

# NCOA Local Partner Comments via online survey

## White House Conference on Hunger, Health, and Nutrition

**Organization:** Building Health, Inc

**Location:** Pittsburg, KS, 66762

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Southeast Kansas and Northeast Oklahoma, an all-rural area, has significant access to food issues, and a high food insecurity rate, even when compared to other rural areas in our region.

### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Require greater accountability to public transit providers (5310, and 5311) to meet the needs of the community. "Meeting community needs" is currently self-reported by the agency to Kansas DOT and some 5310/5311 providers are not providing truly public transportation. Lack of transportation is the largest barrier to access to food for older adults in our area.
  - Increase accessibility of SNAP benefits- create a maximum page length for the application, prevent states from adding barriers like requiring work (many people are disabled and are pursuing disability)
  - Greater accountability for Area Agency on Aging groups to work to know their communities' needs and make improvements in them.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.

Fund organizations that already have successful accountability/oversight like FQHCs for Community Health Workers including grocery pick up/delivery, and transportation.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Require greater accountability to public transit providers (5310, and 5311) to meet the needs of the community. "Meeting community needs" is currently self-reported by the agency to Kansas DOT and some 5310/5311 providers are not providing truly public transportation. Lack of transportation is the largest barrier to access to food for older adults in our area.
  - Increase accessibility of SNAP benefits- create a maximum page length for the application, prevent states from adding barriers like requiring work (many people are disabled and are pursuing disability)
  - Greater accountability for Area Agency on Aging groups to work to know their communities' needs and make improvements in them.
  - Local government to fund more transportation
4. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas and our soon-to-be transportation program.

### **Equity-related suggestions**

- Add Marshallese as a language for forms/applications

### **Steps to integrate nutrition and health**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Fund FQHCs to provide grocery pick up/delivery as part of care management services like CCM, CoCM.
  - Reimburse FQHCs for Registered Dieticians for a wider scope of services like education
2. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?  
Reimburse FQHCs through Medicaid for Community Health Workers
3. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?  
COPE Project with CHWs in Kansas

**Organization: Bergen County Division of Senior Services**  
**Location: Hackensack, NJ, 07601**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

I work for an Area Agency on Aging and we connect local seniors to food programs.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Increase income and asset eligibility for SNAP for seniors, using area median income instead of federal poverty level, so that it accurately reflects the needs of low-income people in high cost areas. Simplify the SNAP application for seniors, and make it readily and widely available on paper (not just internet), and have SNAP workers readily available to help fill it out. Increase the amount of monthly SNAP benefit to make it worth the time and effort for seniors. Turn the SNAP application into a universal application along with Medicaid, Medicare Savings Programs and LIS, utility assistance, housing assistance, etc. Accessing SNAP is a huge administrative burden for seniors, and therefore many, many seniors don't use SNAP, which leads to poor food access which leads to poor health outcomes, which then causes needless sickness and premature death, and then also costs the taxpayers more in Medicare and Medicaid costs. It is shameful that this country makes it so difficult for the elderly to have access to food.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Eliminate administrative burdens to accessing benefits. Change the narrative that says that poor people deserve to be treated poorly because they must have some sort of character flaw that caused them to be in the situation of needing help. "Poverty is not a lack of character; it's a lack of cash."
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - They need to advocate to the federal government to overhaul the SNAP program.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - Advocacy
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - The NCOA Benefits Enrollment Center recognizes the need for extra assistance to seniors to access SNAP and other benefits. But it is a drop in the bucket compared to nationwide need for food access.

**Equity-related suggestions**

- Many elderly people are at a disadvantage for accessing benefits such as SNAP because they might lack access to the internet to research benefits and to submit applications, lack of access to transportation, even a lack of access to a copy machine to make copies of documents needed to apply. And most of the low-income elderly in this country are women, and particularly black and brown women. Elderly, women, people of color - the reason that these programs are so poorly administered is because they address marginalized groups. It's time we started caring about them.

