

Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Council (IFNPAC) Report to the General Assembly February 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting the growth of the local food sector through meaningful regulatory and policy initiatives is critical to growing jobs and the local economy and ensuring positive health outcomes. Rhode Island General Laws 21-36-3, the Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) membership is made up of the Directors of the Department of Health (RIDOH), Department of Environmental Management (DEM), and Department of Administration (DOA). Administrators and Directors from other agencies often participate as well, including representation from the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA), Department of Education (RIDE), CommerceRI, Department of Corrections (DOC), Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, as well as the leadership of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC). IFNPAC was created to find ways to overcome regulatory and policy barriers to developing a strong sustainable food economy and healthful nutrition practices. The Council submits an annual activity report to the General Assembly. This report has been drafted in accordance with the requirements set forth in Chapter 36, Section 21-36-5 of the Rhode Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act.

The Council met four times in 2017: February 23rd, June 26th, August 30th, and December 15th. Council members listened to and discussed presentations by public and private partners with a stake in the Rhode Island food system. See Section C for brief summaries and Appendix A for meeting minutes.

The Council engaged in four primary activities:

- Finalizing the development and release of [Relish Rhody](#), the State's Food Strategy, released May 17, 2017. After the release, IFNPAC has focused on implementation of key priorities and coordination across agencies across Core Themes of the Strategy.
- Launch of the Governor's Statewide Hunger Elimination Task Force
- Statewide Use of Healthy Eating at Events Policy
- Support Programs & Funding Opportunities for Food System Businesses

A. Relish Rhody: A Food Vision for Rhode Island

As part of her efforts to grow Rhode Island's economy and support healthy residents, on May 17, 2017, Governor Gina M. Raimondo released *Relish Rhody*, the State's first comprehensive food strategy. With the support of many partners – and partnership across the agencies involved with the Council – efforts are underway to implement the Strategy in a way that grows our local food economy, benefits all Rhode Islanders, connects to regional and national food planning efforts, and celebrates the state's unique food cultures and landscapes.

Designed to be a five-year action plan, the Strategy takes a holistic view of the state’s food system and is organized around three core themes – or lenses: Environmental Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Public Health & Equitable Access to Food, and opportunities for Economic Development.

From there it is broken down into five integrated focus areas that drive the Strategy:

- Preserve & Grow Agriculture, Fisheries Industries in Rhode Island
- Sustain & Create Markets for Rhode Island Food, Beverage Products
- Enhance the Climate for Food & Beverage Businesses
- Minimize Food Waste & Divert it from the Waste Stream
- Ensure Food Security for All Rhode Islanders

Since its release, the Council and the Director of Food Strategy have been hard at work implementing key sections of the Strategy. IFNPAC further has begun releasing quarterly implementation memos detailing progress. The 2017 4th Quarter update memo is attached here for reference.

B. Hunger Elimination Task Force Launch

In October 2017, the Governor and the Council launched a Statewide Hunger Elimination Task Force. In alignment with *Relish Rhody’s* Integrated Focus Area Ensure Food Security for All Rhode Islanders, the Hunger Elimination Task Force was created with representatives across sectors, with the purpose of leading efforts to reduce food insecurity in Rhode Island to below 10% by 2020.

The members of the Task Force include, but is not limited to representatives from:

- a. The Department of Health
- b. The Department of Human Services
- c. The Department of Environmental Management
- d. The Governor’s Office
- e. The Division of Planning
- f. The House and Senate, at the discretion of the Senate President and Speaker of the House,
- g. The State Innovation Model on Healthcare (SIM)
- h. Local hunger-elimination and nutrition focused organizations
- i. HEZ communities
- j. The public health community
- k. Organizations that are anti-poverty, work with homeless populations, or work to prevent domestic violence

The Task Force shall evaluate and propose specific supplementary recommendations concerning the implementation of the Focus Area of the Food Strategy dedicated to *Ensuring Food Security for all Rhode Islanders*. The Task Force shall submit its recommendations to the Governor, which will include, but not be limited to:

- Recommendations to optimize participation in federal programs and policies that support food-insecure Rhode Islanders

- An action plan to reduce the costs of healthful foods for Rhode Islanders in need
- Recommendations to support the sharing of best practices and to facilitate collaboration between the many programs and efforts within the state that assist food-insecure Rhode Islanders.

C. Statewide Use of Healthy Eating Events Policy

Relish Rhody's goal to Ensure Food Security for All Rhode Islanders includes a specific action item on "Encourage Healthy Workplaces." Toward this goal, RIDOH presented to the Council their Healthy Eating at Events Policy, outlining steps to take to ensure foods purchased by State agencies for events & meetings have healthful options for participants. Council members agreed to abide by the Healthy Eating at Events Policy & to share it with their employees. Further, RIDOH is partnering with DOA to create Healthy Meeting Guidelines which provide best practices for state agencies planning meetings and conferences. These guidelines include recommendations for healthful food options, physical activity and movement breaks, and breastfeeding accommodations. Adoption of the Guidelines by DOA's Policy Advisory Committee will ensure that all state agencies participate, including those not formally members of Council.

D. Support Programs & Funding Opportunities for Food System Businesses

At their August meeting, the Council discussed the Core Theme of "Opportunities for Economic Development." The conversation highlighted the need for additional support for food system businesses to complement the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act grants program. The Council also discussed potential regulatory changes that could positively impact food system businesses (which were released in January 2018 as part of the Governor's Small Business Friendliness Omnibus legislations).

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation also shared that food system businesses represent a growing area in their portfolio, including participation in many different Commerce programs.

E. SUMMARY OF MEETINGS (for complete minutes see addendum A)

February 23rd, June 26th, August 30th, and December 15th.

February 23, 2017

RI Department of Administration, Conference Room A
DEM, DOA, Division of Planning, Governor's Office, Commerce Corporation, RIDE, RIDOH in attendance

Council members discussed RIDOH Center for Food Protection's Restaurant Inspection Initiative, as well as RIDOH's visit to the Delaware, Maryland, Virginia region to discuss food safety protocols on farms. Director of Food Strategy updated the Council on the RI Food Systems Summit and the progress of developing the RI Food Strategy.

June 26, 2017

RI Department of Environmental Management, Director's Conference Room A

RIDEM, RIDOH, Commerce RI, Governor's Office, RIDE, and DHS all in attendance
The Council discussed the release of *Relish Rhody* and next steps for implementation. Director of Food Strategy presented a [Food Insecurity Mapping](#) tool that was developed in partnership with the RI Food Policy Council.

August 30, 2017

RI Department of Environmental Management, Director's Conference Room A
RIDEM, RIDOH, Commerce RI, Governor's Office, RIDE, DOA, DEA, and DHS were all in attendance.
The Council centered their discussion around implementation priorities related to *Relish Rhody* Core Theme of Opportunities for Economic Development.

December 15, 2017

RI Department of Environmental Management, Director's Conference Room A
RIDOH, DEM, DHS, ACI, EOHHS, Division of Planning all in attendance
The Council centered their discussion around implementation priorities related to *Relish Rhody* Core Theme of Public Health & Equitable Access. Dr. Alexander-Scott gave a presentation on the Health Equity Zone initiative, and Sue AnderBois gave a presentation on the launch of the Hunger Elimination Task Force.

D. Other Food-Specific Initiatives within Member Agencies

To better keep Council members and the General Assembly abreast of Food-Specific Initiatives within Member Agencies, the Director of Food Strategy will be releasing quarterly summary memos of Food Strategy Implementation actions. The memo summarizing the Fourth Quarter of 2017 is attached herein for reference.

Appendix A: Meetings Notes