

**FY 2021 Performance Oversight Questions**  
***Food Policy Council***

1. Please provide a list of the Council’s current members, including its ex officio members from the District government. For each member, please provide the following:
  - The member’s name.
  - The Ward in which they reside (not necessary for ex officio members).
  - The agency or organization the member represents.
  - When the member’s term expires.
  - Attendance record for all official Council meetings.

**Response:**

First Name	Last Name	Ward of Residence	Organization/Agency	Date of Term Expiration (Each member is eligible to serve 2 full terms)
<b>Food Policy Director</b>				
Ona	Balkus	6	OP	Pleasure of the Mayor
<b>Appointed Members</b>				
Christopher	Bradshaw	1	Dreaming Out Loud	3/1/2023
James	Huang	5	Unity Healthcare	3/1/2024
Winnie	Huston	Maryland	DC Greens	3/1/2022
Kristy	McCarron	5	YMCA DC	3/1/2024
Spike	Mendelsohn	2	Good Stuff Eatery; We, The Pizza	3/1/2022
Tambra	Raye Stevenson	8	WANDA (Women Advancing Nutrition, Dietetics, and Agriculture)	3/1/2024
Emi	Reyes	4	Latino Economic Development Center	3/1/2022
Philip	Sambol	5	Oasis Community Partners, Good Food Markets	3/1/2022
Andre	Towner	7	DC Baptist Convention	3/1/2022
Ronnie	Webb	5	The Green Scheme	3/1/2023
Beverley	Wheeler	1	DC Hunger Solutions	3/1/2022
Dalila	Boclin	5	Hungry Harvest	3/1/2021
<b>Ex-Officio Members</b>				
Bridgette	Acklin	N/A	DHS	Pleasure of the Mayor
Earl	Eutsler	N/A	DDOT	Pleasure of the Mayor
Katie	Littman	N/A	DMPED	Pleasure of the Mayor
Kate	Lee	N/A	DOEE	Pleasure of the Mayor
Tariq	Sheriff	N/A	OP	Pleasure of the Mayor
Elizabeth	Leach	N/A	OSSE	Pleasure of the Mayor

Sara	Beckwith	N/A	DC Health	Pleasure of the Mayor
Vacant			DPR	
Vacant			DGS	
Vacant			DCRA	
<b>Other Active Agency Reps</b>				
Beth	Hanna	N/A	OSSE	
Robert	Jaber	N/A	DCPS	
Katherine	Mereand	N/A	DSLBD	
Caroline	Howe	N/A	DSLBD	
Ashley	Stephens	N/A	OP	

The Food Policy Council has continued to operate virtual meetings throughout FY2021, and as a result it has been a challenge to keep robust attendance records of all members. That said, many FPC members provided updates at every public meeting and thus were in attendance and recordings of all FPC meetings are available for review. The FPC has begun taking attendance of members at each meeting for FY2022.

2. Please provide a list of the Council’s meeting dates, times, and locations for FY 2021 and FY 2022 to date.

**Response:**

All meetings in FY 2021 and FY 2022 to date were held virtually due to COVID-19. Recordings, presentations, and minutes from all previous meetings can be found here: <https://dcfoodpolicy.org/events-and-meetings/notes-from-previous-meetings/>

Meeting dates and times:

- December 1, 2021 5pm-6pm
- October 6, 2021 5pm-6pm
- August 4, 2021 5pm-6pm
- June 2, 2021 5pm-6pm
- April 7, 2021 5pm-6pm
- February 3, 2021 5pm-6pm
- December 3, 2020- 5pm-6pm
- October 7, 2020- 5pm-6pm

3. Did the Council receive funds in FY 2021? If so, please provide the following:
  - The amount of the funding.
  - The source of the funding.
  - A list of all expenditures.
  - A description of how these funds furthered the Council’s mission.

**Response:** The Food Policy Council did not receive any funds in FY2021.

4. Did the Food Policy Council apply for any grant funding in FY 2021 and FY 2022, to date? If so, please describe the grant, whether or not it was received, and how it will be used.

**Response:**

The Food Policy Council (FPC) applied jointly with Dreaming Out Loud and DC Central Kitchen for a federal U.S. Department of Agriculture Regional Food System Partnership grant in FY 2021. The application proposed a new partnership focused on Scaling Cooperative Social Enterprise: Expanding Market Access for Disadvantaged Farmers and Food Makers in the Washington, DC Region for the duration of the three-year grant term. Unfortunately, the USDA did not select our application for funding.

