

Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Council (IFNPAC)

Report to the General Assembly

2019

Executive Summary

Supporting the growth of the local food sector through meaningful regulatory and policy initiatives is critical to increasing the number of jobs, growing the local economy, and ensuring positive health outcomes. Under 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 State agencies often participate, including representation from the Department of Human Services (DHS), Office on Healthy Aging (OHA), Department of Education (RIDE), Department of Corrections (DOC), Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (CommerceRI, and 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. IFNPAC 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 2019: on March 21, July 25, October 2, and December 18. IFNPAC members listened to and discussed presentations by public and private partners with a stake in the Rhode Island food system. IFNPAC is focused on implementing the Governor's Food Strategy, *Relish Rhody*. Agendas for meetings were set according to the Integrated Focus Areas of *Relish Rhody*. See Appendix A for meeting minutes.

The Council engaged in the five Integrated Focus Areas of *Relish Rhody*, including:

- Preserve and grow agriculture and fisheries industries in Rhode Island;
- Sustain and create markets for Rhode Island food and beverage products;
- Enhance the climate for food and beverage businesses;
- Ensure food security for all Rhode Islanders; and
- Minimize food waste and divert it from the waste stream.

Based on these focus areas, IFNPAC and the Director of Food Strategy had several major priorities in 2019. Inter-agency progress was made under each of these focus areas in 2019, with highlights of the priorities of IFNPAC detailed below.

A. Preserve and Grow Agriculture and Fisheries Industries

The integrated focus area to preserve and grow agriculture and fisheries industries in Rhode Island is a cornerstone of the *Relish Rhody* food strategy.

DEM and partner organizations led many of the efforts supporting our local agriculture and seafood industries. Some of the initiatives included:

- Offering technical support for compliance with the federal *Food Safety Modernization Act* to farmers across the state – in partnership with RIDOH and the University of Rhode Island (URI).
- Several IFNPAC agencies and partners worked with dairy farmers to help ensure they could continue to operate within Rhode Island and find markets for their products.
- The Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) committee awarded \$100,000 to 12 Rhode Island small businesses. This funding helped farmers and aquaculturists expand within the state by providing small grants for specific infrastructure needs. Private foundation funding for the program ended prior to grant round and resulted in a 50% reduction of available funding for regranting for fiscal year 2019. This funding loss occurred even though the Rhode Island Food Policy Council found that between 2014-2016, inclusion of just 27 recipients created 84 new jobs, increased sales by more than \$5 million, and leveraged \$2.5 million in additional funding. (This does not include the recent funding secured by the Rhode Island Mushroom Company, an early LASA recipient and Innovation Bond participant, that is bringing an estimated \$100 million of additional investment to Rhode Island.)
- IFNPAC partnered with Polaris and Polaris provided low-cost technical assistance and LEAN training specific to food businesses. Several farmers took advantage of the program and used LEAN principles to increase efficiency and profits.
- In April, Governor Raimondo announced 12 new Real Jobs Rhode Island partnerships. This included a new food business sector partnership based at the Rhode Island Food Policy Council. The Food Policy Council, the Director of Food Strategy, and staff from the Department of Labor and Training worked with the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association and consultants at KK&P to learn from their successful apprenticeship Real Jobs program to build a model for food sector jobs training and skill building. The Food Policy Council will hire a Director of Workforce Initiatives to lead this work in early 2020.
- The Food Policy Council partnered with DEM, CommerceRI, and the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation to evaluate approaches to eliminating wastewater processing constraints that are inhibiting the growth of seafood processing in the state. The project team also looked at successful models from other parts of the country that could possibly increase wholesale/retail distribution and sales of locally processed seafood in Rhode Island. This project

will be continued in 2020 and will coordinate with the efforts of DEM's Seafood Marketing Collaborative.

