COVID-19 Check-In Meeting Notes  
Tuesday February 15, 2022

Participants: ~46

Agenda

Schedule: Tuesday – General Focus Meeting – Once per Month

Presentation: Northwest Harvest Healthy Food Environments Project – Provided by Laura Titzer, presented by Kim Eads

Updates:
WSDA Focus on Food – Katie Rains
Washington Food Coalition – Trish Twomey
Harvest Against Hunger – David Bobanick
Advocacy Update – Aaron Czyzewski, Christina Wong, Claire Lane

FA Updates: CSFP Income Guidelines; USDA Local Purchasing Grant; FA Future Plans; Other? Questions? Challenges?

Next Meetings: Tuesday: March 15, 9:00 am – General Focus
Friday: March 4, 9:00 am – Contractor Only

Healthy Food Environment Project:
• 5-year CDC Grant – NWH & Partners:
    • Original focus on low sodium food availability
    • Improved food access while creating a more respectful shopper experience
• Food Shopper Equity Website:
  – https://foodshopperequity.org
    • Support Tools & Resources
    • Designing Health and Shopper Centered Spaces
    • Creating a Nutrition Policy
    • Behavioral Economics Gallery
• NWH Contact: Laura Titzer, Community Initiatives Manager
  – laurat@northwestharvest.org

WSDA Focus on Food, Katie Rains:
- Thank you to all who participated in Hunger Action Day and supported their two budget requests for the resiliency grants and initiatives. They have heard positive responses.
- As an agency, already looking ahead to requests for the next legislative session for the coming biennium and really trying to focus on where to go from here. The We Feed WA pilot was more of a transitional strategy to all learn together and learn which systems are and aren’t working but now we need to have discussions with you all and figure out how to bring these systems together under one roof through Food Assistance. There will be a group learning and discussion on this in March.
- Also introducing Jessica Hernandez who joined us in November.

Washington Food Coalition, Trish Twomey:
- The in-person conference will be in Wenatchee 4/21 & 4/22. Registration is $100, or if you attended the virtual conference, the cost is $75.
  - Will be presenting the Fresh Results award which will receive a $1,000 award from Harvest Against Hunger.
  - Please contact Trish for nominations.

Harvest Against Hunger, David Bobanick:
- Farm to Food Pantry kickoff meeting was last week. Almost every county in the state now participating.
- Capacity report is linked up to the HAH website and a link will be sent out as well.
- $215,000 worth of small capacity grants being awarded through the flexible funding grants.

Advocacy Updates, Christina Wong, Claire Lane, and Aaron Czyzewski:
- Today is the House of Origin cutoff date. Both school meal bills (1833 and 1878) have passed.
  - 1878 expands the number of high poverty, high needs schools that can serve meals for free to all students.
  - 1833 will create an online accessible multilingual portal for the ease of families filling out applications or income surveys so schools can access that data.
- The senate is proposing their capital budget on Wednesday, and their operating budget potentially this Friday. The house will follow shortly behind.
  - Requesting to add a total of $58,000,000.00 to the program for the rest of the biennium for added support. Part of that funding to be made available April-June to provide more boxes. For the next fiscal year, they’ve asked for $43,000,000.00 to be added to what they’ve appropriated for next fiscal year already.
Right now, there are two bills; HB 2048 - the major TANF reform which would roll back policies that have been enacted in the last recession to cut the budget. It did cut the budget, but also gutted TANF and plunged thousands of kids in WA living in deep poverty. SB 5838 – allows certain families leaving TANF to ensure that they get five months of transitional food stamps, and this passed unanimously. Also, HB 2075 – which is in response to DSHS planning to never fully reopen in-person services for anyone needing in-person help. After conversations with advocates and the secretary of DSHS, they now plan to reopen community service offices in early March. This bill would put into state code an expectation of service level including limiting call wait times.

The National Hunger Policy Conference is 3/15 & 3/16 which is cosponsored by Feeding America and the Food Research Action Center.

