

The Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger Strategic Plan 2021 to 2026

Final Plan

October 20, 2021

About the Plan

In 2021, Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger engaged in a six months long strategic planning process that included stakeholder interviews with team members, members of the board of directors and partners. In addition, the team engaged in a few strategic conversations.

The leadership hoped the strategic planning process and the plan would articulate a set of values and goals to:

- Build cohesion in the team
- Provide a framework for the organization's decision making
- Share with partners and funders
- Inspire innovation within the team
- Allow the executive director to restructure the organization in ways that advance the work.

Mission

The strategic planning process was not explicitly designed to change the mission statement of the organization. The existing mission statement is:

Founded in 1996, the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger strives to build a community where all people have the food they need to lead healthy lives. The Coalition connects people with food assistance programs and nutrition education; provides resources to a network of food pantries; and educates the public and policymakers about responsible solutions that prevent people from going hungry.

We fight hunger through a three-pronged approach:

1. Immediate Relief: We connect people in need with, and provide hands-on support to, food

pantries and soup kitchens; and we provide close to 200,000 lbs of food for pantries each year!

2. Short-Term Relief: We help thousands of people apply for SNAP (food stamp) benefits through our SNAP Hotline, case management, and community outreach efforts. We participate in over 100 community events each year to reach people where they are, helping them connect to food and food resources, including summer meals.

3. Long-Term Relief: At the local state and federal levels we call for and support responsible policies that address the realities families face putting food on their tables. We advocate on behalf of those who face food insecurity to ensure that they have a voice in shaping responsible solutions to hunger in both local and national policy recommendations.

Based on the strategic planning process, the consultant has pulled out the following statement that could provide the foundation for a new mission statement that is more succinct and clarifies the Coalition's overarching contribution to building food security. If the Coalition should decide to formally change the mission statement for the organization, we recommend that the Coalition work with a communications professional to test the ideas in the statement below and develop language that is accessible to all of the Coalition's constituents.

The Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger's mission is to strengthen the social safety nets that build food security. We do this by:

- Easing access for those who could benefit from existing social safety nets*
- Strengthening community-based institutions that provide food*
- Bringing the voices of people experiencing food insecurity to those with the power to enact change*

Vision

The Coalition does not currently have a vision statement. A vision statement can act as a guiding star for an organization, especially during volatile times. The vision statement below emerged from this process. However, as with the mission statement, we recommend you work with a communications professional to find language that meets the needs of your constituents.

We envision a future in which all communities in our region are guaranteed easy and consistent access to sufficient, safe, nutritious foods that meet their dietary and cultural needs to provide a strong foundation for well-being.

Problem Statement

Why does food insecurity exist?

Food Insecurity is Rooted in Systems of Oppression

As it exists today, food insecurity is a symptom of the combined impact of several systems of oppression. Systemic anti-Black racism has created a racial wealth divide in our nation that has grown with each generation. Black families have been systematically prevented from building wealth and income security - both necessary foundations for food security.

In addition, rampant capitalism has fueled income inequality for people of all racial backgrounds. The majority of our country's wealth is held by a very small percentage of the population. The basic needs of a majority of people, including food access, are often sacrificed in order to build more wealth for a select few. Quality food distribution sites, such as grocery stores are most often located in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, which results in a state of food apartheid that also corresponds with inequities grounded in race, income, and religious practices.

Sexism and patriarchal norms also have a role to play in food insecurity. Issues of gender parity in equal pay and equal access to employment remain deeply entrenched in our economy. Women remain primarily responsible for feeding their families. Many families that experience food insecurity are headed by single mothers. These women are often faced with impossible choices on how to allocate the limited dollars they have to care for their children.