**Organization: Three Square Food Bank**  
**Location: Las Vegas, NV, 89115**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

With the current cost of food older adults find themselves struggling to keep enough food at home.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Increase SNAP benefits to those on a fix income.
  - Create more programs for older adults to access foods, since many times transportation is an issue to that access.
2. What specific actions should local, state, territory, and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Create more awareness of this issue.

**Organization: National Church Residences**  
**Location: Columbus, OH, 43203**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Our community is a low-income community and there are many vulnerable adults who have diet-related diseases. High Blood Pressure comes to mind; but the ability to purchase healthy food is not an option for those on low income. They simply have to purchase what they can afford.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - In low-income communities, individuals frequently visit the convenience stores, i.e., Dollar General, Family Dollar, Dollar Tree, etc. We need to recommend that these outlets in the community that people frequently visit to purchase food and household items, provide wholesome food choices and fresh produce instead of or in addition to high calorie packaged food. I know that pricing is an issue; but the government could help with lower cost wholesome foods.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Congressional members need to present the issue to congress and the governing branch so that it can be legislated and acted upon. Individuals in low income communities rely on the dollar stores due to convenience. Since they rely on the dollar store, legislation should be presented to see that these convenience stores carry wholesome, healthy foods and produce. The government should also provide the funding so that healthy affordable food choices are presented to all.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Localities can give tax incentives to convenience stores who carry wholesome healthy food choices in their city and county. State Governments can provide grant funding for non-profits who can work with convenience stores to ensure that they are

- providing healthy food choices and incorporate programming for constituents who want to learn more about healthy eating.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
    - Private sector can donate to local food collaboratives and in turn local food collaboratives can stock convenience stores with healthier food alternatives. The public sector can advocate for this to happen by completing surveys and petitions to address the issues.
  5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
    - We have some non-profits that are providing workshops on how to provide healthy meals with live food demonstrations, we have local farmers markets and government programs that collaborate with each other through the SNAP Benefit program. An idea could be for the government to give food incentives to individuals who want to purchase better (healthier) food choices; but cannot afford to.

### **Equity-related suggestions**

- As our population ages, more and more adults will become seniors 65 years of age or older in the coming years. By working now to put policies in place that address access and food affordability we will give the aging population the opportunity to enjoy their seniors' years and not have the burden of trying to figure out food affordability and access to healthy food. With good policy in place, access and affordability to healthy food should be the norm for our aging population in the years to come.

**Organization: Benefits Data Trust**  
**Location: Rifle, CO, 81650**

### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

I grew up in a family that relied on food stamps to put healthy food on the table each week. I have also been a SNAP recipient during a tough financial period as an adult. Without SNAP, I would have had to make cuts to my food budget for my child and myself in order to meet other obligations such as rent and utility bills.

In my community, up to half of the residents who qualify for SNAP do not claim these benefits either because they are unaware that they are eligible, or they find the application process too confusing and burdensome.

### **Steps to integrate nutrition and health**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Work towards creating processes that unit benefits such as Medicaid, WIC, and SNAP so that people who apply for one are automatically told whether they qualify for other benefits. Also, work within the federal government and with the states to streamline and simplify the benefits application process so that people are not pre-eliminated from the application process because of literacy, computer literacy, or other disparities.
2. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - Nonprofits already exist that can help federal and state governments streamline the benefits application process. Nonprofits such as Benefits Data Trust and Hunger Free Colorado can partner with states to conduct mail and text outreach alerting residents that they may qualify for benefits, and these non-profits operate contact centers that can provide live assistance in the screening and application process.

**Organization: Flathead County Agency on Aging  
Kalispell, MT, 59901**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

At our Agency we have seen a significant increase in congregate meals over the last six months due to older adults having a harder time affording food.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Agencies on Aging need more funding to support crucial programs for older adults. In Montana specifically, the aging population is nearing 25% of our overall population, and we do not have enough funding to support this change.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - We need more funding for older adults. One of the specific barriers that older adults face is access to food and good nutrition. One of those barriers is transportation, especially in more rural areas like Montana.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Specific actions include directing more funds to rural areas like Montana, in which the aging population is close to 25%.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - We can work together to provide solutions for the needs of older adults, like transportation, which is a significant barrier for older adults accessing nutritious foods.

