



## FOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY Fact Sheet

# Food Policy Councils: Community-Based Collaboration to Inform Food Security Law and Policy

## Background

[Food Policy Councils](#) (FPC) bring various stakeholders together to address food system issues through the creation and implementation of local, regional, state, and tribal policies. Between 2000 and 2021, the [number of FPCs operating](#) in the United States grew from 8 to over 300. FPCs have been successful in [promoting diverse perspectives](#) in food policy spaces by advocating to local leadership and government entities, engaging with those who experience food insecurity, and promoting activities that advance food justice. FPCs have also [succeeded](#) in making progress in a wide range of policy spaces as detailed below.

## Success Stories

### Baltimore (Maryland) Food Policy Initiative (BFPI), City Level Action

In [2008](#), the Baltimore City Office of Sustainability drafted its [Sustainability Plan](#), including food security as one of its “greening” goals intended to support the stewardship of the environment. This led to the creation of the BFPI and Food Policy Task Force. The BFPI is a collaborative effort between several departments within Baltimore City government such as the [Food Policy and Planning Division](#) within the [Baltimore City Planning Department](#), the [Baltimore Office of Sustainability](#), the [Baltimore City Health Department](#), and the [Baltimore City Development Corporation](#). In addition, the Baltimore City Planning Department collaborated with the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future from 2001 to 2018 to gather environmental data about the [health, economic, and environmental disparities](#) effecting residents, such as through [mapping the use of SNAP](#) in the City. The BFPI has [three main pillars](#): (1) Interagency collaboration, (2) the [Food Policy Action Coalition](#), and (3) [Resident Equity Advisors](#). These last two pillars have become successful projects that increase access to food.

- Food Policy Action Coalition (PAC)
  - The Food PAC provides opportunities for members, which include nonprofits, universities, farms, and businesses, to collaborate and share ideas with one another as they engage in food systems issues. The goals of the Food PACs are to (1) have members identify and inform the BFPI; (2) Inform PAC members of local, state, and federal policy implications that impact their work; and (3) increase collective knowledge of members.
- Resident Food Equity Advisor (RFEA)
  - RFEAs are Baltimore residents who receive SNAP benefits and are residents of affordable housing provided by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City. Using these lived experiences, advisors exchange ideas and examine issues related to food access and security. In 2024, the RFEAs worked to examine food access and digital equity – [recommending](#) policies such as eliminating delivery fees for those using Online SNAP and local vendors.

### **Whatcom County (Washington State) Food System Committee, County Level Action**

In 2018, the Whatcom County (Washington State) Council enacted [Chapter 2.47](#), a resolution that established the Food Systems Committee and directed it to address challenges with the County’s current food system. Their goals include developing a food system plan that would promote “healthy people, a strong local economy, [and] environmental sustainability.” In 2023, the Food System Council adopted its [10-year plan](#). The first goal of the plan includes cultivating equity and justice within the food system and the fourth goal includes ensuring access to healthy food. The Council has created [taskforces](#) for each of the five goals identified in the ten-year plan. This plan also identifies actions they are prioritizing to achieve their goals, including:

- Promoting engagement with local food programs such as through farmers markets, community-supported agriculture, and community gardening;
- evaluating the feasibility of waiving permit fees for grocery stores in healthy food priority areas; and
- altering existing public transit routes and transportation programs to increase access to healthy foods.

Since the adoption of the ten-year plan, the Food Systems Committee [has granted \\$200,000](#) in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support two projects: (1) [upgrading a rural food kitchen to support its expansion](#); and (2) supporting unlimited matches with SNAP dollars used to purchase [local produce](#) at all three farmers markets in the County for the season.

### **Conclusion**

Local governments or non-governmental organizations should consider creating or advocating for creation of an FPC to ensure that food access is made a priority. Creating an FPC is an effective step toward developing community-informed, equitable food systems and access policies. Local elected officials and leaders in the local public health and social services agencies could benefit from the critical feedback an FPC could provide.

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