Many people in these communities have internalized the negative stereotypes that society has perpetuated about their group. People blame themselves for their inability to get and retain stable employment and make ends meet. Systems of oppression have convinced people that they are responsible for pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. However, when you are raised in a community that is occupied by police, where the schools have been chronically under-resourced, and jobs that pay a living wage are scarce, you can do all the right things, and still struggle to put food on the table. In addition, a large number of people make too much money to qualify for benefits but not enough to pay for rent, food, transportation, utility bills and other basic needs.

Food Security Systems Are Inaccessible and Under Resourced

Many people who experience food insecurity know very little about the social safety nets that currently exist to build food security. These safety nets include public benefits such as SNAP, nutrition programs and the charitable food network. People face significant barriers when trying to access food. Safety nets are often difficult to navigate, insufficient to meet the need, only available to a subset of people who are food insecure, and don't prioritize nutritious food.

Locally the network of community-based food pantries and the people who run them do their best to try to meet the needs around them. However, leaders are often under-resourced and overworked unpaid volunteers. Food pantry and soup kitchen leaders cannot solve the issue of food insecurity alone. Luckily, there are numerous organizations in our region, large, medium and small, that are working on food justice in a variety of ways. At times, these organizations can be only loosely connected to one another. As such, the overall impact of these efforts is sometimes scattered and not as strong as it could be.

According to Feeding America, SNAP may deliver as much as nine times more food to people than the food bank network across the country. As such, we must remove barriers that prevent people from accessing SNAP. And we need to make sure that, at the local level, the first responders at pantries and soup kitchens have what they need to connect people to more long-term support. We need multiple ways for people to access food resources.

Policy-makers Need Education and Pressure

Food insecurity is viewed by some state-wide policymakers as an “urban” problem. Others acknowledge that there may be constituents they represent who face poverty and food insecurity, but also believe that addressing food insecurity is not an appropriate role for the government to take on. It can be challenging to build political will to improve policies or administrative practices. Stories of people from their counties and pressure from their constituents is one approach that has been shown effective to shift the attitudes of legislators.

Within the city of Philadelphia, it is difficult for the network of under-resourced community-based organizations working to address food insecurity to exert their collective power to push for changes in the city that could expand access to food. In addition, the existing network lacks sufficient input from Immigrant communities, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. As a result these voices are not brought to lawmakers engaged in this work.

Values

Our values inform how we do our work, how we show up with clients, partners, and our community of dedicated supporters, and how we engage with each other as a team.

Our Core Values	
Advocacy	We listen deeply to the people we work with. We amplify the voices of the people we work with.
Diversity	We actively seek out people from diverse backgrounds to be a part of our organization. We invite all people to share their perspectives and experiences.
Collaboration	We intentionally seek out opportunities to connect with and learn from people with different perspectives, approaches and roles.
Mutual Care	We support all members of our community to prioritize care for themselves and their families.
Reliability	We consistently show up for our partners and clients and are respected by our peers. We strive for excellence in all we do.

Areas for Growth

Aspirational Values	
Empowerment	We want to deepen our investment in the leadership of people who experience food insecurity and those who support them, including our Coalition team and volunteers.
Racial Justice, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging	We want to increase our understanding of the systems of oppression that cause food insecurity, and we want to build skills and practices to be effective allies in movements for social justice, equity, inclusion and belonging.
Communication	We want to get better at communicating who we are. We want community members to have a clear understanding of our work.
Learning	We want to build internal practices that allow us to learn from our failures, our successes and to adapt. We want to provide our team members with training and other professional development opportunities that support both their personal growth and improve the quality of the Coalition's work.
Accountability	We want to follow through with our commitments to one another as a team and to our community so that we consistently meet or exceed expectations. We want to be transparent about who we are, what we do well, and what we are working on.
Innovation	We want to encourage creativity and experimentation to find effective approaches as we confront problems.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1: Increase the visibility of the Coalition in cross-sector coalitions

By 2023, the Coalition will be actively engaged in at least one cross-sector coalition (defined as coalitions that include a broad spectrum of organizations working in healthcare, government, business etc.) at the city level.