The FPC has leveraged outside funding in several other ways.

- The FPC successfully applied to host a fellow from the Congressional Hunger Center's (CHC) Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship in 2021-22 and also hosted a CHC Zero Hunger Intern in summer 2021. Both programs provide stipends to the fellow/intern.
- In FY2021, Kaiser Permanente provided a grant to the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) to partner with the FPC to conduct listening sessions with restaurant workers in the District. The outcome of this project was a public webinar that included presentations and recommendations to the Department of Employment Services (DOES), DC Health, and the DC Office of Human Rights (all of which are also participated in the listening sessions) on improvements to worker protections.

5. During the FY 2021 oversight process, the Food Policy Council provided its 2021 DC Food Policy Priorities. Please describe what actions have been taken in furtherance of these priorities, the results of these actions, and any planned activities for FY 2022. The 2021 priorities were:

- *Decrease food insecurity and promote health equity among most at-risk populations highlighted in DC's 2020 Food Access and Food Security Report.*
- *Increase investment/support for Black and Latinx-led food businesses and organizations and entrepreneurs of color.*
- *Expand healthy food access in areas where structural racism and disinvestment have led to low food access.*

**Response:**

For each 2021 DC Food Policy Priority, the FPC identified specific projects to undertake. Please see below on our progress on each project:

- *Decrease food insecurity and promote health equity among most at-risk populations highlighted in DC's 2020 Food Access and Food Security Report.*

**Projects:**

- No Senior Hungry Initiative: Collaborate with DC agencies to develop specific policy recommendations to address DC's high food insecurity rate among seniors (Food Access & Equity Working Group).
  - Completed: FPC members were active participants in the No Senior Hungry working group convened by Councilmember Cheh during the spring-summer of 2021. This working group supported the development of policy recommendations that formed the basis of the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021.
- Promote and expand use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP" or "EBT") online in collaboration with the DC Department of Human Services (DHS) through outreach, technical assistance, and social media campaigns (Food Access & Equity Working Group).
  - Completed: FPC members worked closely with DHS to understand the opportunities and challenges to rolling out online SNAP for District residents. FPC members provided a sounding board for the agency and an outlet for the public to ask questions about the new program. The FPC also promoted SNAP online through its social media platforms, including Instagram and Twitter.
- Help healthcare teams refer their patients to food resources and education in their communities (Nutrition & Health Working Group).
  - In Progress: The FPC Nutrition & Health Working Group invited the DC Association of Primary Care Physicians to present at every meeting on the status of the CRISP health information exchange launch in DC, which would help healthcare providers refer patients to food resources.
- Promote the connection between food and healthcare through communications, research, and public events (Nutrition & Health Working Group).
  - In Progress: Ended up being similar in scope to previous project
- *Increase investment/support for Black and Latinx-led food businesses and organizations and entrepreneurs of color.*

**Projects:**

- Advocate for a public-private Fund that invests in small food businesses, food cooperatives, and entrepreneurs in Ward 5, 7, and 8 (Food Access & Equity Working Group).
  - Completed: In 2021, Mayor Bowser launched the Nourish DC Fund, a public-private Fund that accomplishes this goal. Please see the response to Question 6 for further detail.

- Support the development of affordable commercial kitchen spaces, particularly for Black and Latinx entrepreneurs and small business owners (Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs Working Group).
  - Completed: The FPC, in partnership with Department of Small and Local Business Development, rolled out a kitchen matchmaking survey in March 2021 to capture kitchen spaces and people looking for kitchens. They also hosted virtual workshops and trainings for people looking for kitchens and those starting food businesses, all of which are available online. In September 2021, the FPC and DSLBD co-hosted a Kitchen Matchmaking Event on the MLK Library roof deck with over 50 people in attendance. Finally, the FPC promoted several District funding opportunities for commercial kitchens, including DMPED's Local Manufacturing grant program.
- Promote the continuation of DC emergency rules that have helped small food businesses survive and food workers stay employed and safe during COVID-19, such as expanded outdoor dining (Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs Working Group).
  - Completed: The FPC Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs Working Group hosted a virtual meeting on DC streateries, which was very helpful for small businesses. The FPC also hosted the ABRA Director to discuss potential expansions of liquor delivery and other liquor laws for small businesses. Flexibilities for outdoor dining, liquor sales, and other regulations for small food businesses have been relaxed through the winter of 2022.
- Encourage businesses and institutions to purchase more food products from local producers using sustainable practices, with a focus on BIPOC producers (Sustainable Supply Chain Working Group).
  - In Progress: The FPC is in the final stages of developing a Local Purchasing Guide for small food businesses in the District.
- *Expand healthy food access in areas where structural racism and disinvestment have led to low food access.*