**Organization: None (First-person account)**  
**Location: Madison, WI, 53711**

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

I'm receiving snap benefits, otherwise I could not afford the food I have on hand. During the last twenty years my savings and retirement dwindled to nothing due to caregiving. I currently am without a physician, have not received dental care in 10 years and have low job expectations due to ageism.

### **Steps to integrate nutrition and health**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Dental health is important to overall health. Without proper care, chewing is a struggle and nutrition is gone.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - With age, chewing vegetables is extremely difficult. How do we bring more nutrition to the table while keeping the ability to ingest the food?
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Affordable healthcare and access to support programs (dental). Nutrition education is needed.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - If ongoing vision and dental healthcare is not available, maybe partnering up to give low-cost options for a few times a year.
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - In my state, I am finding less activities than there used to be.

### **Equity-related suggestions**

- As I age, I worry constantly on the legacy of this country that is being turned against those under 30. An equity promise should look into all aspects of climate, opportunity, and class.

**Organization: Georgia Legal Services Program**  
**Location: Atlanta, GA, 30303**

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Our Benefits Hotline talks to 60+ seniors every month. We hear the stories about hunger and poverty that no one should have to tell here in one of the richest countries.

### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Our Benefits Hotline wanted to tell our callers about the end of the Pandemic SNAP benefits so that they would not be surprised. It was heartbreaking to hear the sadness and fear in people's voices that they would have less money (SNAP) to buy food next month and ongoing. Some cried, some cussed, some were grateful for what they had received.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Georgia barriers include lack of access to apply for SNAP (and Medicaid.) Many of our rural areas don't have broadband access and our seniors don't know how to use a computer. Yet, all DFCS offices were closed because of COVID. Our Hotline assists people apply or renew benefits. The website is difficult to maneuver and update your information. The COVID SNAP increases should be maintained during the follow-up inflationary spiral to keep our clients from going hungry.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - The computer program interface and lack of caseworkers, phone help, and navigation means that many seniors can't sign up. The small amounts and harsh verification procedures mean that \$16 per month is not worth it to many of our clients.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - Additional funding for community navigation, investment in better computer access, and broad/widespread distribution of paper applications would help rural seniors get SNAP. Millions invested in new computer vendors was not the solution to this problem.
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - Continued eligibility without renewals and increased amounts during COVID were helpful, as is support for our Benefits Hotline.
6. Please share any recommendations you have related to Equity relevant to this pillar. See NCOA's Equity Promise for ideas on framing Equity related to targeting populations and addressing access to benefits and services.
  - We appreciate the Broadband supplement program but have not seen a wide interest.

**Organization: County of Riverside Office on Aging**  
**Location: Riverside, CA, 92570**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

There is a huge need for HDM for the elderly in our community.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - They need to have additional funding and providers to fulfill the need for additional home delivered meals to anyone that is 60+ or disabled
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Additional funding needs, and not have restrictions on eligibility.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Be able to reach hard to reach/rural area seniors in need of nutrition and food resources
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - Network, and be able to work across counties with larger vendors that can fulfill the needs of smaller counties

**Organization: Alivio Medical Center**  
**Location: Chicago, IL, 60608**

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

In August of 2020, there was a reality check of how many people in the community were impacted if needing assistance as many lost their employment due to the pandemic.

Personal I know first hand how negatively diet has affected my health and quality of life. In my family lives it has a major impact on their lives as well. I take care of my parents who are suffering and dealing with chronic pain. In my community as well, I see the harsh and devastating impact that diet-related chronic diseases - such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, dental disease, and osteoporosis which are the most common cause of death in the world and present a great burden for society. In addition to my own personal experience, I also see it in our most vulnerable elderly low-income Latino clients who are below the poverty level.

### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - There should a program with easy access to all documented and non-status citizens.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - There should campaigns of real stories telling peoples stories of their needs and a strategy plan on how to solve this matter.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - It starts at the community level partnering with local and state constituents.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - We need to work hand and hand with all partners, public and private that has an impact in the community.

**Organization: Council on Aging**  
**Location: Asheville, NC, 28801**

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Hunger and diet-related disease impacts everyone, even if people have enough food. Our society lacks nutrition generally due to the processing of our food. During the beginning of the pandemic, our organization was helping to distribute shelf stable foods, however many in our community lacked the fresh produce, healthy meats, dairy products and fresh grains needed to sustain a healthy lifestyle.

### **Recommendations to empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Ultimately, I see that helping consumers have access to healthy choices begins with the farmers and producers of the food. It would be wonderful to support local farmers and producers of food products with grants and sustainability efforts that encourage them to produce their products at a lower cost than currently available. If farmers and small business food owners were supported through subsidies, consumers would not have to pay as much for healthy options - these products could be available to low-, middle- and high-income families.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Funding is a barrier. Devoting time and space to this initiative is also a barrier. The opportunities are endless, but I will name a few: granting farmers additional tax breaks on their products and properties, subsidizing farmer's and tailgate markets, providing funding for transportation of goods and products directly from farms to markets...
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Local, state, territory and Tribal governments could designate someone who oversees these pillars in order to have an advocate. Nonprofit and community groups could assist in using the government policies in order to help educate, encourage and distribute to local communities - the people.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - This pillar could help bridge the gap between the land and the table (farm and table). It could encourage partnership across many disciplines in an effort to bring healthy alternatives at a cheaper cost.
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - I am not sure about how to answer this question.

### **Equity-related suggestions**

- I believe I addressed this above - but having lower cost healthy options and education can help lower-income families (minorities) access these products.

Organization: Senior Connections  
Location: Henrico: VA, 23238

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Shy high prices and steadily going up

**Recommendations to empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - by allowing us to access to local farms
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - transportation and demographic accessibility
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - access to buy directly from local farms
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - having access to local farms
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - nutrition classes and information

**Equity-related suggestions**

- continue giving seniors access to better information for health

**Organization: Borderland Rainbow Center**  
**Location: El Paso, TX, 79903**

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Our food pantry feeds over 400 families a week and we learned that about 30% of the clients are seniors and about 30% are living with diabetes or have a household member with diabetes or pre-diabetes. Food affordability and food quality/nutrition of foods available are both dire concerns in our community. I will share info about affordability in this survey, since if you can't get food at all, then nutrition is a moot point.

### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - 1) provide more funding support to food banks and small community food pantries to access nutritious food to distribute to those in need. Provide funding for mobile pantries for more access for seniors who are isolated and for folks living with disabilities;
  - 2) allow funding to cover staff costs. Volunteers are awesome, but paid staff are necessary to provide reliable quality service, and to allow agencies to build relationships with the community.
  - 3) make more sensible policies about distribution of federal food reserves (state lines as boundaries for distribution sources don't make sense in many geographic areas. For example making our local food bank in El Paso source food from agricultural areas 8 hours away does not make sense when we are right next to farmers in New Mexico. Contracts to federal funded distribution should be a local as possible, both for logistics and to lessen environmental impact. The federal government has plenty of data to figure out better ways to create distribution pipelines of FDA food.
  - 4) Pass no-waste laws that make it necessary for grocery stores to donate food to pantries and food banks before it goes bad
  - 5) Consider new collaborations for food distribution to low income people (food pantries located at schools, for example).
  - 6) Expand SNAP and Medicaid access. The federal poverty level guidelines are MASSIVELY outdated and ridiculous, shutting out people from accessing needed help. Send every elected senator and congressperson on a month experience where they have to survive on the amount of money allotted for the federal poverty level. Have them make \$100 a month too much to qualify for SNAP or Medicaid. Make them have to find housing, food, and medical care. If they can't understand using data, then require an experience to bring the point home.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - 1) One barrier is non-sensical policies (federal poverty rates are ridiculous, using states as policy regions) see above for examples.
  - 2) Another barrier is lack of funding for smaller pantries and distribution sites, where staff really know their community members. Funding smaller more local sites allows for food pantries to potentially act as a safety network for vulnerable families and elders. These sites have built relationships with their clients, and can provide on-site services to reach more people (SNAP, WIC, Medicaid enrollment, nutrition education, diabetes education, mental health and physical health screening and linkage to care).

