

COVID-19 Check-In Meeting Notes
Tuesday August 18, 2020

Participants: ~75 participants

Agenda

Meeting: Legislative Proposals Stakeholder Meeting

Agenda: Welcome: Steve Fuller, Food Safety & Consumer Services, Assistant Director

WSDA Focus & Federal Snapshot: Derek Sandison, WSDA Director

WSDA Proposals & Cuts: Evan Sheffels, Senior Policy Advisor to the Director

Food Assistance Legislative Proposal: Kim Eads, FA Program Manager

Input & Discussion & Round Table: Steve Fuller, FS&CS Assistant Director

Next Mtgs:

August 21: Contractor Meeting

August 25: General Focus

Steve Fuller:

- Brief introductions/overview of attendees; hunger advocates, Food Assistance Advisory Committee, WSDA leadership, WSDA Food Assistance Team, FA Contractors & Subcontractors, Food Security Coordination Team, the agencies that work with our FA team, DOH, DSHS, and OSPI.
- Planning to send a package over to the Governor's Office: due to COVID and increased demands, our team is trying to navigate this next legislative system while planning for future challenges. Looking for ways to come together to maximize the benefit for people who need support.

Director Sandison:

- 4 months into our hunger prevention efforts. We started with \$10M from the Governor's Office for disaster relief which got us through a really tough time in April, now at ~\$76M in total funding which we've spent on food, PPE, emergency food boxes, direct contracts with the 3 NGOs, supplemental EFAP funding including pilots, capacity improvements such as cold storage and other improvements, replacement food for TEFAP order cancellations, put in place our food flow stabilization program including a leased warehouse with a 2,000 pallet capacity where we're now storing and distributing product out to the NGOs and some of the TEFAP contractors.
- Oct-Dec, hopeful that Section 32 and TMP products continue to arrive. The 3rd round of USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program is getting underway. Have another request for \$15M in at the Governor's Office for some combination of CARES Act disaster relief funding to hopefully get us to the end of the year. CARES Act funding runs out in

December unless the feds extend it, food banks won't see donations from grocery/retail until that industry stabilizes.

- o In need of assistance for small scale farms
- o Assistance for capacity shortages and animal protein processing
- o Looking for increased TEFAP assistance as well as extended TMP assistance
- o Direct dollars for school meal programs
- o Infrastructure assistance including more cold storage/refrigeration
- o Increase support for SNAP
- o Farming support, direct block grants to state departments of agriculture

Evan Sheffels:

- Legislative priorities: dealing with budget cut scenarios while trying to protect our core work. Reflects impacts of COVID 19 and hunger relief. Some key points;
 - o A bill to add "and Food" into the agency name so it would be Department of Agriculture and Food to recognize consumer protection and food security work
 - o Food Assistance and hunger relief response
 - o Additional funding for the Food Policy Forum Co-chair work to help agency partners meet challenges
 - o ISO accreditation of our lab
 - o Pesticide safety reform package – training & compliance to protect farm workers and public health
 - o Funding for the Asian Giant Hornet and Gypsy Moth control
 - o Flexible funding to fill gaps and response to COVID 19 to stabilize and improve our food systems

Kim Eads:

- FA legislative proposal includes 3 key areas:

	FY22	FY23	Total
Increase support for Farm to Food Pantry to assist small farmers and hunger relief organizations. Ongoing.	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$700,000
Increase EFAP funding with flexibility to target local farmer support and meet the increased client need for food through hunger relief organizations. Ongoing.	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000	\$8,000,000
Targeted capacity and pilot grants to fill gaps left by COVID-19. Supports hunger relief and farmers. Ongoing.	\$7,200,000	\$7,200,000	\$14,400,000
TOTAL	\$11,550,000	\$11,550,000	\$23,100,000

