

Terry Gray
Director, DEM
Chair, IFNPAC
315 Iron Horse Way
Providence, RI 029

July 11, 2024

Dear Chair Gray,

The Inter-Agency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) established the Hunger Elimination Task Force (HETF) in 2017 to craft recommendations for addressing food insecurity in Rhode Island. The HETF presented those recommendations to IFNPAC and a broader audience over the following years. In 2021, the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) assumed responsibility for convening HETF on behalf of the RI Department of Health (RIDOH) and the RI Department of Commerce (Commerce). HETF members engaged in a restructuring process during 2023, resulting in the formation of new quarterly Action Groups. These HETF Action Groups work collaboratively to identify specific problems, clarify State Agencies responsible, and recommend particular next steps for those State Agencies in order to reduce hunger in Rhode Island..

Between March and May 2024, the first HETF Action Group gathered to discuss challenges and develop recommendations for **improving food delivery** in the Ocean State. The Action Group included members of the public, State Agencies, and food delivery providers. Below are the group's recommendations:

- **IFNPAC/RIDOH: Conduct a landscape review of food delivery activities serving medically vulnerable, homebound, elder, or food insecure populations. This review should include an assessment of local and national best practices and recommendations for the development of a coordinated, statewide food delivery system.**
 - The landscape review should minimally include:
 - Significant input from those in need of or currently receiving food delivery services;
 - Descriptions of food delivery programs currently operating in RI (including food recovery);
 - Analysis of the geographic scope of existing food delivery services;
 - Identification of unmet food delivery needs throughout the state;
 - Identification and suggestions for which elements of a coordinated, food delivery system could be centralized (and which elements should remain decentralized);
 - Descriptions of food delivery programs (including food recovery) operating outside of Rhode Island that have exhibited success;

- Detailed analysis of existing technologies (e.g. Too Good To Go, FoodRecovery.Org, Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, Phood, etc.) for locating and distributing food, accompanied by recommendations about which technologies or technological elements to integrate into the pilot discussed below;
- Review of potential funding opportunities including Medicaid 1115 Waiver, SNAP, and other Federal funding; and
- Identification of specific policies and/or regulatory changes needed to support the development and implementation of a coordinated, statewide food delivery system.

This landscape analysis must inform and will enable pilot program development to be intentional, equitable, and accessible to all the delivery providers, food-providing organizations, and end-recipients across the state.

- **IFNPAC/RIDOH/Commerce: Develop and fund a pilot, coordinated, statewide food delivery system, based on recommendations from the landscape review, to connect food delivery services with organizations serving medically vulnerable, homebound, elder, or food insecure clients in need of food delivery.**
 - Organizations serving individuals who need food delivery may lack the staff, infrastructure, awareness, or understanding of food delivery providers operating in Rhode Island. Furthermore, existing systems may not meet geographic and/or scheduling needs due to these challenges. A pilot, coordinated, statewide, food delivery system should leverage existing public and private sector services and technologies to connect food delivery providers with organizations and individuals in need of food delivery while bridging identified gaps to ensure long-term success.

By conducting this landscape review and developing this pilot, multi-stakeholder food delivery platform, the HETF Action Group believes Rhode Island is well-positioned to become the first state in the country to ensure all in need of food delivery services have access.

The HETF Action Group appreciates the opportunity to share these recommendations with IFNPAC and the broader community. HETF is available to answer any questions you may have regarding these recommendations.

Sincerely,
HETF Action Group Members, including:

Southern Rhode Island Volunteers
Southside Community Land Trust
Kinfolk Benefit Trust
Rachel Stancil | East Providence Health Equity
Zone

Carrie Bridges, MPH | Vice President,
Community Health and Equity | Lifespan
Dana Siles
Gemma Gorham
Denise Greene | West End Community Center