- 3) Funding to upgrade facilities - for example installing commercial coolers or freezers. Better equipment allows for distribution of more fresh foods through food pantries. Smaller pantries often struggle to have enough refrigeration to distribute fresh items on more than a token basis.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
    - 1) There needs to be more awareness around the issues of food insecurity and hunger, and more coordinated efforts for collaboration.
    - 2) Local and state governments and private companies could incentivize employees to volunteer at food pantries and food banks.
    - 3) funding for local solutions such as community gardens, local farmer/food bank or food pantry relationships, etc. could be increased.
    - 4) Reduce dependence on non-local food when possible,
    - 5) Pass no-waste laws
    - 6) provide more incentives for sustainable farming and organic farming in agricultural areas.
  4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
    - Increase incentives (tax breaks, or funding) for private sector companies (produce distributors, dairies, etc) to collaborate with food pantries, and establish less-than whole sale or donation programs for food.
  5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
    - I think local organizations are excellent at innovating culturally appropriate methods of disseminating nutritional information (recipes based on populations' cultural foodways, using games like Loteria to teach people about benefits available to them and about nutrition and diabetes prevention).
    - Local communities are also amazing at creating partnerships out of necessity to survive, imagine how much more effective these strategies could be if they were funded and informed by the data available to federal agencies.

### **Equity-related suggestions**

- Economic inequity is at the heart of lack of access to affordable food. Poverty makes people hostage to whatever food sources are nearby and within their small budget. So the impact of food deserts are amplified for poor people, since they cannot just take the time and money it takes to commute to a better grocery store, nor can they afford the prices for higher quality foods. And economic inequalities are correlated with racial inequalities. The country needs to address the impact of institutional racism (overt and implicit) on policy.

### **Steps to integrate nutrition and health**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - 1) Expand SNAP and Medicaid benefits regardless of stat of residence.
  - 2) Create more access to healthy food and companion knowledge about the health benefits of that food (recipes, cooking methods, health benefits).

**Organization: Nevada Senior Services**  
**Location: Las Vegas, NV, 89108**

### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Older adults in Nevada struggle with purchasing nutritional food every month. Older adults are unable to leave their home to purchase food due to limited income, chronic illnesses, unable to stand to prepare a meal due to a disability, lack of social support, or no funds to pay for transportation to the store. A majority of the older adults our agency serves only receive \$800-\$1200 a month. The average cost for rent in Nevada starts at \$1000 or more. Any money left over goes towards cheaper foods that which continues to impact their health negatively. Fresh fruit and vegetables are essential to a healthy diet but due to excessive cost older adults are unable to purchase on a regular basis. Fruits and vegetables spoil easily making transportation difficulties all the more problematic.

### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Older adults struggle with technology and excessive documentation interferes with participation in the SNAP program. Resource guidelines limit access to food stamps. SNAP benefits must be increased while also raising income limits due to the rising costs of housing, transportation, and household necessities.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Older adults have difficulty with applying for services, especially in rural areas due to no access to technology. Increasing state funds to support after school nutritional programs, increased funding for congregate meal sites, funding for transportation for easier access to food banks and to the grocery store, partnering with grocery stores to implement a food voucher program for low income older adults and additional funding towards meal delivery services for homebound seniors.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Increased collaboration with local casinos and hotels to assist older adults, homeless, families with children and indigenous peoples to reduce food insecurity.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - Nevada continues to build a strong infrastructure to provided needed resources to our community. Yearly conferences with community partners and stake holders with the focus of reducing food insecurity, grants for funding and collaboration.
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - During the beginning of COVID, Nevada focused on creating actions teams to further avoid food insecurity amongst families with children, older adults and individuals with disabilities. Nevada Senior Services has hosted SNAP outreach events and implemented a congregate meal site with our community partner Helping Hands of Vegas Valley to support older adults and their caregivers. Nevada Senior Services participates in a monthly senior hunger meeting with other community leaders to share best practices on how to decrease food hunger in Nevada.

**Organization: Little Tokyo Service Center**  
**Location: Los Angeles, CA, 90013**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

When we see community members not have access to culturally relevant food options or availability their overall health - physical, mental, emotional, and social are impacted severely as we see significant deterioration in all areas of wellness.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Ease the utilization of food programs as well as accessibility. Provide opportunities for more culturally sensitive food options.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - The follow up and troubleshooting of available food programs and opportunities once eligible is not easy to utilize or stay on. Food options that are not culturally sensitive or relevant are a deterrent.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Collaboration and working together with community groups with government or private companies to reach populations that are not being served whether it be lack of healthy or culturally relevant food options, transportation/delivery, sites/location.
4. What are opportunities for public- and private-sector partners to work together to achieve this pillar?
  - Whatever can be done to increase impact and reach. There is always a waiting list for MOW programs, lunch sites are far and few, culturally sensitive food and or diet are not taken into consideration.
5. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  - Partnering with local small business owners, markets, and community sites to offer options for meals that can reach the community with food options or diets that are culturally sensitive and healthy.

**Equity-related suggestions**

- The statement "the ability to age well will not be based on your gender, color, sexuality, income, or zip code" resonates very much as we currently see these as barriers to access services. (References [NCOA Equity Promise](#))

**Organization: Young at heart**  
**Location: Cameron, MO, 64429**

<https://www.ncoa.org/page/our-equity-promise>

As a single mother I have been hungry and as an AAA many seniors make hard choices

#### **Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Change the shelter and utility standard to adequately reflect the expenses vs being capped. And to bring the food standards to realistic and current values vs the 1976 standard currently being used to determine snap allotments

**Organization: Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative**  
**Location: Buffalo, NY, 14052**

#### **Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Our region and the City of Buffalo has food deserts and food apartheid. Dietitians are the experts in nutrition- yet access to both healthy food and Registered Dietitians is limited.

#### **Recommendations to integrate nutrition and health**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Ensure access to Registered Dietitians is essential for improving nutrition education for all citizens. RDs are the experts on nutrition yet funding and access to RDs is limited. RDs need to be involved in nutrition policy planning, educational decisions,
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Barrier: RD reimbursement for addressing malnutrition does not exist.
  - Opportunity: Mandate increased reimbursement to RDs for medical nutrition therapy. State and federal
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Be empowered to hire and partner w RDs ; include RDs in decision making and nutrition planning
4. What are innovative, successful activities already happening at the local, state, territory, and Tribal levels that could inform actions at the Federal level?
  1. NYS Medicaid ILS for Medically Tailored Meals requires counseling with an RD.
  2. In Western New York, one Medicare Advantage plan (Independent Health) is partnering with a Network of CBOs and AAAs (Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative) to provide nutrition counseling by Registered Dietitians for their members without any diagnosis requirement and without the requirement of a physician referral.

#### **Equity-related suggestions**

- Funding for Registered Dietitian education opportunities for BIPOC, LBGTQ, etc. to ensure representation among all populations.