**Projects:**

- Promote the Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Fund for DC farmers, with preference for farmers of color and those serving marginalized communities (Urban Agriculture Working Group).
  - Completed: In spring 2021, the District Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE) released its first Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grant awards. Eight awardees received a combined \$93,000 to install infrastructure and increase capacity at urban agricultural projects around the District. The funding prioritized socially disadvantaged farmers, a U.S. Department of Agriculture designation for farmers from racial groups who have experienced prejudice, and projects

focused on serving communities experiencing high rates of food insecurity.

- Research community land trusts as a vehicle to preserve and transfer land for urban agriculture (Urban Agriculture Working Group).
  - In Progress: The FPC partnered with graduate students in the fall of 2021 to develop a policy brief on recommending more food growing spaces in affordable housing development in the District. That brief, and further research on land ownership for urban farmers, will be published in 2022.
- Complete the centralized kitchen study and amplify its findings on how a centralized kitchen could create jobs and improve food in schools and other institutions (Sustainable Supply Chain Working Group).
  - Completed: In June 2021, the Office of Planning and the Food Policy Council published a report entitled an Assessment of a Central Food Processing Facility for Washington, DC. This report considers how the District could best use a centralized kitchen facility to improve the nutritional quality of meals served in public institutions (such as schools, senior centers, and correctional facilities), support local food businesses, create career pathways in the food sector, and strengthen the District's food resiliency in case of future emergencies. See the response to Question 9 for more details on this report.
- Complete the DC nutrition education landscape study in partnership with Howard University to identify strategies to enhance nutrition education for DC residents (Sustainable Supply Chain Working Group).
  - In Progress: This landscape study is still in progress and will be completed in 2022.

6. What does the Food Policy Council consider its three biggest accomplishments in FY 2021?

**Response:**

**1. The Creation of the Nourish DC Fund**

In January 2021, Mayor Bowser announced the launch of a \$1M Nourish DC Fund, to support the development of a robust ecosystem of locally owned food businesses, neighborhood vibrancy, and health equity in DC communities, especially in neighborhoods underserved by grocery stores and other food businesses. Nourish DC provides flexible loans, technical assistance, and catalytic grants to emerging and existing food businesses in the District of Columbia, with a preference for businesses located in or owned by residents of underserved neighborhoods. The Fiscal Year 2022 District budget includes an additional \$4M for the Nourish DC

Fund over the next two fiscal years. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development and the Office of Planning partner to administer the funds with several community organizations, led by fund manager Capital Impact Partners.

Through community meetings, meals, and listening sessions, the FPC has heard the unified demands for more fresh food, high quality jobs, and wealth-building and ownership opportunities in the District's underserved communities, particularly through supporting Black and Latinx small business owners and entrepreneurs. The FPC has responded to those demands and has advocated for the last several years for the creation of a city initiative focused on increasing food access through investing in community ownership. The COVID-19 public health emergency has further heightened the need for more equitable economic opportunities and access to healthy, affordable food in every DC neighborhood.

You can learn more about the Nourish DC Collaborative at:

<https://www.capitalimpact.org/what/capacity-building/nourish-dc-collaborative/>

## **2. Advocacy Guide and Listening Sessions for the Nutrition Equity Amendment Act of 2021**

On March 29, 2021, the Nutrition Equity Amendment Act of 2021 was introduced in the DC Council. The bill proposed an excise tax on sugary drinks in the District and proposed that the funds be spent on several programs related to healthy food access and nutrition education. The FPC played an active role in convening members of the public to debate and discuss this legislation. Working groups and the full Council held several listening sessions and presentations on the bill. The FPC also published a comprehensive advocacy guide on the bill, helping to educate the public on what the bill prescribed. This was an excellent example of the role the FPC plays to bring together different perspectives in the food system, encourage residents to be civically engaged, and host deep discussions on potential food policy changes in the District.

