing Office of Food Access programs. Recommendations for funding included more funding for affordable, culturally relevant, fresh produce and healthy bodegas and corners stores which could include DUFB stores, Daily Table, Fresh Truck, or new corner stores, and CSAs.



DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

This focus area was built off of the City's [Food Access Agenda](#) and an ongoing community process on gaps in the food access system that have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

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- Support food access community-led solutions
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- Support new and existing affordable healthy stores and programs

Community partners also raised the importance of pairing the above set of recommendations with cultural appropriateness, language access, and capacity building for the stakeholders involved in the implementation process. This will ensure all Bostonians can access the services or goods regardless of their race, ethnicity, or language spoken, while recognizing that community partners need additional support to navigate City processes (eg. City of Boston Vendor ID, grant applications, etc) and adapt to the requests made by the City to provide services and goods.

Below is some more detail on the potential solutions and concerns under each recommendation theme.

Support food access community-led solutions

Participants identified several community-led solutions. The Office of Food Access should support these by expanding the equity grant program, and allowing each community to tailor the solution to their specific needs. This will give communities more power and maximize their agency. The following list represents some of the solutions, but by no means is collectively exhaustive.

- Meal kits and affordable culturally appropriate prepared meals
- Shared food pick up solutions including group deliveries and/or pickups
- Transportation Support powered by volunteers or private entities such as Lyft and Uber

Cultural appropriateness and language access

- Ensure the program application continues to be available at least in the [10 citywide different threshold languages](#) and outreach is following [MOIA outreach guidelines](#).
- Increase outreach to communities and organizations that speak languages other than English.

Capacity building

- Provide technical assistance for grassroot organizations to navigate the fiscal sponsorship, application process, and other City processes.



Concerns

- How can the City increase participation of organizations that speak languages other than English.

Increase education, outreach, and community engagement on food safety net programs and other food access initiatives.

Participants identified several opportunities to spread the word about programs such as SNAP, HIP, WIC, Double Up Food Bucks, Farmers Markets coupons, and other related initiatives or programs that the Office of Food Access leads or supports. The Office of Food Access should support these opportunities by expanding the outreach and destigmatization grant program, and allowing each community to tailor the solution to their specific needs. Some of the ideas mentioned are:

- Paid Food Ambassadors that reflect communities that experience food access challenges.
- Customized neighborhood resources that include culturally appropriate foods, food resource guides, and targeted outreach based on neighborhood demographics
- Food and nutrition classes
 - Some of the classes mentioned include: how to cook local vegetables and fruits, how to shop on a budget using SNAP, how to store already prepared meals, how to best preserve fruits and vegetables, how to pickle or preserve produce for later use, how to maximize and make use of safety net programs (HIP, SNAP, WIC), basic cooking life skills, and learning about other cultures through food.

Cultural appropriateness and language access

- Ensure outreach is following [MOIA outreach guidelines](#) to make it accessible to everyone regardless of the language they speak.
- Participants mentioned food and nutrition classes must have a cultural focus, and involve nutritionists and dieticians of color.
- Ensure the classes are offered in different languages depending on the neighborhood and people participating.

Capacity Building

- Support external partners to increase outreach, language access, and
- Leverage resources such as SNAP-Ed

Concerns

- How can the City ensure the classes are accessible to everyone? Will the classes be available in all of the neighborhoods? Will they provide accommodations for people with disabilities? Will they provide language accommodations, including American Sign Language?
- How can food waste be reduced?

Increase capacity for growing in the City

Community members, farmers, and other growers identified different ways of creating additional growing spaces and expanding the City's capacity for growing, production and sale:

- Supporting growing
 - Expanding the raised beds program pilot
 - Increase community gardens and food forests



- Increase innovative growing spaces on private and public land (eg. rooftop gardening, freight farms, greenhouses, school gardens, etc)
- Support infrastructure for new and existing farms
- Capacity building and technical assistance funds for farmers and growers
 - Funds for equipment, tools, infrastructure maintenance, workforce development, compost
 - Funding for short term labor for expansion projects or to engage volunteers
 - Technical assistance including coordination, administration and finance
- Increasing avenues for sale including distribution support
 - Creating food hubs for growing and distributing food
 - Distribution logistics support (deliveries, transportation, cooperative buying, promotion)
 - Expanding leveraging of HIP/SNAP (example farm shares)

Some of the ideas can help create space where there is less urban space. Community members also highlighted the importance of providing the community with needed materials to grow (seeds, tools, more affordable water connections, etc), pairing this initiative with educational resources such as cooking, gardening, and preservation classes, and the importance of a climate readiness lens as well as integrating urban agriculture considerations into larger city plans for development and planning.

