WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life and refers to a lack of available financial resources for food at the household level. Extensive research, however, reveals food insecurity is a complex problem that does not exist in isolation. Low-income families are affected by multiple, overlapping issues like lack of affordable housing, social isolation, chronic or acute health problems, high medical costs, and low wages. Effective responses to address food insecurity must address the overlapping challenges posed by the social determinants of health” (Feeding America). Our diverse and multicultural communities in Utah have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in the areas of health, economic stability, housing, and food insecurity. There are various intersectional obstacles that are preventing diverse and multicultural communities from accessing emergency food resources.

The Food Security Workgroup found that these barriers include: Transportation (Accessible and affordable), Documentation and ID(s), Cultural Relevance, Fresh Food, Language Access, Digital (Online) Access, Hours/Days of Operation, Hygiene Kits, Personal Protective Equipment.

The workgroup’s approach to address these rising and interconnected concerns has been a commitment to communication, coordination and collaboration of the multiple entities working in the food emergency ecosystem.

GOALS OF THE WORKGROUP

SHORT TERM GOALS

- Add Community Mobile Neighborhood Distribution Point at Comunidades Unidas (CU).
- Increase awareness for families who qualify for “Pandemic EBT” in Utah.
- Create inclusive, interactive, culturally comprehensive statewide interactive food pantry map.
- Collaborate with partners to increase flexibility so that as many people as possible can sign up for, and easily remain on, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

LONG TERM GOALS

- Help formalize a standardized food pantry application form across Utah in multiple languages.
- Forecasting food insecurity through data gathering.
- Consider equity in food distribution resiliency.
WORKGROUP-SPECIFIC COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
- Comunidades Unidas
- Salt Lake City Mayor’s Office
- Salt Lake County Mayor’s Office
- United Way of Salt Lake
- Utah Department of Workforce Services
- Utahns Against Hunger

If organizations are interested in partnering with the food security workgroup, please contact Celina Milner at Celina.Milner@SLC.gov. We will work with members of the workgroup to determine common areas of interest and program feasibility.

RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION FUND

The Racial Equity and Inclusion Fund is providing COVID-19 grants for community organizations and nonprofits who serve disproportionately impacted communities. Apply through August 21st at multicultural.utah.gov. Donations are also welcome.