



Food Security Councils

The Basics

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Executive Summary

Dear Community of Georgia,

Any community, organization, and/or volunteer combatting food insecurity understands that it is a complex issue. All of us realize that collaboration and innovation are needed to move the needle in permanently reducing the number of people grappling with food insecurity across Georgia.

This toolkit is designed to enable local community members to take action by strengthening and growing networks of farmers, organizations, and programs that are all working together to end food insecurity.

Herein we outline how to locate coalition members, identify and set priorities, and organize the coalition to stay focused on the main goal. In the appendix we provide examples of successful community coalitions, known Georgia stakeholders, and Federal Grant Programs.

Food insecurity is a multi-pronged problem, and it is vital that we work together and create community coalitions to combat this problem. Science for Georgia intends for this toolkit to increase dialogue within the community, to highlight the most effective methods of forming partnerships, and to ultimately enable communities to work together, using what works best in their ecosystem, to uplift people into greater food security.

Science for Georgia, Inc,

1700 Northside Dr, Ste A7, PMB 916, Atlanta, GA 30318
Scienceforgeorgia.org • info@sci4ga.org

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FACTS ABOUT FOOD INSECURITY IN GEORGIA

The global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted food systems and economies locally and globally. Over 38 million Americans are living in food insecure households, which means they lack access to an affordable and nutritious diet. At least 1 in 7 households with children could not buy enough food their families. Before the pandemic, 13% of the population was food insecure, but now this has increased 15%. An estimated 1,662,040 Georgians are now food insecure.

The impact of the pandemic has been devastating for residents of Georgia. We must continue to support immediate access to food assistance, while pushing for long term changes that are designed to help lift-up food insecure households – enabling them to break out of a cycle of food insecurity. To achieve this – we must provide resources and support that focuses on maintaining existing solutions and partnerships while growing them to address larger, systemic needs.



PURPOSE OF A FOOD SECURITY COMMUNITY COALITION



Food insecurity is a complex issue and exceeds the resources and capabilities of any organization, individual, or sector. Communities throughout the state of Georgia are taking action to reduce food insecurity, but these organizations and individuals are often too busy feeding people to connect with others who are also tackling this problem.

A Food Security Community Coalition brings together all stakeholders in a Georgia community that have a shared goal of ending food insecurity. The coalition enhances and creates partnerships with other organizations and agencies while continuing to raise awareness of food insecurity. A coalition is not one-size fits all. Each community understands their local needs and must work in a way that is best suited to their individual situation.

A Food Security Community Coalition includes a group of individuals and organizations that are tackling food insecurity within their community. Coalitions help identify resources and gaps, assess the structure of local food delivery systems, and help make decisions for change and implement action plans. The purpose of these coalitions is to share information and identify common challenges while providing resources for individuals and organizations.



COMPONENTS OF FOOD SECURITY COMMUNITY COALITION

Food security is a multi-faceted issue; therefore, it is important to have a group of individuals from different sectors working together to help address the factors and causes food insecurity while tackling the problem through a collective impact approach.

The types of sectors and organizations that are included in Food Security Community Coalitions can include:

People living in communities
affected by Food Insecurity
Community Leaders
Elected Officials
Local Governments

Hospitals and Clinics
Non-profit Organizations
Universities
Corporations
Local Businesses



Getting Started Step 1: IDENTIFY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

To help strengthen a Food Security Community Coalition the first step is to recruit and identify key stakeholders. Stakeholders are groups, organizations, and individuals that are impacted or interested by the issue of food insecurity. There are many types of stakeholders that have different abilities and interests in helping enact change.

It is important to brainstorm the specific organizations and individuals within the Georgia local and state community and determine who you will prioritize reaching out to.