By 2023, the Coalition will also be actively engaged in at least two cross-sector coalitions at the state level.

By 2024, the Coalition leverages the relationships it has built in these coalitions to support Strategic Goals 2, 3 & 4 and Internal Goal 5 described below.

Strategic Goal 2: Expand access to SNAP benefits to include more people from marginalized groups

By 2022, follow-up with SNAP hotline callers in new ways to strengthen our relationship with them, establish ongoing communication, and better meet their ongoing needs.

By 2022, begin to develop tools to measure the impact of the SNAP hotline

By 2023, the Coalition will leverage the relationships built in cross-sector coalitions to bring new resources (such as financial support, partnerships, and technology) to the SNAP hotline that will allow it to serve a wider cross-section of people.

By 2023, the Coalition will decrease barriers that prevent people from immigrant and refugee communities who qualify for benefits from accessing SNAP.

- Target community outreach to at least five organizations that serve immigrant and refugee communities in Philadelphia
- Train SNAP hotline staff and volunteers on how to collect information about specific barriers people from immigrant and refugee communities face when trying to access systems
- Partner with at least two of these organizations to ensure that existing food pantries and soup kitchens have what they need to serve these communities

By 2024, the Coalition will decrease barriers that prevent returning citizens who qualify for benefits from accessing SNAP.

- Target community outreach to at least five organizations that serve returning citizens in Philadelphia
- Train SNAP hotline team members and volunteers on how to collect information about specific barriers returning citizens face when trying to access systems
- Partner with at least two of these organizations to ensure that existing food pantries and soup kitchens have what they need to serve returning citizens

By 2025, the Coalition will decrease barriers that prevent people living with disabilities who qualify for benefits from accessing existing systems that build food security.

- Compile and distribute a list of food pantries that are accessible
- Target outreach activities to at least three community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities in Philadelphia
- Train SNAP hotline staff and volunteers on how to collect information about specific barriers people with disabilities face when trying to access systems
- Partner with at least two of these organizations to ensure that existing food pantries and soup kitchens have what they need to serve these communities

By 2026, the Coalition will decrease barriers that prevent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and intersex (LGBTQI) people who qualify for benefits from accessing existing systems that build food security.

- Target outreach activities to at least three community-based organizations that serve LGBTQI in Philadelphia
- Train SNAP hotline staff and volunteers on how to collect information about specific barriers LGBTQI people face
- Partner with LGBTQI organizations and support local food pantries and soup kitchens to be spaces that affirm and welcome LGTQI people

By 2027, the Coalition will increase the proportion of callers to our SNAP hotline who identify as immigrants, people living with disabilities or LGBTQI.

Strategic Goal 3: Empower VIP members to act collectively in service of the diverse needs of their communities.

By 2023, develop tools to measure the impact of participation in the VIP network on network member organizations and the communities that they serve.

By 2024, the VIP network includes community-based organizations from communities that are chronically under-resourced.

- Target outreach to at least five organizations that serve immigrant and refugee communities in Philadelphia
- Invite at least three community-based organizations that serve immigrant and refugee communities in Philadelphia to become part of the VIP Network
- Target outreach activities to at least three community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities in Philadelphia
- Invite at least one organization that serves people with disabilities to become part of the VIP network

By 2025, the expanded VIP network is actively engaged in mutual resource sharing, cross-training, and collective capacity building activities.

- Strengthen the relationships between network members
- Identify skills and resources that each organization has to offer
- Provide opportunities for cross-training
- Build network members' capacity to develop a set of shared goals
- Build network members' advocacy skills
- Build network members' knowledge and understanding of the SNAP program

Strategic Goal 4: Collaborate with partners to organize a story-driven statewide advocacy campaign that is grounded in strong policy analysis, is compelling to a cross-section of policymakers, supports the leadership of food insecure people, and leverages the Coalition's reputation as an information hub.