B. Sustain and Create Markets for Rhode Island Food and Beverage Products

Relish Rhody's Integrated focus area to sustain and create markets for Rhode Island food and beverage products recognizes that Rhode Island growers, harvesters, and makers are businesses that need access to appropriate markets to thrive. In this realm, IFNPAC supported four initiatives in 2019

1. Supply RI and Anchor Institution Engagement: Agencies involved in IFNPAC have continued to work to advance its goals around institutional procurement of Rhode Island food products.
 - a. IFNPAC worked on a pilot project during the summer with Sodexo, with a goal that 10% of the produce procurement in three Lifespan facilities would be from local vendors. Sodexo officially launched the program in early June 2019 and purchased their produce and Rhode Island-made products from Farm Fresh RI's Market Mobile Program. Hospitals are also hosting on-site farmers markets twice a month, are labeling any Rhode-Island-grown ingredients that are available in the dining facility, and are creating locally-focused "action station" meals each week.
 - i. Early numbers show that the hospitals are exceeding their goals and more than \$40,000 was spent during the summer in support of local farms.
2. Partnership with the Good Food Foundation:
 - a. *Relish Rhody* was a host of the 2019 Good Food Mercantile in Brooklyn. As part of its sponsorship Rhode Island food businesses received discounted rates to showcase their products at the show. Participating businesses included Granny Squib, Beth Bakes, Dave's Coffee, and Sanobe Superfoods. There was also a *Relish Rhody* table that featured food products from across the State.
 - b. In June 2019, the Director of Food Strategy led a group of the Good Food Foundation Merchants' Collaborative on a tour of food producers in the state. Independent markets from across the country (Washington, DC, Colorado, and California) and representatives from the Good Food Foundation met with Rhode Island makers, tasted their products, shared advice, and developed relationships. The Collaborative spent two days in Rhode Island.
 - c. Rhode Island also had a 2019 Winner of a Good Food Award: Sacred Cow Granola. Sacred Cow is a product of Munroe Dairy and a graduate of Hope & Main. They are also a participant in the Supply RI program and are currently building out a new kitchen facility in East Providence to expand their operations.
3. Wholesale readiness training for local agricultural and food processing businesses: The Food Policy Council worked closely with DEM and local organizations that serve farmers and small food processors on the development of a wholesale readiness workshop that provided technical assistance for businesses interested in selling to institutional or other wholesale buyers. The first workshop attracted about 40 attendees and content was well received. A second workshop took place in February 25 and there were more than 40 attendees.
4. Increasing local food purchases by Rhode Island public schools: The Food Policy Council worked closely with the Director of Food Strategy, DEM, RIDE, and other partners to identify ways to increase purchases of local food by public schools. This year, a workplan that detailed ways to

improve RIDE's ability to accurately track local food purchases and identified ways to increase interest in purchasing local food at the district level was developed. The work plan is expected to be implemented in 2020.

C. Enhance the Climate for food and beverage Businesses

In alignment with the integrated focus area to enhance the climate for food and beverage businesses in Rhode Island, IFNPAC tracked and supported other agencies' initiatives in an effort to streamline regulations and update rules for food businesses. Work in this focus area included:

- The Director of Food Strategy worked with a student from Harvard to explore specific aspects of the climate for food businesses in Rhode Island. The student's work finished in April, and the findings were presented to a cross-agency team in May. The report will be distributed to all IFNPAC members and stakeholders.
- The Director of Food Strategy regularly met with businesses to provide technical assistance and guidance about troubleshooting administrative issues.

D. Minimize Food Waste and Divert it from the Waste Stream

Momentum continues to grow to surrounding food waste reduction and diversion within Rhode Island, and IFNPAC spent the third-quarter meeting focused on how to best support this work. This work has included:

- The *Rhode to End Hunger* continues to expand, with more than 20,000 pounds of food saved from the waste stream.
- The Center for Ecotechnology (CET) is working with DEM to conduct outreach to businesses who are not in compliance with the tonnage threshold for the state's food waste recycling law. CET offers businesses with technical assistance.
- CET, with support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), offers free technical assistance to Rhode Island businesses and institutions. Since 2017, CET helped Rhode Island businesses donate three tons of edible food and divert more than 1,200 tons of food waste per year.
- CET provided compost site technical assistance to two facilities in Rhode Island. CET offered guidance and recommendations for site expansion and recipe development. This assistance supports the growth of processing capacity in the state.
- The Director of Food Strategy and representatives from DEM toured the newly constructed anaerobic digester in Johnston. The facility is currently only in its pilot phase but plans to be more fully operational in the future after testing is completed.
- DEM held a half-day information session for breweries on waste and wastewater processing and resources available to the industry from the State.
- The RIFPC created a 'Wasted Food Solutions' work group that has four major initiatives. First, it is supporting a new organization (Hope's Harvest) that is recovering grade B produce from farms around Rhode Island and delivering it to the Rhode Island Food Bank and other emergency food organizations. Around 50,000 pounds of fresh food was recovered by this effort in 2019. Second, it is supporting

the work of Foodscape RI, an organization that is working in public schools to educate students and set up diversion tables that recover excess food and send it to the Food Bank. Third, it is supporting the work of composters (Earth Care Farm, The Compost Plan, and smaller urban composting organizations) to remove obstacles to increasing composting activity. Fourth, it is advocating for policies and legislation that could increase food donations, food recovery, and better organic waste management by businesses in Rhode Island.