- Since 2014, we've had our Farm to Food Pantry Initiative. This last year, we had one-time funding of roughly \$100k for SFY20 and SFY21 to help support that. For supporting agriculture, small farmers and getting fresh foods into the hunger relief system. In partnership with Harvest Against Hunger, that has been successful. Looking to elevate this to the next level; from an initiative to a program. The feedback from participants has been incredible as well as the benefit to clients getting fresh produce.
 - o \$350k/year – ongoing and in partnership with Harvest Against Hunger. Harvest Against Hunger pays the farmer up front so they can prepare for the upcoming growing season.
- The second piece is for EFAP. With growing need and the scope and scale of work changing and focusing on nutrition, we're working on flexibility to allow food purchases directly from farmers, increased operational support, and to increase capacity. Hunger relief organizations are struggling with how to provide enough food to a growing number of people with less volunteers and limited operational funding. The increased demands being placed on these organizations is outstripping the available funding and laying bare critical gaps in the system.
 - o Asking for an additional \$4M/year ongoing.
- The last piece is for targeted capacity and pilot grants to fill gaps. Planning ahead for large quantities of fresh foods; ex. truckloads of fresh apples, potatoes, etc. One issue is figuring out how to convert these into shelf-stable products. The Director has been working on ideas such as processing, which we'll continue to look at.
 - o \$7.2M/year ongoing.
- Totalling \$23.1M over the next biennium.

Comments:

- Kim w/ Bremerton Foodline: would it be possible for food banks to be able to ask for 10-20% to help pay for operation & maintenance costs such as electricity bills?
 - o Kim Eads: absolutely. This is a good topic for your Spring meetings and the point of this type of funding is to help with just that.
- Mike from BFB: excited to see ongoing efforts for funding and to help farmers. Hoping for programs to support small and large farms.
- Michelle from EFN: liking the focus on small farms and getting additional funds out, increasing SNAP, etc. For our smaller food pantries, the level of storage needed for fresh items continues to be daunting. All of the grants are appreciated. Hoping to keep a focus on both shelf-stable and fresh foods.
 - o Derek Sandison: We are keeping a focus on both.
- Christina from NW Harvest: what is your initial thought process on how you would solicit RFPs and grants to make the best use of that investment?
 - o Kim Eads: one is based on our conversations with our stakeholders; the people operating the programs. Also closely tied with the food policy forum which also

drives some of that decision making. Conversations with our food advisory group. In terms of a specific RFP, due to this emergency situation we're in, that didn't take place. Open to thinking about how to do that. Housed also in our strategic plans which is a group effort. The key is to be able to respond to a situation at any given time.

- Claire Lane: DOH is not planning on extending funding in their package for SNAP, has there been a conversation among the 3 state agencies that have a "stake" in this program to talk about what that means for the program if DOH isn't asking for that money?
 - o Derek Sandison: yes, these are ongoing conversations. We like that program a lot and are interested in seeing if we can help pick up slack there in terms of making that an ongoing effort. It's in the works, more to come later.
 - o Have you had any conversations with legislatures who understand what the needs are that might be champions for this in the budget?
 - o Derek: Yes, we have lots of conversations with folks in the legislature and we're encouraged by their response in general.
 - o Evan: we've had legislatures actually encourage us to do more on both the FA side and the farm side. Lots of great conversations with legislative staff and we'll keep having those. Depends on how/when federal funding does come through.
- Maddie Price from Harvest Against Hunger: we appreciate looking into better communication and planning when it comes to the 3rd round of CFAP boxes. Refrigerated storage is a challenge, some food banks can't even order from farmers at the local level due to full capacity from TMP and CFAP foods.
 - o Kim Eads: there are many other organizations working on similar efforts. Mentioning City of Seattle issuing a significant capacity package and King County is also doing something.
- Aaron Czyzewski from FLL: thank you for all this information. With the new and emerging influence of the food policy forum, reflecting some of that and this is significant too. With the eventual Use Food Well Act plan that would be presented to the legislature, is there the opportunity to expect that plan to set the stage for synergy with your plan?
 - o Evan: yes, that is one of the things from talking with Ron from with the Conservation Commission and Laura Raymond that any kind of action that can get ahead of the waste issues we'll do what we can.

Next steps for this proposal:

- They'll be submitted to OFM by 9/14/20. In the fall, we'll get answers from OFM on which they'll like us to move forward with or not.

Closing remarks:

- Feel free to send your feedback to our Food Assistance team! Thank you everyone!