



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

STATE PLANS TO END HUNGER

An Opportunity for Colorado

In partnership with



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Colorado Health Foundation would like to thank the author of this report, **Jennifer Banyan** of R-Evolution Consulting, LLC.

About the Author

Jennifer Banyan has 18 years of human services experience and is the chief executive officer of R-Evolution Consulting, LLC. In this capacity, she has worked with several Colorado foundations, counties, the Colorado Department of Human Services and large nonprofits on issues of basic human needs, public benefits integration into nonprofit operations, systems improvement and high-level efforts to end hunger in Colorado. Prior to consulting, she was the division director for self-sufficiency and community support for Boulder County Housing and Human Services. In this role, she was responsible for multiple programs including Medicaid Outreach and Enrollment, SNAP, CO PEAK Statewide Training team, CCAP, TANF, Housing Family Self-Sufficiency and strategic initiatives. She implemented nationally recognized outreach and enrollment projects (NACO awards) and innovative policy work to promote service integration for increased access to public benefits. She has helped lead local and state efforts to improve county business processes, overall system and program improvements and promote benefits access and program outcomes through policy change. Jennifer is considered to be a national subject matter expert on anti-hunger strategies and federal food programs. She is an expert in the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in policy, outreach, enrollment and analysis.

Previously, Jennifer was the director of quality improvement for the state of Vermont Department of Mental Health and was a senior management analyst in child welfare in California. She specializes in integrated services, systems redesign, policy analysis and data driven process improvement. She creates innovative and collaborative projects to improve the public human services delivery system to promote self-sufficiency, family stability and healthy communities. Jennifer holds a master's degree in social work from Indiana University.

About the Colorado Health Foundation

The Colorado Health Foundation is singularly focused on helping Coloradans live their healthiest lives by advancing opportunities to pursue good health and achieve health equity through grantmaking, policy and advocacy, strategic private investments and convening to drive change. For more information, please visit www.coloradohealth.org.

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Background

The Colorado Health Foundation is singularly focused on helping Coloradans live their healthiest lives by advancing opportunities to pursue good health and achieve health equity through grantmaking, policy and advocacy, strategic private investments and convening to drive change. To achieve this, it's critical that families, including the most vulnerable populations, have access to affordable healthy foods and caregivers, and children have the opportunity to enroll and participate in assistance programs for which they qualify.

We know that food insecurity, a condition where individuals or families lack access to sufficient food because of limited resources, is strongly linked with poor health outcomes and higher health care costs and utilization. Additionally, food insecurity is directly tied to educational outcomes and school readiness in children, and for seniors, it dramatically impacts self-sufficiency and well-being. Increasing food access and food security is widely recognized as an impactful strategy for improving health outcomes and lifting families out of poverty.

Federal food assistance programs in the U.S. are an effective avenue to alleviate hunger and supplement the food budgets of low-income families. However, Colorado consistently falls short when it comes to enrollment of individuals and families who are eligible to participate in such programs.

One of the [Foundation's 2017 policy priorities](#) is to improve supports for Coloradans experiencing food insecurity by reducing administrative inefficiencies and barriers to participation in food assistance programs. We also are expanding our efforts around social determinants of health, making it one of our [six focus areas](#).

In order to inform our work, the Foundation commissioned Jennifer Banyan of R-Evolution Consulting to map out the Colorado food security system and develop recommendations around gaps, potential opportunities and next steps. To provide a holistic perspective on hunger in Colorado, the following activities were conducted between October 2016 and January 2017:

1. Key informant interviews with Colorado anti-hunger experts
2. Data analysis and literature review
3. Review of best practices for addressing program gaps, collaboration and planning

This white paper, *State Plans to End Hunger: An Opportunity for Colorado*, is one in a series of documents produced for the Foundation around food insecurity in our state.

State Plans to End Hunger

Research demonstrates that states committed to ending hunger through the development of a “state plan” or “blueprint” are more likely to achieve their goals, or at a minimum, vastly improve their performance. The most successful states have high-level executive support from their state public health and social services departments, influential anti-hunger organizations and their governor’s office.