E. Ensure Food Security for All Rhode Islanders

In 2017, IFNPAC created the Hunger Elimination Task Force. In October 2018, the Task Force released a set of recommendations to IFNPAC and Governor Raimondo. In 2019, the Task Force broke off into sub-groups to address specific sections of the recommendations. The work of the sub-groups included:

- The USDA released their annual *Food Insecurity Report*, showing that Rhode Island's food insecurity rate is down to 11%, from 12.4% in 2018. The Task Force aims to lower food insecurity rates to less than 10%, and with a more coordinated effort, it is expected that the goal will be attained.
- The Task Force was focused on increasing school meal participation as part of its recommendation to ensure that Rhode Island is taking full advantage of federal funds. As part of this effort, the State received grant support from Share our Strength's No Kid Hungry program. A cross-agency team, including RIDE, the Governor's Office, the Director of Food Strategy, the Food Policy Council, and the Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition (who is the fiscal sponsor of the grant) was selected to participate in a multi-state meeting in New Orleans and is implementing an 18-month workplan to expand innovative breakfast models for K-12 schools.
 - This Working Group will also be exploring potential policy guidance on lunch shaming and school meal balances across the state. This working group received community feedback at the July Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Learning community meeting.
- The Task Force is moving forward on implementing other areas of its recommendations through working groups.
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Incentive Expansion Working Group: The Rhode Island Public Health Institute (RIPHI) hired a consulting team to facilitate a stakeholder engagement and implementation process for the SNAP Incentive Expansion Project. The first phase of that work is near completion, and the next phase will be focused on advocacy and fundraising. RIPHI is partnering with DHS, and DHS Director Courtney Hawkins has agreed that DHS will become the long-term permanent administrator for this program. There is active collaboration with DHS to secure funding for 2020 through a USDA GunsNIP grant to begin a pilot program in 2022 with approximately 2,500 SNAP participants.
 - Transportation: The transportation subcommittee explored work to map the ways that members of the task force and the HEZ community can impact and influence transportation planning in their communities to better reflect their mobility needs to connect to food resources. The Transportation sub-committee

presented at the May Hunger Elimination Taskforce (HETF) meeting and two Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Learning Community meetings.

- **Data:** In response to the requests DHS released a SNAP client data snapshot with demographic data about how Rhode Islanders utilize SNAP programs. Understanding the demographics of who is using the programs can help partners better tailor their services and programs.
 - Jay Metzger, a RIDOH GIS Specialist, presented to the Task Force about the planned updates to the food insecurity mapping tool on RelishRhody.com. RIDOH will be updating the map based on publicly available data. Any requests for changes to the map can be shared directly with the Director of Food Strategy.
- **Economic Development:** A cross-agency partnership of RIDOH, DHS, and DLT released shared communications materials in the fall. The Task Force identified that Rhode Islanders in need of good-paying, high-quality jobs were not getting information about programs like Real Jobs RI. This new partnership will promote awareness of these programs across agencies and to Rhode Islanders who need the information.
- **Overarching:**
 - For Fiscal Year 2019, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) severely restricted funding for state-level work for Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN). CDC approved RIDOH's grant application but did not provide funding. RIDOH Associate Director Carol Hall-Walker and Director of Food Strategy Sue AnderBois attended CDC's annual meeting for all grantees as ambassadors from programs that were approved/unfunded to learn from, and connect with, PAN programs in other states. IFNPAC continues to advocate at the federal level for the reinstatement of funds for these vital programs.
 - In partnership with the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association, Governor Raimondo released a proclamation declaring September as Family Meals Month, and encouraged all families to eat at least one additional meal at home with their families each week. Family meals have been shown to improve the emotional and physical well-being of individuals.