## **3. Progress on Addressing Senior Food Insecurity**

Over FY 2021 and 2022, to date, the FPC has made significant progress in its efforts to improve policies to address senior food insecurity. The chairs of the FPC Food Access & Equity Working Group and the Food Policy Director were active in organizing, presenting at, and participating in the No Senior Hungry Working Group organized by the office of Councilmember Mary Cheh from January - July 2021. This working group comprehensively examined various factors causing senior food insecurity, did a deep dive on every nutrition program currently serving seniors in the District, and identified gaps in the research and services to address senior

food insecurity. The result of the Working Group's efforts was the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021, which will have a public hearing on February 14, 2022. The FPC also hosted the Department of Aging and Community Living, DC Health, DHS, and other agencies at FPC working group meetings to discuss senior food insecurity and how services could be improved for seniors.

The FPC also hosted a Congressional Hunger Center Emerson Fellow in fall 2021/winter 2022 whose primary project was researching senior food insecurity in the District, focusing on how to better leverage nutrition programs and increase senior enrollment. Their research will be made public by the Congressional Hunger Center in spring 2022.

7. Please describe the FPC's major goals for FY 2022 and the plan/timeline for completion.

**Response:**

The following draft priorities will be voted on by the Food Policy Council at its public meeting on February 2, 2022:

**2022 DC Food Policy Priorities**

*The \* notation indicates a new priority/project.*

**Priority 1: Decrease food insecurity and promote health equity among the most at-risk populations identified in OP 2021 Update on Food Access & Food Security in the District of Columbia, including Black and Latinx residents, families with children, and seniors.**

Projects:

1. Convene and engage residents on the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Act of 2021. (Food Access & Equity)
2. \*Develop and recommend a comprehensive "School Meals for All" policy. (Nutrition & Health, Food Access & Equity)
3. \*Recommend comprehensive reform for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) and evidence-based lifestyle programs for diet-related diseases, to potentially include: Medicaid coverage, technical assistance for community-based Registered Dietitians, pipelines for BIPOC Registered Dietitians, and expansion of MNT access. (Nutrition & Health)
4. Recommend policies to enhance and expand nutrition education for DC residents based on the DC Nutrition Education Landscape Assessment conducted by Howard University. (Nutrition & Health)

**Priority 2: Increase support for DC small food businesses, with a focus on BIPOC-led (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) food businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs.**

Projects:

1. Increase awareness of funding opportunities for BIPOC-led food businesses and entrepreneurs, including the Nourish DC Collaborative. (All working groups)
2. \*Share resources and recommend streamlining licensing regulations for small food businesses. (Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs)
3. \*Support entrepreneurs moving to brick and mortar through resource sharing, policy recommendations, and leveraging District funds towards ownership. (Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs)
4. \*Recommend policy change(s) to create a pathway to ownership for urban farmers, with a focus on BIPOC farmers. (Urban Agriculture)
5. \*Create database and map of legacy food businesses in the District and identify strategies to support these businesses. (Food Access & Equity, Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs)

**Priority 3: Expand healthy food access in neighborhoods where structural racism and disinvestment have led to low food access.**

Projects:

1. \*Publish policy brief recommending more food growing spaces in and around affordable housing developments. (Urban Agriculture)
2. \*Convene farmers markets and recommend policies to extend operations and expand to more locations, particularly in Wards 5, 7, and 8. (Sustainable Supply Chain, Urban Agriculture, Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs)
3. \*Convene independent grocers to understand how government can support them in expanding healthy food access. (Food Access & Equity)
4. \*Publish the FPC's annual Food Economy and Food Access report to track key metrics in the District's food system. (All working groups)

**\*Priority 4: Support the development and implementation of local food policies that address climate change.**

Projects:

- \*Support DOEE and Office of Contracts and Procurement (OCP) in implementing the Green Food Purchasing Act. (Sustainable Supply Chain)
- \*Track the implementation of District laws related to food and climate, including the Save Good Food Act, Green Food Purchasing Act, and the Zero Waste Omnibus Act. (Sustainable Supply Chain, Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs)

- \*Publish policy brief and increase awareness on the District's commitments under the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration. (Urban Agriculture, Sustainable Supply Chain)

**\*Priority 5: Increase resident voice in food policy development in the District.**

Projects:

- \*Improve language access in website, written materials, and meetings/events, including offering simultaneous Spanish translation and ASL interpreter, and translating written materials. (Resident Engagement Group)
- \*Conduct surveys at beginning/end of meetings and events to better understand who we are currently reaching, with the goal of increasing racial and geographic diversity. (Resident Engagement Group)
- \*Increase communication regarding District food policies and programs through the FPC newsletter, social media, and office hours. (Resident Engagement Group)
- \*Host at least two community conversations or focus groups with residents not regularly engaged in FPC work. (Resident Engagement Group)

8. Please provide a copy of all official correspondence sent by the FPC in FY 2021 and FY 2022 to date.

**Response:** The FPC sent no official correspondence in FY 2021 and FY 2022 to date.

9. Please describe all studies and reports issued by the FPC in FY 2021 and FY 2022 to date. For each study or report, please describe any actions that FPC or the Executive have taken or planned as a result of its findings and/or recommendations.

**Response:**

The FPC published two major reports in FY2021 and FY2022 to date.

**1. *Assessment of a Central Food Processing Facility for Washington, DC:***  
 In June 2021, the Office of Planning and the Food Policy Council published a report entitled an *Assessment of a Central Food Processing Facility for Washington, DC*. Required under the Healthy Students Amendment Act of 2018, this report is a comprehensive assessment of how the District could best use a Central Food Processing Facility (CPF) to improve the nutritional quality of meals served in

public institutions (such as schools, senior centers, and correctional facilities), support local food businesses, create career pathways in the food sector, and strengthen the District's food resiliency in case of future emergencies. The report provides valuable insights into how the District could design and manage such a facility to maximize its benefits to District residents.

Prepared by CBE contractor team Cureate and The Food Works Group, this first-of-its-kind report in the United States provides 45 best practices and 57 recommendations for the creation of a CPF in the District. Interviews with over 60 local and national food system experts, in depth case studies into similar models in other jurisdictions, and extensive research on the District's food landscape support the report's findings. The analysis is broken into three key sections:

1. **Impact:** The report outlines how a well-designed and managed CPF could provide positive impacts to the District's food system; including addressing health equity, supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs, generating revenue, and providing high quality jobs;
2. **Operations:** The report evaluates and synthesizes information collected from similar facilities in jurisdictions across the country on best practices for CPF management, core functionality, equipment, contracts, labor, and food safety to maximize synergy and efficiency; and
3. **Physical Facility:** The report considers how a CPF could be best designed to support schools and other public institutions food services while simultaneously increasing the District's capacity to provide spaces for commercial kitchens, storage, and job training to local food businesses.

Lessons learned from the unprecedented food access and food supply challenges experienced by District residents over the COVID-19 public health emergency are also included. As the District moves towards an equitable recovery, this report provides valuable insights on how a CPF could support the District's efforts to provide nutritious meals for residents in the care of District institutions, as well as commercial kitchen, storage, job training, and community spaces for local food businesses and entrepreneurs.

Since the release of the report, OP hosted a virtual launch with two expert panels in August 2021 to discuss the report's findings. The first was moderated by Andrew Trueblood, then Director of the DC Office of Planning, with co-authors of the report Kim Bryden, Founder and CEO of Cureate, and Wendy Stuart, Co-Founder and Principal of the Food Works Group, serving as panelists. They discussed the challenges and opportunities within the District's food system and the role of a CPF can play in ensuring a more accessible, vibrant, and equitable food sector for residents and businesses alike. The second panel was moderated by Ona Balkus, Food Policy Director, with Dalila Boclin, Food Policy Council Member, and Mark Scott, Critical Infrastructure Specialist at the DC Homeland Security and

Emergency Management Agency, serving as panelists. They discussed the local/regional food system infrastructure and importance of aggregation and food storage as a critical pathway to support food businesses and creating food resiliency for the District.

The report is available at: <https://dcfoodpolicy.org/reports/centralized-kitchen-study/>

## **2. *The Road Ahead: 2021 Update on Food Access & Food Security in the District of Columbia:***

In December 2021, the FPC published *The Road Ahead: 2021 Update on Food Access & Food Security in the District of Columbia*. As an update to the 2020 report entitled *Food Access & Food Security in the District of Columbia: Responding to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*, the 2021 report discusses the state of food insecurity in the District and evaluates the ambitious steps the District has taken and the progress that has been made to address food insecurity of its residents.