This white paper reviews three states that have developed blueprints to end hunger: Oregon, Maryland and Pennsylvania. While other states have developed fragmented plans for addressing aspects of food insecurity, these three states have developed comprehensive and collaborative blueprints to elevate the issue and the systemic, programmatic and fiscal solutions necessary to end hunger. The outcomes of the plans – as well as the processes for developing the plans – are summarized. Additionally, interviews with key advocates in two states are included for commentary on the process.

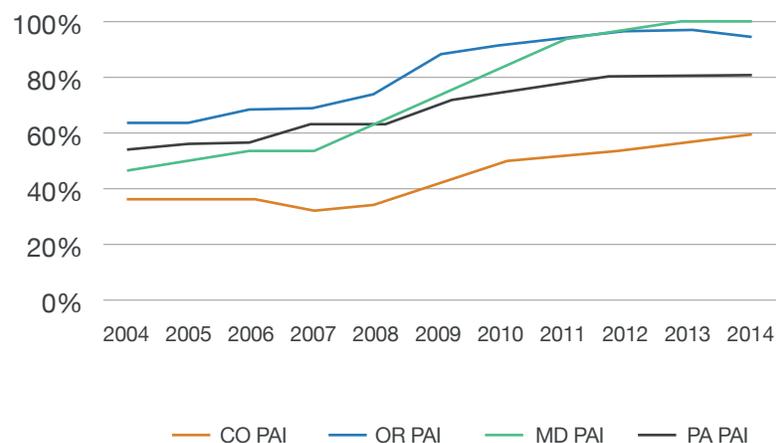
State blueprints typically cover many of the socio-economic issues that impact hunger and offer strategies to address those in the context of their anti-hunger plans. These include the need for a living wage, affordable housing, low-income tax credits, child care assistance and expanding social benefit and work supports to better address the “cliff effect” for low-income families. While these are all part of a larger solution to end hunger, most of these factors are currently being addressed through other Colorado state initiatives and will not be included in this white paper as recommendations.

While each state highlighted has distinct political and cultural considerations, hunger in the U.S. has very common demographics and consequences. Universally, hunger leads to immediate poor health outcomes, lowered academic and economic productivity and longer-term public health consequences (e.g., obesity, diabetes, malnutrition). Rural areas in any state are hit first and hardest during economic downturns and these communities tend to have limited access to fresh, affordable food due to geographic isolation and lack of or high costs of transportation. Across the U.S., African Americans, Hispanics and female-headed, single-parent families experience food insecurity at higher rates. The information provided in this summary documents how to achieve goals to improve food security and can serve as examples for a Colorado blueprint.

Effective state food action plans include broad strategy development for multiple aspects of a state's food security ecosystem. Common aspects include:

- Maximizing the use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and striving to have all eligible individuals enrolled
- Expanding participation in school breakfast programs
- Creating a multi-sector strategy that promotes collaboration between business, agriculture, local and state government, nonprofit/community-based organizations, policy and advocacy organizations and schools
- Improving and streamlining the administration of the National School Lunch Program, including increasing direct certification
- Expanding access to the Summer Meal Program
- Integrating AmericaCorps and Vista service programs into the state's hunger and obesity reduction efforts (including outreach and enrollment assistance)
- Creating or expanding centralized easily accessible, multi-benefit application assistance resources
- Partnering interests of farmers and businesses with low-income community members
- Supporting efforts to reduce poverty¹

SNAP ACCESS COMPARISON



¹Berg J, Moss J. The Case for State Food Action Plans: Laboratories of Food Democracy. Center for American Progress. https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/02/pdf/hunger_report.pdf. Published February 2011. Accessed June 7, 2017.

The Oregon Act to End Hunger

In 2004, the state of Oregon adopted a five-year plan to end hunger in the state. This plan was initiated by leading anti-hunger advocates and organizations that provided information on hunger in Oregon and built public and political will for change. For reference, their SNAP access rate was still far better than Colorado's when the state and the advocacy groups within Oregon chose to dedicate human, financial and political resources to improve SNAP. In fact, all states mentioned in this white paper had and continue to have a higher SNAP Program Access Index (PAI) than Colorado as shown in the chart on the previous page. Nationally, Colorado has ranked in the bottom five states for SNAP enrollment for well over a decade.