F. Summary of Meetings (for Complete Minutes see Appendix A)

March 21, July 25, October 2, and December 18

March 21, 2019

DEM, Room 300, Providence

RIDOH, DEM, RIDE, OHA, DOC, Department of Administration (DOA)/Division of Purchasing (DOP), Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA), Food Policy Council, and RCommerce all in attendance.

Council members had a presentation by Food Solutions New England on its Racial Equity Challenge and discussed how Rhode Island can better incorporate racial equity into the food systems work within the state.

July 25, 2019

DEM, Room 425A, Providence

DOH, DOP, DOA, RIDE, DEM, RIFPC, and RICommerce all in attendance

The Council had a strategic discussion about the two-year anniversary of the release of *RelishRhody*, what had been accomplished, and what was left to be accomplished. They also focused on potential topics for the January 2020 Food Summit hosted by URI and settled on the intersections of Climate Change and Food Systems.

October 2, 2019

RICommerce, Narragansett Room, Providence

DEM, RIDOH, RICommerce, OHA, RIDE, RIFPC, and DOP were all in attendance.

The Council focused on the *Relish Rhody* integrated focus areas to reduce and divert food waste from the traditional waste stream. They heard update presentations from Hope's Harvest, FoodScape, and staff at DEM about food waste initiatives occurring across the state.

December 18, 2019

DEM, Suite 425A, Providence

RIDOH, DEM, DOA, RIDE, DOC, RIFPC, and DHS were all in attendance.

The Council expressed its support of continuing the Director of Food Strategy position, as Sue Anderbois left state government. The Food Policy Council presented an overview of the impacts and effectiveness of the LASA grants and all voted in support of restoring full funding for the LASA grant program. The Food Policy Council learned about the state's pilot of e-WIC, launching on January 21, 2020, in the East Bay (Bristol, Newport, Tiverton, and East Providence). eWIC will streamline its program by replacing paper checks with a card that can be used for purchases and will also add flexibility by moving some in-person meetings for non-critical enrollees to online training modules. A full statewide rollout is scheduled for spring 2020.

G. Quarterly Updates

To better keep Council members and the General Assembly abreast of food-specific initiatives within member agencies, the Director of Food Strategy will release quarterly summary memos of food strategy implementation actions.

Appendix A: Meeting Notes

**Inter-agency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
(IFNPAC)**

DATE: March 21, 2019

TIME: 10 – 11:30am

LOCATION: Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Room 300, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02908

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Nicole Alexander-Scott (RIDOH), Ananda Fraser (DEM), Ken Ayars (DEM), Paul Gonsalves (DOA – Planning), Mike Bonneau (RIDOC), Stephen Carey (RIDE), Rose Jones (DEA) Kasim Yarn (RIOVA)

Other ATTENDEES: Kate Balestracci (URI SNAP-Ed), Andrew Viveiros (Sodexo), Kenneth Payne (Food Solutions New England), Ernest Julian (RIDOH), Scott Marshall (DEM), Diane Lynch (RIFPC), Ada Amobi (RIDOH), Aleatha Dickerson (DEA), David Dadekian (Eat Drink RI)

1. **Call to Order:** Nicole Alexander-Scott called the meeting to order at 10am.
2. **Approval of minutes from last meeting:** Minutes were approved (motion by Steve Carey, seconded by Diane Lynch).
3. **Submission of the 2018 IFNPAC Annual Report:**
 1. IFNPAC discussed the contents of the 2018 IFNPAC Annual Report. The IFNPAC Annual Report was submitted to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office shortly after the IFNPAC meeting.
4. **Food Strategy Updates Since Last Meeting:**
 1. Members reviewed the Food Strategy Implementation memo circulated in advance by Sue AnderBois & provided updates around the table on additional items.
 2. At the Q4 2018 Meeting, members had discussed food waste diversion. Sue AnderBois updated the members on follow up conducted with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) on their Save the Food Campaign. Director Alexander-Scott instructed Sue AnderBois to set up a meeting between RIDOH & DEM to discuss next steps for using the NRDC materials.
5. **Food Strategy Implementation Focus: Racial Equity within the Food System**
 1. Ken Payne from Food Solutions New England (Formerly the RI Food Policy Council) presented about Food Solutions New England's Racial Equity Challenge for April. Now in its third year, the Challenge is designed to create dedicated time and space to build more effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with issues of race, power, privilege, and leadership. During the Challenge, participants receive a daily email prompt with a short reading, video, or audio file. Participants are encouraged to take 10-15 minutes each day with the material in the prompt and have the option participating in on-line forums facilitated by Food Solutions New England.
 2. The RI Food Policy Council (Diane Lynch, Chair) shared that the Council participated in the Challenge last year and many members planned to participate again this year.