From Aaron:
More info the hunger relief-related provisions on HB 1799 (bill text) (bill report). First, it proposes updates to the Washington Good Samaritan Act (Section 3). The language in the bill mirrors H.R.6251 - Food Donation Improvement Act of 2021, sponsored by U.S. Representative Jim McGovern (links to press release) and co-sponsored by U.S. Representative Dan Newhouse (co-chair of the Congressional Food Waste Caucus) and California’s AB-1219 - Food Donations adopted in 2017. In addition, Section 3 would accomplish the very first recommendation of the Use Food Well Washington Plan (see below) presented to the legislature as required by the Wasted Food Reduction Act of 2019. Here is a great point by point synopsis of the recommended changes from the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic: here.

Use Food Well Washington Plan
Recommendation 1: Strengthen the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act
The Washington State Legislature passes a joint memorial to support federal legislation to strengthen the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act to:
• Allow the sale of food at a discounted price: Broaden language to protect nonprofit organizations that sell food at a discounted price and the donors that donate to these nonprofits.
• Encourage direct donations from restaurants: Modify language to include donations made by food businesses and retailers directly to individuals.
• Emphasize food safety: Change the definition of “apparently wholesome food” to read: “The term ‘apparently wholesome food’ means food that meets all safety and safety-related labeling imposed by Federal, State, and local laws and regulations even though the food may not be readily marketable due to appearance, age, freshness, grade, size, surplus, or other conditions.”
Secondly, HB 1799 proposes to create the Washington Center for Sustainable Food Management, also called for in the Use Food Well Washington Plan. Below is a list of the types of work that the Center would oversee.

**Washington Center for Sustainable Food Management:**

Coordinate the implementation of the Use Food Well Washington Plan

- Draft plan updates and measure progress towards actions, strategies, and the statewide reduction goals.
- Maintain website with current food waste reduction information and guidance.
- Provide staff support to the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment food waste reduction work.
- Stay connected to the Food Policy Forum’s work on food system resiliency.
- Facilitate and coordinate public-private and non-profit partnerships focused on food waste reduction through voluntary working groups.
- Collaborate with federal, state, and local partners on solutions to food waste.
- Develop and maintain mapping of the food system of Washington.
- Research capacity for food waste and wasted food prevention, rescue, and recovery, and identify opportunities through data.
- Research and develop emerging food waste reduction markets.
- Develop and maintain statewide food waste reduction and food waste contamination reduction campaigns.
- Distribute and monitor grants dedicated to food waste prevention, rescue, and recovery.

From Claire:

**Anti-Hunger Priorities:**

Expand Free School Meals for Washington Kids (HB 1878)

This bill would require all eligible schools to use the Community Eligibility Provision and ensure they are adequately funded to serve healthy, free school meals to all their students.

- House Education & Appropriations – passed unanimously
- HOORAY! Passed the House 93-3! (2 excused)

Create a statewide, multilingual online tool for school meal applications and household income data for low income students (HB 1833)

Low income families in all schools need a single family-friendly, multilingual, online option to apply for school meals – or to provide family income data in schools that don’t require meal applications.

- House Education– passed unanimously
- House Appropriations - bypassed (because fiscal note is <$50,000)
- HOORAY! Passed the House 92-4! (2 excused)
Extend funding for food banks and community-based emergency food programs
Fund WSDA’s Food Assistance programs to ensure food banks and community organizations have enough food and sufficient capacity to meet needs. ($70 million in Gov’s budget)

- Request – We Feed Washington: $15M (FY2022) and $43M (FY2023)
- Request – Resiliency & Capacity grants: $17.125M

Expand the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program for 7,100 more seniors
Add funding to feed hungry seniors; support the required transition from paper vouchers to electronic benefits; and support local farmers and farmers markets. ($400,000 in Governor’s supplemental budget)