One of the keys to Oregon's success has been a long-standing history of support from their governor to end hunger, with the governor sponsoring the development of the first Oregon anti-hunger initiative: the Act to End Hunger, 2004-09. The plan was updated for 2010-15. As with Colorado, Oregon faced significant challenges, such as caseload growth during the recession without increased staffing, inconsistent service delivery in local communities, poor customer service, long wait times for SNAP enrollment and less-than-ideal technology.

Oregon credits their success to many variables, including:

- Strategic outreach to vulnerable populations
- Improved business processes
- Progressive policy changes
- Partnerships with community organizations/advocates
- Same-day or next-day SNAP enrollment
- Improved customer service
- Performance metrics (accuracy, timeliness, access)

The Oregon Act to End Hunger and the subsequent Ending Hunger Before It Begins: A Call to Action 2010-15 have made Oregon one of the leading states in addressing hunger, with measurable, positive outcomes. Oregon's SNAP participation has improved from 64 percent program access in 2004 to 94 percent in 2014. Within the first five years of the Act to End Hunger, the state improved by 23 percent. Due to their success, the state has received bonus awards from the federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) every year since 2006 and reinvests those funds back into the food security system. Key successes included the development of a comprehensive SNAP outreach plan that had a wide group of contractors to target vulnerable populations. By 2011, SNAP outreach contractors covered almost all counties in the state. The "plan" created effective sub-committees to achieve the goals listed below:

- GOAL 1: Increase economic stability for people, communities and the state**
- GOAL 2: Cultivate a strong regional food system in Oregon**
- GOAL 3: Improve the food assistance safety net**

Each goal has recommendations for long-term change and a set of key strategies focused on community/local level needs, state opportunities, federal policy and the engagement of leaders at all levels. As mentioned, Oregon's first goal is outside of the scope of this paper as broad economic stability work is being propelled by multiple high-level state and local initiatives in Colorado.

Goal 2: Cultivate a strong regional food system in Oregon

- Ensure all Oregon citizens have access to healthy and affordable food in their communities
- Strengthen Oregon's ability to produce, process and distribute food in ways that help feed and employ Oregonians
- Integrate food system, health and equity recommendations into local zoning, land use, and public planning documents²

Goal 3: Improve the food assistance safety net

- Improve outreach and delivery of federal food programs to vulnerable communities, such as people with disabilities, seniors, immigrants, rural residents and people who are experiencing homelessness
- Streamline and increase the capacity of the federal child nutrition programs to ensure year-round access both in and out of school settings
- Ensure all Oregonians can access food assistance when they need it
- Expand healthy food options and nutrition education throughout the food assistance safety net²

Some key achievements of the first Oregon Act to End Hunger Plan, 2004-09 include:

- Oregon increased SNAP participation to 80 percent, bringing in over \$1 billion a year to Oregon's economy (economic stimulus of at least \$1.8 billion). Their 2014 SNAP PAI was 94 percent
- The co-pay for school breakfasts was eliminated for families earning between 130-185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level
- Funds for the Oregon Food Bank Statewide Network increased from \$750,000 to \$2,000,000²

²Ending Hunger Before It Begins: Oregon's Call to Action, 2010-2015. Oregon Hunger Task Force and Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. <https://oregonhunger.org/sites/default/files/oregons-call-to-action-2010.pdf>. Published 2010. Accessed June 7, 2017.

Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland

In 2008, Maryland launched a collaborative effort between Share Our Strength, a national nonprofit working to end childhood hunger in America through its No Kid Hungry campaign, and the Maryland Governor's Office for Children. The effort was named the "Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland" by 2015. In addition to the Governor's Office and Share Our Strength, leading hunger organizations, foundations, health care providers, the faith community and state and local health, education, mental health and human services departments participated in the efforts to end childhood hunger. Maryland continues to make tremendous strides each year, as can be seen in the state comparison chart provided on page 6. The partnership set forth three initial goals. They are listed below with their progress to date:

- GOAL 1:** Increase participation in the School Breakfast Program by 9 percent or about 65,000 more students per year
- GOAL 2:** Enroll 15 percent more households with children under age 18 in SNAP
- GOAL 3:** Enroll 25 percent more licensed child-care facilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Goal 1: Increase participation in the School Breakfast Program by 9 percent or about 65,000 more students per year

- Progress: From school year 2007-08 to 2011-12, enrollment in the School Breakfast Program increased by more than 45 percent (90,815 children to 132,336)
- Since 2015, there are just over 24,000 more children participating in school breakfast, with 2017 data not yet available.

Goal 2: Enroll 15 percent more households with children under age 18 in SNAP

- Progress: From Oct. 2007-Oct. 2012, SNAP enrollment increased by 115 percent (342,095 to 747,316 individuals)
- Since 2015, an additional 17 percent more families with children under 18 are now enrolled in SNAP. That equates to 14,455 more families/households receiving SNAP benefits

Goal 3: Enroll 25 percent more licensed child care facilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

- Progress: 25 additional facilities have enrolled (4.4 percent increase)

Additional successes: In 2009, the Maryland Partnership, with foundation support, conducted a pilot outreach program in three counties to increase awareness and access to the Summer Meals Program. This resulted in more than 250,000 additional meals served over the previous year (11 percent increase).¹

¹Berg J, Moss J. The Case for State Food Action Plans: Laboratories of Food Democracy. Center for American Progress. https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/02/pdf/hunger_report.pdf. Published February 2011. Accessed June 7, 2017.

Setting the Table – A Blueprint for a Hunger-Free Pennsylvania

In 2015, Pennsylvania officially set its goals to provide all citizens with access to healthy, nutritious food, thereby improving their well-being, health and independence. “Pennsylvania will leverage the strength of our community and business partners; federal, state and local resources; and innovations in the charitable food network to set the table for a hunger-free Pennsylvania.”³

On Sept. 29, 2015, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf signed an executive order establishing the Governor’s Food Security Partnership (The Partnership). The Partnership is comprised of the secretaries of the departments of Aging, Agriculture, Community and Economic Development, Education, Health and Human Services. It is responsible for promoting coordination, communication and joint planning between government programs and entities in the private sector in providing nutrition and food assistance to Pennsylvanians.³

State and local hunger advocates and organizations were the driving force for the creation of the state’s hunger strategy. In early 2015, more than 60 organizations signed a letter with official recommendations for addressing hunger in Pennsylvania and presented it to the governor. The recommendations were then provided to internal state leadership for vetting and creation of the specific goals and strategies. Advocates were disappointed that the process was not inclusive of community representation and did not include many of the community-driven solutions. However, the leading hunger agencies and advocates are pleased that a plan is in place to build upon.

The blueprint, developed by the state departments, identified the following strategies and specific goals to achieve by 2020:

Strategies for improving food security in Pennsylvania:

- Leveraging federal, community and state resources
- Improving nutrition access to state products (farmers, producers)
- Enhancing public-private partnerships
- Improving outreach, awareness and advocacy

³Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA. Created by the Governor Tom Wolf Administration. http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_242851.pdf. Published July 2016. Accessed June 7, 2017.

Specific goals to achieve by 2020:

- GOAL 1:** Increase the SNAP Participation Rate from 90 percent to 98 percent (as reference, Colorado is at 59 percent)
- GOAL 2:** Increase the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Redemption from 308,000 to 340,000 checks annually
- GOAL 3:** Streamline access to food security information and benefits for all Pennsylvanians
- GOAL 4:** Increase WIC average participation from 245,000 to 260,000. Currently 28 percent of eligible individuals for WIC are not enrolled (in Colorado, it is closer to 50 percent eligible but not enrolled)
- GOAL 5:** Every county/region in Pennsylvania will have a local food alliance to combat hunger in their local communities

Overall, the strategies in Pennsylvania are similar to other states striving to eliminate hunger: increase communication to all stakeholders and eligible citizens, enhance partnerships, increase collaboration, improve access to all food resources, create effective outreach to vulnerable communities and increase enrollment in vital food programs.

