

June 1, 2022

To: Councilmember Lisa Herbold, Chair, Public Safety & Human Services Committee
From: Tanya Kim, Acting Director, Human Services Department
RE: Response to Council Statement of Legislative Intent HSD-026-A-001

This report provides the Human Service Department's (HSD) response to Council Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) [HSD-026-A-001](#) on the availability of state and federal funding for food programs.

Background

The City of Seattle has significantly increased emergency feeding funding, beyond baseline budget, since 2020 to address food insecurity and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly through one-time federal fund sources. HSD directed its COVID relief investments toward food bank and meal services for especially underserved populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including low-income individuals, people experiencing homelessness and formerly homeless, and seniors. Additional City funding supported the Office of Sustainability and Environment's Emergency Grocery Voucher program and expanded funds for its Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program. The City closely partnered with United Way of King County, Public Health - Seattle and King County (Public Health), Seattle Public Schools (SPS), and the nonprofit feeding community to align funding priorities and best meet community need through contracts, low-barrier grants, and accessible and COVID-safe food distribution. A one-time HSD investment in community-based grants, administered by United Way, ended in 2020.

The 2022 adopted budget included \$2.5 million for emergency food programs, and Council provided additional funds via Council Budget Action (CBA) [HSD-005-C-001](#). The fund source for the one-time increase is the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Relief (CLFR) fund, allocated through the Seattle Rescue Plan. In conjunction with Council's CBA, Council also requested an update on state and federal funding that would provide food support to communities impacted by the COVID pandemic.

HSD conducted research with various partners to determine what funding was available in 2022 for COVID relief, and what funding was projected in 2023. This included a review of new state legislation and school levy language, an inventory of state and federal allocations and new (or continued) Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) grant programs, analysis of economic and public health data that impacts food security (i.e., housing and food costs), and interviews with WSDA staff. This report also includes Public Health's recently completed grant program for food access.

2022 State, Federal and County Food Investments

Table 1 outlines the amount of new funding by fund source in 2022 and, in some cases, 2023. HSD is unaware of funding committed beyond 2023.

Council's SLI also requests a proposal for how any new state and federal funds would be spent in Seattle. It is important to note that all funds in this report are already designated to local community-based organizations through allocations and grant awards. Federal, state, and county funds that are pending because of currently open competitive processes will be distributed to successful applicants, to be determined by the grantmaking entity. The City does not anticipate additional federal, state, or county funds for direct allocation by the City.

Table 1. Crosswalk of City of Seattle v. Other (State, Federal, County) Seattle COVID Relief Funds¹

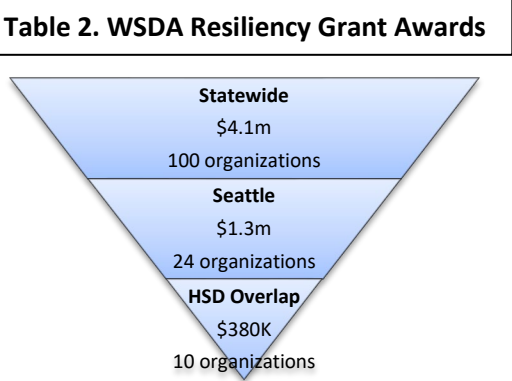
Purpose	City of Seattle	Other Funds	Description: Other Funds, Source, and Timeline
Shelter meals	\$1,605,000 CLFR \$500,000 2022 Adopted Budget \$1,105,000 2022 - HSD-005-C-001 anticipated	\$0	
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Meals	\$500,000 CLFR \$500,000 2022 Adopted Budget \$0 2022 – HSD-005-C-001	\$2,000,000 (per state fiscal year)	Department of Commerce directly contracted with FareStart. 7/1/21-6/30/22 and 7/1/22-6/30/23.
Food bank network	\$1,875,000 CLFR \$1,280,000 2022 Adopted Budget \$595,000 2022 - HSD-005-C-001 anticipated	\$1,300,000	WSDA (CLFR). Food Assistance Resiliency Grants round 1. 1/1/22-6/30/22. \$4.1m statewide.
		TBD (application period open)	WSDA (CLFR) Food Assistance Resiliency Grants round 2. 7/1/22-6/30/23. \$16m statewide.
		\$570,000	WSDA (TEFAP ²) Temporary Emergency Feeding Assistance Program increase to Food Lifeline. \$2.4m statewide.
		\$1,750,000	King County (CLFR) Food Security Assistance Program. Distributed by United Way. 2/1/22-12/31/22. \$6m statewide.
		\$165,000	King County (CLFR) Farm to Food Bank project grants. Distributed by Harvest Against Hunger. 4/1/22-12/31/22. \$500k statewide.
		[<\$9m] see description	WSDA (CSFR) We Feed WA food box program round 1 11/1/2021-6/30/22. \$22.5m statewide. Local \$9m to Seattle based agencies who serve multiple counties.
		TBD	WSDA (CSFR) We Feed WA food box program round 2. 7/1/22-6/30/23. \$53m statewide. Local funding TBD to Seattle based agencies who serve multiple counties.
Senior Meals and Nutrition	\$220,000 CLFR \$220,000 2022 Adopted Budget \$655,000 State pass-through for Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program \$1,300,000 OAA ARPA pass-through for nutrition, estimated annually through 2024	\$0	
Total	\$6,155,000		