**Organization: none (First-person account)**  
**Location: Fort Worth, TX, 76109**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

My SNAP allotment provides the only and entire amount I have available for food. As a lacto-ovo vegetarian, it is difficult for me to find quality vegetarian food at food banks and the local Meals on Wheels refused me services and was very condescending towards me when I asked if they offered vegetarian meals. They do not offer them and appear to have zero interest in offering them.

**Recommendations to improve food access and affordability**

1. What specific actions should the U.S. Federal government, including the Executive Branch and Congress, take to achieve this pillar?
  - Make sure access is fully granted to vegetarians.
2. What are the opportunities and barriers to achieving the actions? Actions should include specific policy and/or programmatic ideas and changes as well as funding needs.
  - Educate food banks and Meals on Wheels to provide more options for vegetarians and counsel them on how to be respectful of our dietary choice.
3. What specific actions should local, state, territory and Tribal governments; private companies; nonprofit and community groups; and others take to achieve this pillar?
  - Educate food banks and Meals on Wheels to provide more options for vegetarians and counsel them on how to be respectful of our dietary choice.

**Equity-related suggestions**

- Educate food banks and Meals on Wheels to provide more options for vegetarians and counsel them on how to be respectful of our dietary choice.

**Organization: Montgomery County Dept. of Recreation**  
**Location: Silver Spring, MD, 20904**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Many seniors are left with the decision of buying healthy groceries or purchasing medications. This should never be a choice they have to make.

**Organization: None**  
**Location: MAPLE VALLEY, WA, 98038**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

In my past professional experience in outreach to senior population with reverse mortgages, I saw many of the people I worked with choosing between medication and food. Not only do we need to make sure seniors know about resources that can help, but we also need to identify and mitigate the root cause of the lack of funds in their households to properly care for themselves.

**Organization: Bowie senior center**  
**Location: Bowie, MD, 20716**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

What a great opportunity to share, thank you! I have served the senior community for more than 25 years and it is a fact, seniors would be in a better healthy place, if they were consistent with healthy eating. Many of the health problems come from years of not having nutritious meals and exercise. Care for our elderly is worse than ever. Family sometimes cannot help, planning to live long should be encouraged. I hope we can have a conversation to better this situation.

**Organization: Five County AAA**  
**Location: St. George, UT, 84770**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

With the impact of the pandemic, social isolations leading to increase health risk due to congregate meals being closed, and now workforce and other inflationary factors are increasing risk for older adults in assuring access to adequate food and impacting Senior Nutrition sites and their ability to adequately serve the community.

**Organization: District Three Govt. Coop**  
**Location: MARION, VA, 24354**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

As older adults are living longer and mostly just receiving social security income the need for increase food assistance becomes a major issue. At the time seniors were paying into SSA, especially in rural communities' wages were low thus their social security benefits are not able to sustain all their needs. Many seniors are having to decide whether they buy their medicine, pay bills or get groceries. The increase in income eligibility has helped them qualify for SNAP, but the SNAP minimum is way too low.

**Organization: Winona Senior Advocacy**  
**Location: Winona, MN, 55987**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

I assist older adults apply for SNAP benefits. With the cost of rent increasing in my area, the deduction for housing isn't reflective of what households are paying. I heard that the housing deduction for a family of 2 is \$575. One household that was recently denied SNAP pays \$1050 a month for rent.

**Organization: Town of Avon Senior Center**  
**Location: Avon, CT, 06001**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Older adults that come to the Avon Senior Center (CT) participate in our Congregate Meal program. When we serve a meal (2 days a week), we know that they are eating well. We see them, monitor them, check on them and are aware of what they eat. We are not sure what they are doing for food when they are not here. With the rising costs of food, social isolation concerns, food insecurity and finances, we need to focus on our older adults and nutrition.

**Organization: COEDD AAA**  
**Location: Shawnee, OK, 74801**

**Impact of hunger or diet-related disease on you, your family, or your community**

Our community has been negatively impacted by hunger and malnutrition in our Older Americans in our 7 county service area. Particularly affecting those in rural isolated areas and those who still have to work outside the home.

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