3. IFNPAC members discussed ways that their work already intersects with racial equity and ways that we could deepen this as a focus going forward.
4. Dr. Alexander-Scott encouraged all IFNPAC members to participate in the Challenge and to share with their staff.
5. RIDOH suggested that the Commission on Health Equity might be interested in participating as well.
6. To do:
 - i. Sue shared around a link afterward to IFNPAC members for how to sign up for the Challenge.
 - ii. Sue & RIDOH will meet between meetings to discuss next steps for engaging IFNPAC and the Food Strategy in racial equity work.

Adjournment: Dr. Alexander-Scott (Chair) adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.

**Inter-agency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
(IFNPAC)**

DATE: July 25, 2019

TIME: 9 – 10:30am

LOCATION: Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Room 425A, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02908

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Carol Hall-Walker (RIDOH – standing in for Nicole Alexander-Scott), Paul Gonsalves (Division of Planning), Steve Carey (RIDE), Ken Ayars (DEM), Janet Coit (DEM), Amanda Clarke (DOA), Ernest Julian (RIDOH)

Other ATTENDEES: Andrew Viveiros (Sodexo), Diane Calvin (RIFPC, FoodScape), Nessa Richman (RIFPC), David Dadekian (Eat Drink RI), Diane Lynch (RIFPC), Kate Balestracci (URI SNAP-Ed), Andrew Schiff (RI Community Food Bank)

1. **Call to Order:** Carol Hall-Walker called the meeting to order at 9:10am.
2. **Approval of minutes from last meeting:** Minutes were approved
3. **Food Strategy Updates Since Last meeting:**
 1. Sue walked through updates in the pre-circulated food strategy update memo (Attached). Several items were added to the update from IFNPAC members including:
 - i. Adding a Resolution to the next IFNPAC meeting to support LASA
 - ii. USDA Agricultural Census data was released. Ken Ayars, Sue AnderBois, URI, and the RI Food Policy Council are digging into the data and will report at a future meeting.
 - iii. The RIDOH City Match Equity Summit will be held September 23-25th at the Convention Center. More information & sign-up will be sent to IFNPAC members as it becomes available.
 - iv. Laurie Leonard from the Academic Partnerships Division of RIDOH was highlighted as a valuable resource as we are expanding food-related work with institutions. Sue AnderBois will be following up with her directly after a recommendation from Carol Hall-Walker.
 - v. Sue AnderBois & Carol Hall-Walker receive regular updates & materials from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Ambassadors. Sue will begin to forward these resources to the IFNPAC members.
 - vi. Steve Carey reminded IFNPAC that the Farm to Institution work from the RIDE perspective should include childcare centers and that there are point people at RIDE on the Farm to Institution work.
 - vii. Dr. Ernest Julian updated IFNPAC that he is the current chair of the Association of Food & Drug Officials and that a national committee is going to be studying expanding RIDOH's Rhode to End Hunger work to a national audience.

- viii. Director Coit wanted the IFNPAC notes to reflect that the state's Food Waste Recycling Law requires institutions producing more than 102 tons of food waste per year are relevant to the ban.
- ix. The Rhode Island Food Policy Council informed IFNPAC that they have recently updated their website, which now includes metrics measuring the success of the RI Food Strategy. You can see their website at either: RIFoodCouncil.org or RIFPC.org
- x. Director Coit requested that IFNPAC continue to include climate resilience on the agenda for future IFNPAC meetings.

4. Implementation: Overarching Across the Food Strategy:

1. IFNPAC members had a discussion about potential topics for the January 2020 Food Summit, hosted by URI.
2. Sue AnderBois made a proposal that the Food Summit be focused as a deep dive into a specific topic of the food strategy. This would help give us some clear deliverables, engagement, and next steps – as well as better control the costs. The topic proposed was Expanding Markets for RI food products through institutional procurement – given the quantity of work being done in that arena across the food system currently. Ken Ayars supported this recommendations.
3. The RI Food Policy Council raised the idea of using the policy survey to help assess what topics people might be interested in. While not directly the same question (policy interests v. topics for a convening conversation), Sue AnderBois will follow up with them to get early results.
4. Sue AnderBois will follow up with IFNPAC for their input & final decisions

5. Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 10:30am.