¹ Fund Sources in this Table: ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act), CLFR (Coronavirus Local Fiscal Relief), CSFR (Coronavirus State Fiscal Relief), OAA (Older Americans Act), WSDA (Washington State Department of Agriculture)

² See Table 4. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. Additional funding spiked in 2019-2021 due to a combination of COVID relief, Trade Mitigation Funds, and rollover. WSDA projects a downward trend until 2023, where it returns to baseline.

Table 1 shows partial designated funding for meals for individuals living in permanent supportive housing (PSH), and no new designated funding for individuals living in shelters or tiny house villages.

Information for food banks is more complex. There is significant new funding reaching food banks, meal programs, and other food relief programs, however, only some of this funding directly supports food banks currently receiving City of Seattle COVID food relief through HSD contracts. Table 2 illustrates by way of example how a large statewide grant program awards funds to Seattle, and of those funds, there is partial overlap with HSD. WSDA funds tend to support new initiatives, program expansions, or one-time equipment purchases, whereas HSD COVID relief funding pays for food, staff and PPE/food distribution supplies.



Similarly, the majority of WSDA’s first round of grants for We Feed WA food boxes benefited agencies that did not directly receive HSD COVID relief funds. Large programs like Food Lifeline and FareStart will be able to distribute food boxes broadly to benefit Seattle communities. Food banks in particular have identified barriers to accepting and redistributing food boxes and prefer the flexibility of staffing and operational funds. Proposals were due on May 18, 2022 for the second round of We Feed WA funding, with awards expected to be announced in June 2022. Regarding King County grants, many Seattle-area food banks received grants between \$2,000-\$8,000, with select food banks receiving grants of \$100,000 and the Seattle Food Committee (Seattle’s food bank coalition) receiving \$250,000.

Other Investments and Policies Supporting Food Access

The WA state legislative session and Seattle Public Schools levy brought additional changes to the food access landscape:

School and Student State-level Policy Changes

State [HB 1878](#) expands Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) participation for student meals. The bill provides \$21.5 million (likely ongoing) statewide and ensures a wider pool of students have access to free and reduced lunch, gradually increasing the number of CEP participating schools from 6 to 18. State [HB 1833](#) creates an electronic submission option for households to submit documents, simplifying the process for school meal eligibility. These process improvements should benefit student food access in Seattle.

School and Student Local Investments

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) will receive \$20 million from the 2022 Seattle Public Schools Capital Levy to build and improve kitchen facilities, enabling healthier and more cost-effective cooking for students. Additional statewide investments in supply chain improvements (\$18.2 million) and local food procurement (\$3.6 million) will help meet COVID-related food needs and offset food cost increases. It is unclear how much of this funding will be available to Seattle at this time. Notably, the SPS kitchen and food service workforce—like the broader feeding workforce—continues to struggle with hiring and capacity, complicating funding gains.

Anti-Poverty State-level Investments

Additional state investments and eligibility changes in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) will provide extended or expanded access to select households and may indirectly increase food security. Similar benefit may come from new additional support for the Women, Infants and

Children (WIC) program, increased accessibility of Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Service Offices, childcare flexibilities, increases in permanent housing investments, and more anti-poverty legislation.