The report finds that the overall food insecurity rate for the District in 2021 was 11%, which is a near return to the pre-COVID food insecurity rate of 10.6% in 2019. However, this generalized data hides the continued elevated needs of Black and Latinx households, households with children, and seniors, which all remain at higher risk of food insecurity than that general District population. While white households with children reported statistically zero food insufficiency in April 2021, Black and Latinx households with children reported 21% and 29.3% food insufficiency, respectively. The challenges faced by these populations reflects the systemic challenges of the racial wealth gap, high costs of living, and historic disinvestments in communities of color which require increased strategic investment and support.

The FPC has amplified and acted on the report's findings and continues to work towards addressing the systemic issues faced by specific populations identified in the report. The FPC has aligned its 2022 Priorities, described above, with the needs identified in the report.

The District has also continued to increase the benefits of, and participation in, its federal nutrition programs. The report highlights the continued increased demand for nutrition program benefits and their importance in supporting residents' needs. Emergency Food Providers and District agency partners continue to meet regularly to coordinate and expand activities to increase participation in these programs and ensure residents are being connected with local food and nutrition programming. The FY22 budget also included \$58 million for DMPED to implement the Food Access Fund, \$5 million for the Nourish DC Collaborative, and increased funding for the DC Health Community Health Administration grant programs to increase their food security efforts. Lastly, DHS continues to work diligently to get \$93

million of Pandemic EBT benefits to all 85,000 eligible District children, which provides an additional support for families.

The report is available at: <https://dcfoodpolicy.org/foodsecurity2020/>

10. Please list all working groups and describe what each has worked on in FY 2021 and FY 2022, to date, and what recommendations they have contributed to the Food Policy Council annual report.

**Response:**

Please refer to the responses in Question 5 to see the working group's major projects and accomplishments for this year. Since the FPC annual report this year focused on progress on food insecurity since 2020, it did not include specific recommendations.

11. What current District laws and regulations related to the food system have not yet been implemented fully or stand in the way of strengthening the District's food system?

**Response:**

The Food Policy Council and Food Policy Director Establishment Act of 2014 contains provisions that do not reflect how the FPC currently operates and keeps us from being our most effective and efficient. The Act provides detailed descriptions of the topics our Working Groups should cover. These topics are both overly specific and not inclusive of all DC food system issues that our members and DC residents believe are important. The Act also includes a provision prohibiting the FPC from compensating members. This holds back the FPC from offering stipends to District residents who have expertise and experience that would make them valuable members, but currently are not able to participate because of financial barriers. The Act also includes several provisions related to ex-officio members, including prohibiting them from voting, naming some food-active agencies but not others, and other provisions that do not reflect the FPC ex-officio members' central roles in guiding the FPC's work.

12. During FY 2021, the Metropolitan Washington Council on Governments launched a new Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. The Food Policy Director serves a Committee Member.
  - Please describe the Food Policy Director's work with FARM during FY 2021 and FY 2022, to date.
  - What work would the Food Policy Council like to see the FARM Advisory Committee take up in the remainder of FY 2022 and beyond?

- What barriers does the Council see to the effectiveness of the FARM Advisory Committee?

**Response:**

The MWCOG FARM Committee was established in 2020 to support development of long-term regional direction and collaboration toward a more resilient, connected food and farm economy (food system) across urban, suburban, and rural communities in the metropolitan Washington region. The Food Policy Director is a voting member of the FARM Committee and has participated in every meeting, to date. In the first months of the FARM Committee, the Food Policy Director assisted the FARM co-chairs and staff in developing initial priorities for the Committee. The Director also contributed to a letter to the Biden transition team on issues related to regional food insecurity and school meals. The Food Policy Director also presented food investments in the Mayor's FY22 Budget to FARM at the end of FY21. The Food Policy Director has also provided several rounds of review of the FARM's first work product: a compendium of Food Security Policies in Metropolitan Washington.

The Food Policy Council would like to see the FARM Committee deepen its work on supporting BIPOC farmland ownership in the region. Across the mid-Atlantic states, less than 2% of farmland is owned by farmers of color. This disparity is due to historical discrimination on the part of private lenders and the federal government that kept BIPOC farmers from maintaining and growing their land. The lack of BIPOC owned farms in the region impacts the District's racial equity goals. Although the FPC would like to push for policies that support food procurement from farmers of color, there are so few BIPOC farmers in the region, it makes this impossible.