**Inter-agency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
(IFNPAC)**

DATE: October 2, 2019

TIME: 11:30 – 1pm

LOCATION: Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, 315 Iron Horse Way, Providence, RI 02908

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Rose Jones (OHA), Ana Novais (RIDOH), Aleatha Dickerson (OHA), Ananda Fraser (DEM), Janet Coit (DEM), Stephen Carey (RIDE), Paul Gonsalves (Div of Planning)

Other ATTENDEES: Diane Calvin (FoodScope), Elise Swearingen (OHA), Mark Dennan (DEM), Kate Balestracci (URI), Sarah Amin (URI), David Dadekian (Eat Drink RI), Diane Lynch (RIFPC), Eva Agudelo (Hope's Harvest), Lorenzo Macaluso (CET), Alyson Brunelli (DEM), Michele McCaughey (DEM), Kaleena Harrington (RI Commerce)

1. **Call to Order:**
2. **Approval of minutes from last meeting:** Approval of minutes was postponed until the Q4 meeting. At the Q4 meeting, IFNPAC will approve the Q2 and Q3 minutes.
3. **Food Strategy Implementation Updates Since Last Meeting:**
 1. Sue AnderBois circulated around a Q3 update memo to IFNPAC members & handed out physical copies for additional attendees.
 2. In addition to the memo, Janet Coit raised the importance of the LASA program and the need to advocate for additional funds for the program. Diane Lynch from the RI Food Policy Council responded that the Council would like to coordinate on these efforts.
 3. Janet Coit also raised that EEE has been a major issue during the late summer & fall and will continue to be an issue of concern until the first major frost. We should all be encouraging the people we work with and serve to avoid being outside with exposed flesh, especially in places and at times with high mosquito counts.
4. **Implementation: Food Waste**
 1. Eva Agudelo from Hope's Harvest gave an update on their programs. Hope's Harvest is a relatively new nonprofit in Rhode Island that is focused on connecting surplus food from farmers' fields to Rhode Islanders in need. They take teams of volunteers out on trips to rescue food that would have otherwise been thrown away or composted and bring it to a network of food pantries across the state. They have been growing a good deal in the last year and project more growth and partnership opportunities going forward.
 2. Alyson Brunelli & Michele McCaughey from RI DEM presented on DEM's efforts to support the diversion of food waste.
 - i. Rhode Island has a law that requires institutions who produce large volumes of food waste to divert that waste from their traditional waste stream to a commercial composter or anaerobic digester *if one is located within 15 miles of their operation*. Earlier this year, DEM clarified the boundaries of the program to include all commercial composters & AD facilities within 15 miles – not just those that fall within Rhode Island state boundaries.

- ii. Using maps created by the EPA, DEM was able to identify additional food waste producers that fall within the catchment area of a few AD or compost facilities right over our borders.
 - iii. DEM has partnered with the Center for EcoTechnology to send letters to the facilities that fall within these new catchment areas. The letters alert the businesses that they fall under the Food Waste Recycling Law and that there are technical assistance resources available to them for compliance through the Center for Eco-Technology.
 - iv. DEM staff are investigating potential updates to the Food Waste Recycling Law for the 2020 General Assembly session and will provide future updates on this legislation to IFNPAC.
5. **Next Meeting (Q4):** The next meeting will be held in December and will focus on institutional procurement & recommendations from FINE's Policy Committee.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1pm.

**Interagency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
(IFNPAC)**

DATE: December 18, 2019

TIME: 9:30 – 10:30 AM

LOCATION: RI Department of Environmental Management, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Carol Hall-Walker (RIDOH – standing in for Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, Jaclyn Porfilio, (DEM - attending on behalf of Director Coit), Ken Ayers (DEM), Steve Carey (RIDE), Amanda Clark (DOA), Ernest Julian (RIDOH), Michael Bonneau (DOC), Ann Barone (DOH), Bethany Caputo (DHS)

Other ATTENDEES: Diane Lynch (RIFPC), Nessa Richman (RIFPC), Andrew Schiff, (RI Community Food Bank), David Dadekian (Eat Drink RI), Kate Balestracci (URI SNAP-Ed) Emily Lynch (DEM) Erin Bertoldi (RIDOH)

