

Rethink Food

Recommendations for the White House
Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health

PREPARED BY
Rethink Food

Purpose of Report

Below includes recommendations from Rethink shared at the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health convening session with the NYC Mayor and other food stakeholders across New York City on June 21st, 2022 at Gracie Mansion. Additionally, these recommendations will formally be sent in writing to the White House Conference staff.

Conference Details

The White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health will be hosted in September 2022. This conference is historic since it has been over 50 years since the last conference, which was the launching point for many federal hunger and nutrition programs that we see today, like SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). This conference in the fall will be pivotal in shaping food policy in the United States for years to come, and Rethink is honored to be able to share its recommendations.

The five pillars below define the scope of the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. They're meant to help identify actions that can be taken by all parts of society — including the Federal government; local, state, territory, and Tribal governments; nonprofit and community groups; and private companies.

Conference Pillars

1

Improve food access and affordability:

End hunger by making it easier for everyone — including urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities — to access and afford food. For example, expand eligibility for and increase participation in food assistance programs and improve transportation to places where food is available.

2

Integrate nutrition and health:

Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure that our healthcare system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.

3

Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices:

Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices: Foster environments that enable all people to easily make informed healthy choices, increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy workplace and school policies, and invest in public messaging and education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities.

4

Support physical activity for all:

Support physical activity for all: Make it easier for people to be more physically active (in part by ensuring that everyone has access to safe places to be active), increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity, and conduct research on and measure physical activity.

5

Enhance nutrition and food security research:

Enhance nutrition and food security research: Improve nutrition metrics, data collection, and research to inform nutrition and food security policy, particularly on issues of equity, access, and disparities.

Stakeholder Engagement Questions & Rethink's Recommendations

The following three questions have been posed by the White House at stakeholder listening sessions to elicit responses and organize them into logical groupings that can be included at the conference in the fall. The below recommendations from Rethink are grouped under each of these questions.



What specific actions should the federal government, local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private sector; civil society; and others take to achieve each pillar?



Food donations need to be more greatly incentivized.

We have a concurrent health, food access and climate crisis, and no standard federal guidelines that provide guidance to state and local governments that could help ameliorate these problems. We cannot address health and hunger without addressing the glaring issue of food waste in our nation.

- Tax credit vs. tax deductions for donating food, and include restaurants, not only farms.
 - Ex. Legislation: FIND Food Act (Federal)
- Expansion of the current food donations guidelines to allow food businesses to directly donate to in need individuals, and allow nominal fees to be charged to cover the cost of recovering excess food.
 - Ex. Legislation: Food Donation Improvement Act (Federal)
- Require food donation for food service businesses.
 - Ex. Legislation: Int. 0491-2022 (NYC) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to reducing civil penalties where food service establishments donate leftover food.
 - Ex. Legislation: Int. 1046-2022 (NYC) A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring certain retail food stores to post notices on the food donation web portal concerning the availability of excess food, and arranging for the transportation and retrieval of such food.
 - Ex. Legislation: Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law (NYS)



The food banking system should allow other innovative food systems solutions outside of the traditional food bank model to participate in programming and funding opportunities.

Food banks emerged in 1967 and the Feeding America yearly budget is nearly 3B a year. While the food banking system is a necessary part of the United States food relief network, the system continues to get larger, yet hunger and food insecurity is not decreasing in the United States.

- Unless an organization is a part of the food bank network, there is little access to consistent funding or food provided through the food banking system, with almost no space to allow complementary innovate food systems solutions to participate.



Emergency and supportive/supplemental food needs to be better.

This means better in regards to food quality, nutrition and cultural relevance. The government funding for these programs must allow higher price points to provide more healthy, appetizing, dignified food.



Decrease barriers to government contracting for small food businesses.

Navigating becoming a food vendor with the government is onerous and not inclusive for small businesses, and therefore many are left out of the process due to capacity or lack of support.

- Barriers to participate in contracting must decrease to make the process easier for vendors that do not have a full legal, accounting , and nutrition team on staff.



Community based organizations need funding support in order to implement the on-the-ground work that will be required of the systematic changes that arise from the conference.

This funding will be for infrastructure, staffing and other associated costs that non-profit organizations desperately need to effectively carry out the proposed food systems change work.

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Create an office that is solely responsible for food equity across the various agencies that currently exist.

Issues related to food security and hunger span many agencies in the federal government (USDA, FDA, etc.), and there needs to be greater cross-agency coordination to successfully address the structural challenges that exist across the food system, and solutions required to meaningfully address food inequity, hunger, poor nutrition and health related diseases.

A

Fund social innovation to support the expansion of new solutions to address hunger, nutrition and health.

If current funding was adequate or correctly allocated, our society would not be facing these challenges of addressing hunger, nutrition and health disparities. In order to address the challenges that will be set forth at the conference, there must be funding for cross-sector innovation to work and build new models and programs that will help address the systemic, root causes of food inequity, and to expand support for non-traditional responses to emergency food access and provision.

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What are opportunities for public and private sector partners to work together to achieve each pillar?

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Restaurants are a viable conduit for community led feeding programs.

They should be recognized as another method for providing quality food in emergent and non-emergent supportive feeding. This was a huge learning in the pandemic and should not be lost.

- Ex. Government Program: NYS Restaurant Resiliency Grant Program (NYS)
- Ex. Government Program: Great Plates Delivered (California)
- Ex. Non Profit Programs: Rethink Food, Feed the Frontlines, SF New Deal, WCK.



What are innovative, successful activities happening at the local, state, territory and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?



Emergency and supplemental food should include prepared hot/cold meals.

Many food relief and assistance programs only allow shelf stable, or raw product, with no consideration for time-wealth, access to refrigeration and cooking facilities or having a disability.

- Pass SNAP RMP program in all 50 states. Currently SNAP is only allowed for the purchase of fresh produce and other grocery items. SNAP RMP occurs in 7 states currently and NYS is working on submitting it's application for the program.
- Expand SNAP RMP to include anyone on SNAP, not only those experiencing homelessness, the elderly or disabled.
- Include prepared meals as an allowable commodity to purchase with government funds. Many programs do not currently include them (TEFAP (Federal), HPNAP (State), EFAP (NYC)).

Additional Considerations

- Reframing of emergent vs. ongoing food insecurity: We need to address both the urgent, emergency crises that arise around food insecurity, such as the staggering rise of food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing reality that most Americans – and, particularly low-income individuals and communities of color – struggle every day with affordability, access and availability of healthy food. We must come together to solve for and support both: implementing innovative, rapid response models in times of crisis, but also supporting the longer-term innovative solutions that work to address the structural and systemic issues of poverty, race, health and economic and social well-being that limit our ability to consistently feed people well and in a dignified manner.
- Rethink’s work is a deliberate system to move the needle (hiring folks from the community, paying better wages, recovering food, investing in local businesses, etc.) – a long term opportunity to support the systematic work that will be done.
- Lift up the collective food system work that the NYC Food Policy Alliance is leading.
 - Rethink is a member organization of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, convened and led by Equity Advocates. Rethink participates and is a member organization, recognizing that not one sole organization can address the intersectional issues and change that must happen in our food system – we all must work in tandem. Through the New York City and New York State budgetary process, the coalition has built policy and legislative recommendations to build a better and more equitable food system. Many of these recommendations can be utilized at the White House Conference to inform changes in urban food policy. The alliance policy platforms can be found [here on their website](#).