FARM is a promising step towards regional collaboration on food policy. Regional collaboration faces the common hurdles of diverse forms of government, constituents, and urban/suburban/rural regions. To date, the FARM Committee has navigated these hurdles and is building a strong community among the FARM members. In particular, the FARM Committee is well positioned to build deep relationships and regular communication with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, advocating for federal policy changes that would help our region. FARM could also strengthen regional support for work to enhance food and water resilience as a strategy to address food insecurity. Lastly, FARM could better connect to the existing work of several other MWCOG working groups, including the Agriculture and Food Insecurity regional working groups.

13. Outside of the FARM Advisory Committee, how has the Food Policy Council been engaging with the District's regional partners in its policy efforts in FY 2021 and FY 2022, to date?

**Response:**

The FPC maintains close relationships with the region's food policy councils and the Food Policy Director and OP Food Policy Division staff engage in several regional coalitions, including the MWCOG regional food security and regional agriculture groups. The Food Policy Director has regular check-ins with the Food Policy Directors from Montgomery County, MD and Prince George's County, MD. The Food Policy Director also convenes the U.S. Conference of Mayors Food Policy Advisors network, co-chairing that network with her counterparts in Baltimore, MD and New Haven, CT. All of these networks are opportunities to share and learn best practices from other jurisdictions. Additionally, FPC staff work collaboratively with regional and national food systems professionals to share and learn from their best practices to bring to the District.

The FPC also continues to foster its relationships with emergency operations professionals within the District and regionally. OP Food Policy Division staff serve on the HSEMA Food and Water Resiliency Task Force as subject matter experts to the local and regional food system. The task force is working collaboratively with other local, regional, and national experts to create an emergency response plan to ensure the rapid and equitable deployment of food and water resources in the District. The study is federally funded by FEMA and is supported by MWCOG.

14. On October 1, 2021, the Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act went into effect, having been funded in full in the FY 2022 budget; the Office of Contracting and Procurement, Department of Energy and Environment, and other relevant agencies will now begin implementation of the Act.
- What role with the Food Policy Council play in guiding implementation of the Act, if any?
  - What barriers does the Food Policy Council see to the effective implementation of the new law? Are these administrative or legal hurdles?

**Response:**

The FPC has identified as a priority project for 2022 to support DOEE and OCP in implementing the Green Food Purchasing Act of 2021. This will include hosting these agencies to present on the progress of implementation at FPC meetings and offering our assistance wherever helpful as the agencies implement the Act.

The FPC does not see any administrative or legal hurdles to effective implementation of the Act.

15. COVID-19 has led to increases in food insecurity in the District.
- What trends has the Food Policy Council seen in rates of food insecurity since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020? Are food insecurity rates increasing, or have been able to better connect residents in need with resources since the pandemic's start?

**Response:**

The overall food insecurity rate for the District in 2021 was 11%, which is a near return to the pre-COVID food insecurity rate of 10.6% in 2019 and significantly lower than the District's food insecurity rate of 21.1% in June 2020. However, this generalized data hides the continued elevated needs of Black and Latinx households, households with children, and seniors, which all remain at higher risk of food insecurity than the general District population. The persistent elevated levels of food insecurity – defined by the USDA as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life – among these populations reflects the systemic challenges of the racial wealth gap, high costs of living, and historic disinvestments in communities of color which require increased strategic investment and support.

- What actions has the FPC taken to address this issue in FY 2021 and FY 2022, to date?

**Response:**

The District's emergency food programs, which were created in response to increased food insecurity resulting from COVID-19, provided much needed help to residents during the height of the public health emergency. Through the GetHelp Hotline, which operated through June 2021, the District delivered nearly 12,000 grocery boxes to residents quarantined at home. And, through its Grocery Distribution Program, which ended in October 2020, the District provided over 1,000,000 pounds of free groceries, mostly fresh produce, at 13 DCPS locations.

Further, Mayor Bowser announced a \$58 million investment as part of the FY22 budget to increase food access in areas where structural racism and disinvestment have led to low food access in the District. DMPED manages the Food Access Fund to provide capital investments to increase equitable access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food by closing the grocery gap and strengthening grocery access programs. The investment also includes \$4 million for the Nourish DC Fund which supports small food businesses through grants, loans, and technical assistance.