1. Call to order – Carol Hall-Walker called the meeting to order at 9:30am.
2. Approval of minutes from last meeting: Minutes from Q2 and Q3 were approved.
3. Food Strategy Implementation Updates Since Last Meeting
 - a. Discussion of staffing transition:
 - i. With Sue Ander Bois departure from state service, Erin Bertoldi will step in to help staff IFNPAC meetings.
 - ii. A vote was held to measure if meeting participants feel the Food Director position is valuable. A majority was affirmed.
 - iii. Ken Ayers raised that active discussions on the budget for this role are occurring between DEM, RIDOH, and RI Commerce Corporation.
 - iv. Diane Lynch raised that the focus of the role to date has been on the economic impact of food businesses and would like the role to continue having high-level access with RI Commerce.
 - v. Carol Hall Walker raised new potential of role to partner closer with academia to gather data to inform and drive policy. Ernie Panciera agreed and stated that identifying underutilized resources could help in this endeavor. He gave the example of connecting the Food Director with new URI Food Center staff.
 - vi. Carol Hall-Walker also raised that the planning of a statewide event to bring together farming and food producers may need a longer timeframe for planning due to vacancy in role.
 - b. Vote: IFNPAC Support for LASA
 - i. Ken Ayers provided a brief history of the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) Grants Program. The program, now in its seventh year, provides grants to support innovation and growth of Rhode Island's local food economy by providing grants up to \$20,000. The first five years of the LASA program used public and private funds. The private funds have all been awarded and the program now relies solely on State funding at a reduced total amount.

- ii. Nessa Richman circulated a 2020 Legislative Report on the impact of the LASA program to date and stated that individual success stories and information on past grantees can be found on the DEM (dem.ri.gov/agriculture) and RIFPC website.
- iii. Diane Lynch raised that the program's public/private funding streams were part of a pilot program. Moving forward, the State has an opportunity to show that it is a good partner by restoring the funding gap on program that has proven success. Diane also stated that these funds are critical for farmers/fishers to obtain heavy equipment and other capital that traditionally do not qualify for bank loans.
- iv. David Dadekian from Eat Drink RI and previous member of the LASA Grant Advisory Committee stated his support for the LASA grant program and raised that there's a need to raise awareness of the program among the General Assembly.
- v. IFNPAC voted in favor of supporting the LASA grant program.

4. E-Wic Pilot Testing Implementation

- a. Ann M. Barone LDN, RIDOH Chief of RI WIC Program presented an overview of the WIC program and the roll out of a new pilot program. Established in 1974, WIC is a grant-based program that prescribes health food items to pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as children to reduce the risk of diet defined illnesses in children. The program has high enrollment but sees a sharp decline in enrollment once children reach the age of one. This drop is attributed to several factors including the need for enrollees to attend in-person meetings and the use of paper checks that are cumbersome to use at grocers. The pilot program launching on January 21 in the East Bay (Bristol, Newport, Tiverton, and East Providence), looks to streamline the program by replacing paper checks with a card that can be used for purchases. The program will also add flexibility by moving some in-person meetings for non-critical enrollees to online training modules. A full statewide rollout is scheduled for this coming year from April to June.
- b. IFNPAC members were asked to help spread the word on this new program. David Dadekian raised that a video of Ann speaking on this program is available to share on the Eat Drink RI Facebook page.

<https://upriseri.com/2019-11-25-ri-food-bank/>

<https://rifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-RICFB-StatusReport-Web.pdf>

5. Advisory Committee Member Updates/Announcements

- a. SNAP Administrator Bethany Caputo from DHS provided an update on changes to Federal rules that will affect the eligibility of SNAP recipients.
 - i. Expanded Categorical Eligibility – Proposed regulations set to take effect will close a loophole that many states use to calculate TANIF funds. New rules will be test households at a higher rate (185%). More than 11,000 individuals in Rhode Island are expected to be affected by this change.
 - ii. Standard Utility Allowance – New rules seek to move state's calculation to a standard allowance of 80% of household cost. This drastically changes

eligibility and is estimated to result in a 43% reduction for Rhode Islanders on program. The monthly allowance is also projected to be reduced from more than \$630 to close to \$430.

- iii. **Able Body Adults without Dependents – New rules will change requirements for waived city and towns in which enrollees reside. There are currently 13 waived areas in Rhode Island. The new rules will recognize only one waived area (New Shoreham).**

6. Meeting close time was reached and meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.