By 2023, conduct a policy analysis of current food policy, interpret findings, and develop a paper and companion education materials to utilize with partners and legislators. Use this analysis to identify specific issues or topics that could benefit from a story collection process to illustrate impacts.

By 2024, identify three to five organizational partners across the state, especially in counties that have movable Republican representation in the state legislature interested in supporting a joint story collection effort coordinated by the Coalition.

- Hire additional team members and cross-train all program team members in advocacy so that they are able to look out for and identify potential issues arising on SNAP hotline calls or within the VIP network to center a statewide campaign on.

By 2025, launch a campaign in collaboration with partners across the state that is compelling to a cross-section of policymakers, supports the leadership of food insecure people, and leverages the Coalition's reputation as an information hub.

- Recruit, train and compensate a small group of people from across the state who contributed stories to the story collection effort to participate in advocacy efforts.
- Organize listening sessions with key decision makers in government.

Strategic Goal 5: Deepen our team's understanding of root causes of food insecurity, food apartheid and food justice

By 2022, establish a working group on the team that is devoted to gathering information and convening conversations with the Coalition.

By 2023, develop a training module to utilize with new hires to ensure new staff are up to speed on what the team is talking about.

By 2024, team members should gather to review the strategic goals and make changes grounded in new insights that have emerged through this collective process of political education.

Internal Goals

Internal Goal 1: Restructure to support strategic and internal goals

By 2023, shift staff structure to:

- Increase executive director's capacity to lead the organization on strategic and internal goals by decreasing the number of staff that report to her directly.
- Strengthen the cross-pollination of information across programs to remove barriers to access for SNAP hotline callers, strengthen community-based food distribution network efforts and support effective story-driven advocacy.
- Empower staff to set clear goals and take ownership of them.
- Empower staff to learn new skills and grow.

Proposed structure is depicted [here](#).

Internal Goal 2: Invest in performance management and team member professional development to increase team efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction and retention.

Over the next five years, the Coalition commits to develop the capacity to:

- Provide management training to all managers.
- Empower team members to take ownership of their work.
- Empower team members to set goals for themselves in annual performance review.
- Build in support for team members to meet expectations of their role.
- Empower team members to learn new skills, experiment, and grow.
- Empower team members to increase their understanding of root causes.

Internal Goal 3: Engage team members and board in organization's efforts to become an anti-racist multiracial organization

Over the next five years, the Coalition commits to develop the capacity to:

- Implement an annual team values audit.
- Regularly name and reinforce meeting norms that encourage healthy conflict.
- Support members of the board and staff to participate in training opportunities and workshops that support staff to have open and honest conversations about race.
- Support Board and staff to participate in training opportunities that increase staff understanding of root causes of food insecurity.
- Normalize and encourage members of the board and staff to name white-supremacy and systems of oppression when talking about root causes of food insecurity.

Internal Goal 4: Build organization-wide program monitoring and evaluation capacity.

Over the next five years, the Coalition commits to develop the capacity to:

- Identify desired program outcomes and indicators of success.
- Build evaluation into annual program planning cycles.

Internal Goal 5: Strengthen external communications and messaging to increase public awareness and understanding of the Coalition's work.

Over the next five years, the Coalition commits to develop the capacity to:

- Develop a strong elevator pitch.
- Explore a mission, vision, and name change.
- Provide a platform for SNAP hotline callers, VIP members and policy makers who have been influenced by the work of the Coalition to share their stories.

Internal Goal 6: Leverage evaluation data and new messaging to expand donor base and increase revenue.

Over the next five years, the Coalition commits to develop the capacity to:

- Increase visibility of Race Against Hunger.
- Increase executive director participation in resource development activities.
- Increase board engagement in resource development.

Internal Goal 7: Improve the quality of the organization's IT infrastructure to support program and development goals.

Over the next five years, the Coalition commits to develop the capacity to:

- Add TTY and other adaptive technologies to increase accessibility.
- Explore data management platforms to support program evaluation and resource development.