District agencies continue to work diligently to ensure that all eligible residents are enrolled and participating in the expanded federal nutrition assistance programs. They have successfully delivered hundreds of millions of dollars to eligible individuals and families through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (p-EBT), among others. The District has also adapted programs to ensure that school meals and senior meals and groceries have continued to be available and accessible throughout the public health emergency.

16. This December, DSLBD launched the first round of Food Waste Innovation Grants. These grants will help reduce waste-related costs for food businesses, and further the District's environmental goals.

- Please describe the work of the Food Policy Council in FY 2021 and FY 2022, to date, in furthering the District's waste diversion goals.
- What role do you believe the Food Policy Council can and should play in guiding our waste diversion work, as it relates to food waste?

**Response:**

The FPC recognizes the importance of addressing food waste to meet the District's sustainability goals. The FPC has assisted DSLBD's staff in spreading the word on this new, exciting grant opportunity, including sending out to our farmers market and SNAP vendor networks, and over our social media accounts. We also hosted a brief update & information session about the grant during a full FPC meeting.

The FPC coordinated DC's application to participate in the mid-Atlantic cohort of the Natural Resources Defense Council Food Matters program, which brings together cities to achieve meaningful reductions in food waste through comprehensive policies and programs. Several FPC ex-officio members serve on the DC cohort. Exchanges with peer cities in the NRDC cohort played a significant role in shaping the Food Waste Innovation Grants, learning from best practices in Denver and Nashville, who ran similar programs in the past, and Jersey City, running a similar project now.

The FPC also promotes the tremendous efforts of the DC Food Recovery Working Group (FRWG), which supports food recovery efforts in the greater DC area. The FRWG supports recovery on all levels outlined in the EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy, including source reduction, food donations and composting. The FRWG hosts an annual DMV Food Recovery Week with partner Manna Food Center's Community Food Rescue, which includes engaging and enlightening free in-person and virtual events aimed to help individuals and our community become more

resilient. This year, the FPC Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs Working Group cohosted two events as a part of the week: one focused on highlighting small businesses creatively tackling food waste and community food programs during COVID and another bringing together businesses to explore possibilities of upcycling outputs from each other's processes.

An FPC ex-officio member also serves on the Interagency Waste Reduction Working Group facilitated by DPW, and bridge important challenges in waste reduction of both holding businesses accountable for their waste without putting too much burden on our smallest businesses nor low-income consumers. This has been important to tie together work on food waste, styrofoam and straw enforcement, and new regulations around foodware. The cross-pollination from FPC conversations and these IWRWG conversations are beneficial to meet the Sustainable DC goals as a whole.

Although the primary goal of the Emergency Food Providers calls coordinated by the OP Food Policy Division is to increase food access in vulnerable communities, these calls and connections help divert edible food to those who need it on a regular basis. Whether making the connections to guarantee that individual organizations can accept nonperishable donations at an enormous scale or helping redirect donations of prepared foods or perishable produce, this group does help keep food in human consumption rather than in waste.

17. In June 2021, FPC published its Centralized Kitchen Study on best practices for developing such a facility in the District, in accordance with the Healthy Students Amendment Act of 2018. What were the findings of that study? What next steps should the District take, based on those findings?

**Response:**

The Centralized Kitchen Study is a comprehensive assessment that details how the District could best use a Central Food Processing Facility (CFPF) to improve the nutritional quality of meals served in public institutions (such as schools, senior centers, and correctional facilities), support local food businesses, create career pathways in the food sector, and strengthen the District's food resiliency in case of future emergencies. Please see the response to Question 9 for a detailed description of the report.

The report recommends that to bring CFPF to fruition, more work must be done to strategically convert the best practices into a phased, collaborative, cross-agency operational approach to creating the facility. This includes conducting a feasibility and siting study which includes the following:

- A comprehensive business plan for the development and operation of the facility;

- An analysis of the scale of demand for food businesses to utilize incubator and cold/dry storage space;
- Identifying a location, land use, and zoning requirements;
- Conducting transportation and environmental impact studies;
- Determining which agency will manage the facility; and
- Identify aligned partners, both locally, and regionally, to create economic supports for revenue generation and purchasing.

As a national leader in food systems, the District is strongly positioned to utilize the learnings provided in the Centralized Kitchen Study for the benefit of its residents and their future.