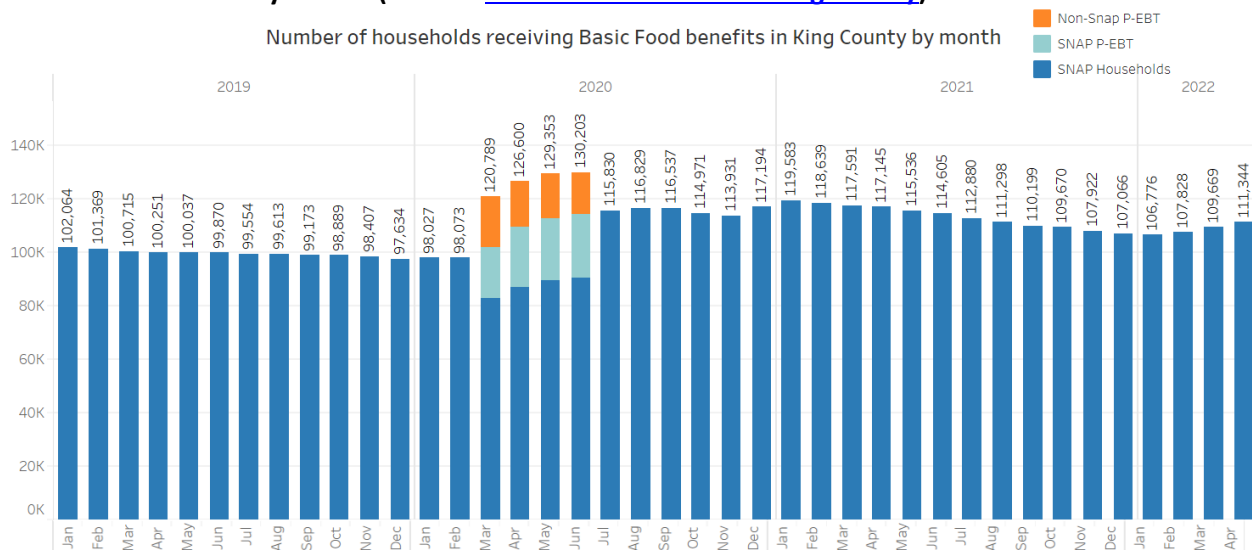
2023 Outlook³

Despite investments in direct food support through state grants, improvements to student meal access, and legislated anti-poverty policies, communities may continue to be at risk of increased food insecurity during 2023. WSDA expects funding to significantly decrease in 2023, barring any new investments, while community need remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. Supply chain disruptions and inflation have increased costs of food and transportation, as noted in the City's [April 8 Economic and Revenue Update](#). In March 2022, [grocery store food prices were 10% higher than in March 2021](#), according to the USDA.

Seattle and regional housing costs are also back to pre-pandemic levels and rising. [Seattle rents are up 22% over last year](#), per Seattle Met's analysis of Apartment List data. Temporary safety nets created during the pandemic have or are expected to end soon, including supplemental COVID funding through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Pandemic EBT food benefits, the Expanded Child Tax Credit, utility shut-off moratorium, and increased benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Moreover, data from WSDA and Public Health show that food insecurity, while down from its early-2020 spikes, has remained flat and at a higher baseline than pre-pandemic (see Table 3). Public Health published a series of statistics in May titled "After one year of steady decline, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment in King County is increasing," citing potential reasons for increased enrollment including rising food costs, end of stimulus funds, and re-opening of in-person DSHS assistance offices. WSDA reports increased rates of food bank visits occurring during the Great Recession set a new, higher baseline even as the economy recovered; the same could be true following this economic downturn.

Table 3. Food Insecurity Trends (Source: [Public Health Seattle & King County](#))



WSDA, King County and City of Seattle staff have heard reports of increased need in 2022. WSDA has recently expressed increased concern about the flat level of base TEFAP funding available despite food costs

³ On June 1, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) [announced several additional investments](#) to the food system, particularly around agriculture and supply chain improvements. More analysis is needed to understand the eventual impact to food access in Seattle.

significantly rising (see Tables 4 and 5). While HSD contractor data shows overall food and meal program use has stayed fairly stable since the pandemic, with program-by-program variances, several providers have reporting seeing spikes in program use in recent weeks, likely due to [residual COVID supply chain and labor impacts, and soaring food prices linked to the conflict in Ukraine](#). Taken together, communities may experience longer-term impacts beyond 2023.

Table 4. TEFAP Operational Funds and Monthly Clients (source: WSDA slide deck presentation)