START WITH EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS

- Reach out to the who you know and see if they can connect you to other organizations or individuals
 - Understand each other's capabilities and needs
- Show and know the value of each other's organizations

Getting Started Step 1: IDENTIFY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

CONDUCT ONE ON ONE OUTREACH

- Brainstorm potential members.
- Identify groups and build a relationship focused on understanding what might interest them in getting involved with the coalition.
- Spread the word via: organizational newsletters, announcements at religious and community meetings, social media, email, and/or word of mouth.



HOLD INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

- Provides an opportunity to bring stakeholders together to discuss concerns and solutions about food insecurity in the community while brainstorming ideas on how to make an impact
- Meetings can help gain a better understanding of the mission and vision of each stakeholder
- Understand the skills and trainings that each stakeholder can contribute to the coalition

Getting Started Step 2: ORGANIZE AND SET PRIORITIES

Once you have about five to ten interested entities, it's time to come together and get started.

Over the course of a few hours the team will want to:

1. Assess current resources – understand what is going on in your community.
2. Determine key priority areas – food security is a large problem. To avoid burnout, pick no more than three items to focus on, and start with those you have the resources to tackle.
3. Make an Action Team – this team will create an action plan to hold everyone accountable to the priorities and keep folks moving forward.

Before your initial meeting, have individual members do the homework outlined on the next three pages:

1. Assess Resources
2. List three priority items

At the meeting, together, follow the same steps to compile the resource assessment and decide on the priority items.

HW 1: Assess Resources

Assessing the Community's Resources, Gaps, Barriers, Strengths, and Weaknesses

Community assessments are an important part in helping organize communities for change because they provide a deeper understanding of the community's needs, and relationships, culture, transparency, and accountability.

The benefits to community assessments help increase knowledge and strengthen the partnerships with state and local systems. The assessment also helps improve community coordination and collaboration. This will help develop policies and define actions to target efforts that promote health.



HW 2: Prioritize

Determine the Key Priority Areas and Action Steps

It is important to prioritize key initiatives for the entire community. To help prioritize, pick an overall goal for the community, and make sure priorities fit into that.

To avoid distraction and burnout, focus on only two or three things at a time.

Starter Questions and things to consider when Identifying Priorities

1. What central issues is the community addressing well?
2. Why aren't we perfect?
3. Where is the largest gap in coverage?
4. What is a barrier to participation in food security programs?
5. How can we expand the accessibility and amount of food?
6. How can we improve coordination in the system?
7. How can we expand participation within existing programs?
8. Where can we show the greatest impact to build momentum and goodwill?
9. Do we know what success looks like?
10. What is the timeline to success?
11. Do we have the resources in hand?
12. Will this grow the community?
13. Is it of interest to, does it meet the mission of, our coalition members?



HW 2: Prioritize

For each priority – it is important each item consists of a thing you want to do and the way you are going to do it. Your community needs to know what is happening and you need to know when you have succeeded so you can move to a new priority action.

Make sure the priority actions are easily accessible in a one- or two-page document so that everyone in the coalition can read and/or explain the items to the broader public.

Example Priority Actions

Thing to Do	Way to do it
Increase SNAP and WIC participation	through education, outreach, and awareness by identifying how-to materials and implementing a marketing strategy
Increase participation in local farmer’s markets	assisting local vendors in accepting WIC and SNAP
Grow Farm to School Programs. Develop resources for school, farmers, and child nutrition staff.	Enable the local schools to serve one fresh food item at each meal for the month of September. Accompany that with nutrition information.
Expand summer meal programs	Set up reverse bus routes during the summer months
Develop options to expand home-delivered meals for individuals, older adults, and those with disabilities	Explore it as a Medicaid-covered service

Getting Started Step 3: CREATE AN OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Create basic ground rules and operations for the coalition to make sure everyone is on the same page and their time is respected.

The best meetings have an agenda, follow “what happens in meeting stays in meeting...” and require commentary to begin with “yes, and...”

Operations Checklist

- Frequency of meetings (monthly, quarterly)
- Who is responsible for meeting set-up?
- Who creates meeting agendas?
- Who will take notes and share to-dos / action items at meetings?
- Who will keep meetings on track?
- Who is on the action team?