Cultural appropriateness and language access

- Ensure the program application continues to be available at least in the [10 citywide different threshold languages](#) and outreach is following [MOIA outreach guidelines](#).
- Ensure the educational material is available in the different [threshold languages according to the neighborhood](#) they are being distributed.
- Provide a wide variety of seeds that recognizes the different cultures and their preferences.

Capacity building

- Support farmers to expand their growing capacity, staff, operations, and technical assistance with sign up processes (eg. City of Boston Vendor ID, grant application, and land trust models)

Continue to support the Farmers Market Coupon Program

Participants highlighted the success of the 2021 Farmers Market. With more than \$700,000 in redemptions, all of the stakeholders mentioned the importance of continuing the support of this program as it supports families experiencing food insecurity regardless of their immigration status, while supporting local farmers and businesses.

Cultural appropriateness and language access

- Continue to provide outreach and program material in at least the [10 citywide threshold languages](#).
- Increase number of vendors that sell culturally appropriate goods at different farmers markets



Capacity building

- Support farmers markets to expand their staff, increase outreach, and provide educational opportunities around the food safety net, specially the HIP program as it is directly related to their business.

Create community kitchens

Community kitchens are places where residents can share cooking resources, including ingredients, tools and physical space to either create their own business, partner with others to create a business, or cook their own food. Participants mentioned the ideal place to have community kitchens would be existing underutilized kitchens, as well as the need to have youth and local employment promoted at these locations.

Some of the locations suggested include public school kitchens, public libraries that have kitchens spaces, restaurants, or YMCA locations.

Concerns

- Who will oversee and clean the community kitchens?
- Will it require surveillance while using it? This may discourage some people from using or visiting the kitchens.
- What will the operating hours look like?
- Zoning is a challenge for new spaces, or spaces that want to adapt

Design and build neighborhood food hubs

Food hubs are welcoming places where people could grow, cook, share, and find several food resources, ALL under one same roof. Programming and services available are decided by the community. Canada has already successfully piloted [community food centres](#) as an initiative to reduce food insecurity. Some of the services that participants mentioned could be housed under this model include:

- Community kitchens
- Food Pantries
- Healthy affordable stores
- Safety Net Programs sign ups (SNAP, WIC, etc)
- Child Care
- Community Gardens
- Job Fairs
- Community event spaces
- Community food liaisons that help navigate the safety net
- Food distribution
- Shared storing spaces for CBOs working on food insecurity
- Food and nutrition classes
- Farming and gardening classes
- Healthcare services

Cultural appropriateness and language access

- Ensure programming and services are available in different languages, specially with a focus on the [threshold languages of the neighborhood](#) in which the food hub is located. Ideally in the [10 citywide different threshold languages](#).



- Ensure staff is multilingual to ensure people that speak a language other than English can access the services and are supported to navigate the safety net system.

Concerns

- How can accessibility be ensured?
- Don't require ID
- How will it be staffed?
- Transportation to food hubs might be a challenge for some people
- How will the food hub coordinate and harmonize with existing initiatives?
- Take into account storage space

Support new and existing affordable healthy stores and programs

Participants highlighted the success of existing Office of Food Access programs. Recommendations for funding included more funding for affordable, culturally relevant, fresh produce and healthy bodegas and corner stores which could include DUFBS, Daily Table, Fresh Truck, or new corner stores, and CSAs.

Cultural appropriateness and language access

- Support stores to carry more culturally appropriate fruits and vegetables, and other cultural foods.

Capacity Building

- Support corner stores and bodegas with infrastructure so their produce can last longer (eg. fridges)
- Provide technical assistance to business owners to improve their systems and processes. (eg. POS systems, minimizing credit cards or other fees, etc)

Concerns

- How are minority and women owned businesses going to be prioritized?



VISUAL NOTES FROM THE MEETINGS



Mayor's Office of Food Access - Equitable Recovery
ARP Listening Session: Community Based Organizations | 09.13.21



Mayor's Office of Food Access - Equitable Recovery
ARP Listening Session: Community Meeting | 10.19.21





ARPA FUNDS

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

DIGNITY * AGENCY * EQUITY

LET'S GO BETTER! FOOD ACCESS CITY OF BOSTON



Mayor's Office of Food Access - Equitable Recovery
ARP Listening Session: Community Meeting | 10.21.21



FARMERS MARKETS CITY OF BOSTON

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS
a GATHERING SPACE for COMMUNITY



Mayor's Office of Food Access - Farmers' Markets Program
Farmers' Market Community Meeting | 10.22.21