Gov. Tom Wolf continues to propose funding increases for the chronically underfunded state food security system. Pennsylvania has two unique anti-hunger programs:

1. The State Food Purchase Program (SFPP), providing cash grants to counties to purchase and distribute food to low-income individuals
2. The Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) that redirects millions of pounds of Pennsylvania-grown fruits and vegetables to augment nutritious family meals. As of state fiscal year 2016, the Pennsylvania State Budget provided \$18.2 million for SFPP and up to \$1 million for PASS³

³Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA. Created by the Governor Tom Wolf Administration. http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_242851.pdf. Published July 2016. Accessed June 7, 2017.

Insights from State Advocacy Groups

In Oregon, the advocacy groups utilized information sharing tactics at local constituent town halls to build public and political will to address hunger in their state. They were met with open collaboration by the governor, who was also committed to solving the problem of hunger. Advocacy groups, led by the Oregon Hunger Task Force/Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon have continued to implement the goals, strategies and tactics with a wide array of community partners, food banks, immigrant and refugee organizations, community volunteers and executive-level staff participation from the State Department of Human Services, the Governor's Office, the Public Health Institute and Oregon State University. For development of the plan and subsequent updates, Oregon Hunger Task Force/Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon conducted a statewide survey, held community forums, conducted in-depth interviews, reviewed reports and data sets from Oregon, other states. National advocacy and public policy organizations brought together a broad set of experts and community leaders for an all-day summit. Many similar activities have taken place in Colorado, setting the foundation for the development of a blueprint.

In Pennsylvania, the approach and development of the Blueprint was quite different. More than 60 anti-hunger groups, led by Hunger-Free Pennsylvania, developed and signed a white paper of recommendations to end hunger in their state. There was agreement among advocates regarding priorities, goals and strategies and they submitted these to the governor and the State Departments of Public Health and Social Services. The State Departments then spent four months behind closed doors, without any advocates or stakeholders and emerged with their Blueprint. Advocates indicate that the process was not transparent and the blueprint did not include enough of their recommendations; however, they are pleased with this first step, the executive support and the executive order. Each year, this collaborative collectively advocates for increased funding for the food security system. Most recently, 870 organizations signed a letter to the governor requesting increased funded for anti-hunger programs on Nov. 22, 2016.

Recommendations for a Colorado Plan/Blueprint to End Hunger

Given Colorado's poor historical performance enrolling eligible individuals and families in food assistance programs and the potential for restructuring federal funding under the next Farm Bill reauthorization, there is a sense of urgency among national and state advocates to design and execute effective strategies to address hunger. Considering the ongoing, statewide initiatives for economic security, living wage, affordable housing and job development, it would make sense for Colorado anti-hunger stakeholders to concentrate on tangible, immediately-effective strategies, goals and activities to end hunger with an eye towards the overarching context of inequity. The state plans in Oregon, Maryland and Pennsylvania have similar target outcomes, include similar stakeholders and actionable plans. Their processes and experiences offer examples for Colorado.

It is recommended that Colorado proceed with efforts to draft a blueprint to end hunger, with leadership from foundations and a steering committee of leading experts and organizations working on food security issues. Based on experiences in other states, it is recommended that the steering committee to review, vet and finalize recommendations for the final blueprint include the leading state program areas (CDPHE, CDE, CDHS and HCPF), as well as leading anti-hunger and health organizations.

Findings from the key informant interviews, data from food programs in the state, national and state research, focus groups and surveys recently conducted by various stakeholders, and already identified gaps in the food security system can be used to prioritize strategies and goals to create a draft blueprint for feedback. A final blueprint, designed and vetted by leading experts in Colorado, can then be presented to the governor, the state legislature and the Departments of Health Care Policy and Finance, Human Services, Public Health, and Education for support and funding. This shared vision can also provide a framework for coordinated funding and advocacy efforts for Colorado.

Reference List

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