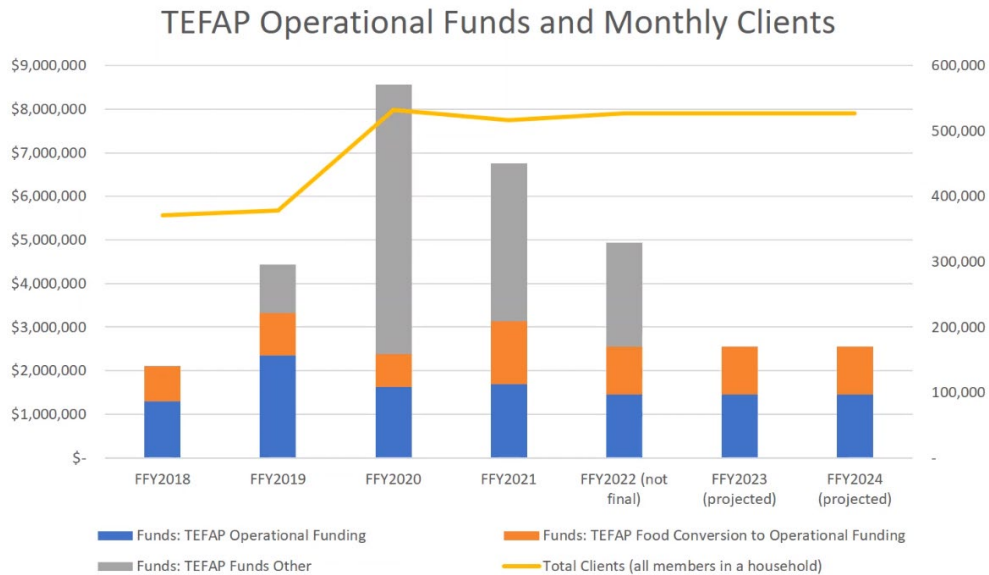
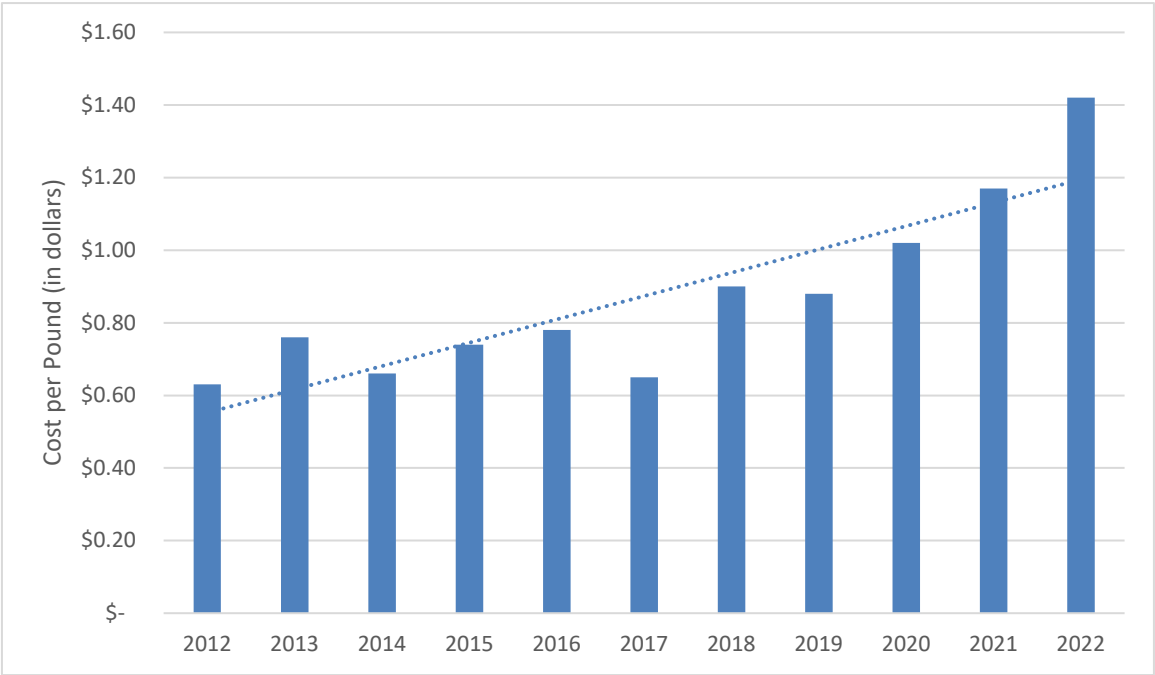


Table 5. Average Price of Food per Pound for TEFAP Purchases (source: WSDA slide deck presentation)



Summary

As COVID recovery continues, state, federal, and county funding investments continue to include support for food and meals in Seattle. State, federal, and county investments provide direct funding to some food banks the City of Seattle directly supports through its COVID relief investments and augment City funding for meals in permanent supportive housing programs. There is no known new funding in 2022 or projected in 2023 specifically for meals in emergency shelter programs beyond City of Seattle investments.

Additionally, policy changes through the State Legislature and the passage of the Seattle Public Schools Capital Levy are designed to increase food access for families, nutrition for students, and reduce the number of individuals living in poverty.

Conversely, historical high and rising inflation and food costs, the end of COVID entitlement benefits, and recent increases in emergency food usage suggest continued risk for those who remain or become food insecure.