- Request – $400,000

Anti-Poverty Priorities:
Extend Basic Food Ed & Training to immigrants receiving Food Assistance
Immigrants who receive state-funded Food Assistance should have equal access to job training and education opportunities that help lift families out of poverty and into living wage jobs. ($560,000 in Gov’s budget)

- Request: $560,000

Strengthen TANF for families with children living in deep poverty
End the 60 month time limit for TANF for children and very low income families who face hardship (e.g. homelessness) or are meeting all program requirements (HB 2048)

- House Human Services & Appropriations – passed on party lines
- REQUEST: Vote YES on House floor

Fix last year’s bill on time limit exemptions during high unemployment (HB 1755)

- House Human Services – passed w/ 1 no
- House Appropriations – passed unanimously
- HOORAY! Passed the House 79-19

Provide a diaper benefit for TANF families with a child under age 3 (SB 5838)

- Senate Human Services & Ways & Means – passed unanimously
- HOORAY! Passed the Senate 48-1!

Extend Transitional Food Assistance to more families leaving TANF (SB 5785)

- Senate Human Services & Ways & Means – passed unanimously
- HOORAY! Passed the Senate unanimously!
Lift the cap on family size for TANF support from 8 people to 10 people in a family

- **Governor’s budget request**

Create the Evergreen Basic Income Trust/Guaranteed Basic Income pilot
GBI projects ensure very low income people have money to meet their needs in a way that provides flexibility, dignity and autonomy.

- HB 2009 died in House Human Services Committee
- Status: budget proviso for pilot project

Expand permanent affordable housing

- Request - Invest $500 in the Housing Trust Fund to protect and expand permanent affordable housing.

Ensure DSHS provides multiple access points for assistance to people in need (HB 2075)
DSHS’ local Community Service Offices and call center must be available and accessible for people in need of services to meet their basic needs.

- House Human Services & Appropriations – passed unanimously
- REQUEST: Vote yes on the House floor

**Food Assistance Updates, Kim Eads:**
- CSFP income guideline has moved from $1,395/month for a single person to $1,473/month for program eligibility. New guidelines will be available soon.
- USDA local purchasing grant
  - Application due early April and WSDA will be applying. We've reached out to multiple other agencies for interest in partnership. We've also reached out to Tribes because this grant allows for federally recognized tribes to apply directly to USDA. We have also offered to support tribes and tribal organizations as part of our plan.
  - The Director is still finalizing which direction he'd like this to go, but one idea is to issue funds through Food Assistance that would follow an allocation method.
  - This grant is giving states the chance to purchase locally.
  - We'll be bringing back the local purchasing grant group that originally met in October. Invites to come!

**Q&A:**
- David Bobanick (HAH) announced they’re recruiting for Harvest Vista positions at several partner sites across the state.
- Claire Lane asked how organizations can be included in the conversations about partnerships with WSDA on the local food purchasing grant.
  - This will be a multi-pronged approach and there will be stakeholder sessions in March, if not sooner. More info to come on those.
- Someone asked if WSDA receives a local purchasing grant, how would that funding be allocated? More of an EFAP formula? Also, when that funding would be available for use.
  - There are a couple of allocation methods, both with pros and cons. The idea is to reach the broadest number of organizations, so if we use the EFAP model, it would leave out some of our TEFAP organizations. So we’re looking at a combined approach, most likely utilizing poverty and unemployment data as well as making sure our tribal organizations are included. Applications are submitted around 4/4 so decisions should be made in April with funding available most likely in May. This is a two-year grant, so we have time to plan.
- Michelle Douglas (EFN) states
  - It appears as though two separate emergency food systems are emerging in WA State. As we look at how out of network organizations are reaching clients, and how to incorporate these agencies into our network, we should also take the opportunity to reevaluate some of our own practices.

As Food Assistance moves forward and looks to integrate these out-of-network agencies and revise practices, Michelle would like to see complete transparency in the decision making process. Michelle is looking to work together to build a resilient system that works for everyone.