Getting Started Step 4: ESTABLISH AN ACTION TEAM

- Responsible for
 - Keeping everyone focused on main goal
 - Writing an action plan and assigning tasks
 - Creating sub-teams (fundraising, advocacy, outreach, communications, etc) as needed
- Make sure to set clear expectations for each action so that everyone knows what needs to happen, who is responsible, and when it needs to be done. This will allow individuals to develop a roadmap to achieve the goals and specific tasks.
- Provide an innovative and creative environment where everyone can welcome new ideas. Use the diverse backgrounds, experience, and perspectives within your team.
- It is important to delegate based on everyone's skill set, interest, and experience.
- Celebrate the progress and share the successes within the community.



Getting Started Step 5: WRITE AN ACTION PLAN

- Strategic action plans help maintain focus on what is important and provide direction for the coalition and establish realistic goals
- The plan provides path to success, and enables progress and impacts to be tracked
- The plan should provide the details on what will be done, how to do it, and recourses needed (i.e. volunteers, materials, money, resources, etc.)

Remember to Make All Goals and Plans SMART



<https://fullfunctionrehab.com/blog/smart-goals/>

TIPS ON STAYING FOCUSED & TAKING ACTION

Communicate – Make sure that there are open lines of communication among the coalition and within and throughout the community. There should also be good communication with the media to increase support when needed. Everyone should have enough information to make the coalition successful. Make sure the priority action items are always referred to.

Be Realistic - It is important to keep the mission and vision in mind but make sure you are making SMART goals and objectives

Leadership - Define who will be responsible in accomplishing the goals of the coalition and who will be engaging others to collaboratively work on the project. Teamwork requires clear expectations and goals.

Network – Keep as many groups as possible within the community informed of progress. Invite them to coalition meetings. Let them know what projects are taking place, educate them about their impacts. Everyone is a potential ally. They may also have connections with other organizations and policy makers and are able to help you approach them.

Training – Is there training that is needed for coalition volunteers and members when implementing the initiative? Should there be workshops to enhance the member's skills?

Follow Operational Norms and Ground Rules - Make sure everyone's time and contributions are respected. Reach decisions as a team. At each meeting, check on progress toward goal. Support each other in following through on commitments.

Evaluation – Results and successes beget other successes and positive momentum. Track progress. Gather data and information. Present impacts to grow the community.

APPENDIX

EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIPS & COALITIONS

Public-Private Partnerships

Public-Private Partnerships help bridge a government entity and a private party through a service or public asset. A majority of the example partnerships listed on the next few pages are examples of successful public-private partnerships. Working together, these communities are increasing food security.

The Augusta HUB for Community Innovation is a project that is designed to help revitalize the neighborhoods of Harrisburg and Laney Walker which are the two most underserved communities in Augusta. The coalition is led by the Boys and Girls Club of Central Savannah River Area (CRSA), Community Foundation for the CSRA, and the Medical College of Georgia Foundation. The purpose of the HUB will help encourage collaboration among neighbors and nonprofits by providing a space to gather, community events, and inviting public speakers.

Construction on the facility broke ground on April 6, 2021. The HUB will house nonprofits that are locally based and help deliver essential services to the community. They include:

- **Boys and Girls Club of CRSA**, the HUB will serve as the HQ and support center.
- **Augusta Locally Grown**, their mission to promote public health through community gardens, farmer's markets, and educational programming.
- **Augusta University Literacy Center**, this center provides free tutoring services for children and adults in the community.
- **Harrisburg Family Health Care**, will provide free medical care to Augusta residents annually.
- **RISE Augusta**, will link the community to resources, mentoring, literacy remediation, and other basic needs to struggling families and children.

EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIPS & COALITIONS

Athens Senior Hunger Coalition was created to bring together organizations and businesses within the Athens area to combat senior hunger. The coalition has a commitment in serving the older adults within the community. The goals of the coalition are to raise awareness of senior hunger, identify older adults who are food insecure, and to create cost-effective, sustainable and innovative interventions. The ultimate goal is to end senior food insecurity in the Athens Area.

Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI) is a coalition of stakeholders that are working to build a sustainable food system in metro Atlanta. The group of stakeholders consists of nonprofits, communities, government agencies, individuals, and corporations. The mission of ALFI is to help transform the food system so that every Atlanta resident in the metropolitan area has access to nutritious, safe, and affordable food produced by a network of sustainable gardens and farms.

Baltimore's Food Policy Action Coalition is an initiative developed by the Baltimore, MD city governmental Office of Sustainability. For 10 years, Baltimore's food policy action coalition has grown its network of nonprofit organizations, universities, hospitals, farms, and other stakeholders to overcome barriers regarding access to food. The coalition has many programs including an educational campaign, Get Fresh Baltimore, that is helping EBT users gain access to local markets and the city's governmental agency. Their coalition has improved local policies for food deserts, state nutrition, financing, supermarkets, and much more through organized collective action.

California Food Policy Council is comprised of grassroots organizations, decision makers, and elected officials. Roots of Change is the nonprofit organization that serves as the host of California Food Policy Council. This council consists of 28 members to engage local health departments and other stakeholders in farming and food policy efforts. The purpose of the council is to find common ground on statewide policy priorities, support the general public, and educate policymakers about the issues within the food system. CAFPC goal is to provide transparency to food legislation regarding food systems.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The sources listed below provide additional tools for planning a Food Security Coalition and further list resources available.

TEXAS HUNGER INITIATIVE BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

This is a detailed comprehensive toolkit for developing and strengthening hunger free community coalitions

<https://www.baylor.edu/hungerdatalab/doc.php/350176.pdf>

EXAMPLE OF COALITION MEMBERSHIP CHECKLIST

This tool includes a checklist of important members for the coalition

<https://www.ncpudi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Sample-Coalition-Membership-Checklist.pdf>

STAKEHOLDER CHECKLIST

This checklist will help determine the important stakeholders to identify

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d5156083138fd000193c11a/t/5d64337c18862f0001470867/1566847869787/Stakeholder-Checklist.pdf>

EXAMPLE OF COALITION OUTREACH INVITES

This tool includes a template of how to send invites to different organizations and individuals

<https://mibreastfeeding.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2.-Coalition-Outreach-Invites-Template-3.pdf>

THE ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK

This resource reminds why advocacy is a good idea and provides guidance for your coalition and organization

<https://alliancetoendhunger.org/afh-playbook/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GEORGIA FOOD ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

This resource includes different counties in Georgia and the services they provide

<https://www.dca.ga.gov/safe-affordable-housing/homeless-special-needs-housing/covid-19-resources/food>

SNAP OUTREACH TOOLKIT

This is a SNAP toolkit FOR raising awareness about the program within the community

https://alliancetoendhunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SNAP_state_ALL.pdf

NASDA FOOD SECURITY TOOLKIT

This toolkit helps identify different federal programs throughout the country

https://s3.amazonaws.com/nasda2/media/NASDA-Food-Security-Toolkit_FINAL.pdf?mtime=20210223132853

EXPANDING ACCESS TO FRESH, LOCAL PRODUCE FOR EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START FAMILIES THROUGH WIC FARMERS' MARKETS IN GEORGIA

This resource discusses the importance of WIC within Georgia

<https://georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WIC-Farmers-Market-Jan2021.pdf>

GEORGIA SENATE REPORT IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD AND ENDING FOOD DESERTS COMMITTEE

This report was created by the Georgia Senate to discuss the recommendations in ending food insecurity in Georgia

<https://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/FoodDesertsFinalReport2021.pdf>

FEEDING AMERICA

This provides facts about hunger in Georgia and listing of food banks within the state

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/georgia>

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