



MEETING SUMMARY & NOTES:

RI Hunger Elimination Task Force Q3 Meeting

August 29, 2023 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm

Theme: *Providing feedback for the direction of RI 2030 Food Strategy*

[Click Here to Watch the Meeting Recording!](#)

[Click Here to Access the Slide Show Presentation!](#)

OBJECTIVES

- *Discuss the highlights from the 5-Year Food System Retrospective and Regional New England Feeding New England Report on Rhode Island.*
- *Review the process of updating the Rhode Island Food System Strategy.*
- *Contribute your expertise to the hunger relief elements of the updated plan.*

PRE-READING

- READ: [Background of the Hunger Elimination Task Force \(HETF\) & Ongoing Challenges in Hunger Relief](#)
- Review the questions in the Takeaways document and come ready to share your thoughts and experiences!

MEETING SUMMARY

The third Hunger Elimination Task Force (HETF) Meeting of 2023 was attended by over 75 participants. Our state's Director of Food Strategy, Juli Stelmaszyk shared that our statewide food strategy, *Relish Rhody*, is in the process of being updated and invited everyone to participate in the process. Randi Belhumuer, of the Rhode Island Department of Health, provided history and background on previous HETF priorities that informed *Relish Rhody*. All participants went into topical breakout rooms where they discussed what is currently working and not working to alleviate hunger in Rhode Island.

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AGENDA

- 2:00 pm Welcome and Introductions**
- 2:05 pm Food Strategy Overview**
- 2:10 pm Highlights from 5 Year Retrospective Report**
- 2:20 pm Orientation to Breakout Sessions**
- 2:30 pm Breakout Sessions**
- 3:10 pm Breakout Session Report Out**

3:25 pm **Final Meeting Announcements**

NOTES

2:00 pm **Welcome and Introductions**
(Facilitated by Nessa Richman, RI Food Policy Council)

- The Hunger Elimination Task Force is a statewide network of food access, nutrition, and public health champions that work to reduce hunger and increase access to healthy, culturally-appropriate food for all RI residents. This task force is owned by the RI State Agencies involved in food system work and is facilitated by the RI Food Policy Council.
- The goal of the Hunger Elimination Task Force is to reduce hunger and increase access to healthy, culturally-appropriate food for all Rhode Island residents.
- Today we are discussing important updates to our state's food strategy, *Relish Rhody*. We will first review the process of updating the food strategy. Afterwards, we will discuss HETF highlights from the 5 Year Food System Retrospective Report.

2:05 pm **Food Strategy Overview**
(Overview by Julianne Stelmaszyk, CommerceRI)

- Today's gathering will be a listening session focused on gathering your feedback as we continue to shape our priorities for the 2030 plan. We'll first reflect on the goals of the 2017 food strategy, the origins of the Hunger Elimination Taskforce, and its activities. Then we'll share the feedback you've given us over the last year before looking ahead to 2030. We want to discuss what's working, what's not, and what do we imagine is possible to reduce hunger and nutrition insecurity in the next 6 years? We want your feedback on the development of priorities for the Food Strategy 2030.
- We kicked off the process in the spring and in June gathered our 30 person advisory board, which some of you serve on. In 2017, Rhode Island launched its first comprehensive statewide food plan under the Raimondo Administration and hired a position - the Director of Food Strategy to lead planning and implementation. Designed to be a five-year action plan, the Rhode Island Food Strategy is a state-led plan that takes a holistic view of the state's food system and is organized around three core themes: Health & Access, Economic Development, and Environmental Sustainability & Resiliency. It is further broken out into five integrated focus areas: 1) Preserve & Grow Agriculture, Fisheries

Industries in Rhode Island 2) Enhance the Climate for Food & Beverage Businesses 3) Sustain & Create Markets for Rhode Island Food, Beverage Products 4) Ensure Food Security for All Rhode Islanders 5) Minimize Food Waste & Divert it from the Waste Stream. It's time to renew and reassess our goals for a 2030 Food Strategy. Why 2030? This timeline aligns with Governor McKee's RI2030 plan and the New England Feeding New England to achieve 30% regional food production by 2030.

- The process for the update to this food strategy was as follows. This spring we conducted a 5 year look back, what we are calling a 5 year retrospective, to assess what has happened in the past five years and what needs still remain. This will be published in 2 weeks. and shortly we'll share a few findings relevant to the Taskforce. We will spend the next 10 months engaging with stakeholders, researching relevant issues and developing goals and metrics for 2030 with anticipation that it will be complete next August 2024.
- Along with our partners at DEM, RIDOH, and RIFPC who are assisting in the planning process, we are lucky to have philanthropic partners who see value in the project from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation and Rhode Island Foundation. We have established a Steering Committee and an Advisory Board of 30+ community food system leaders to co-create and inform our planning process.
- The state food plan will mean nothing without meaningful input from partners like you, working on the ground with communities, businesses, and industry. As they say ,plans are nothing but planning is everything. The process of creating a shared vision together for collective impact is just as important as a final document. To stay informed on the process and ways to be involved you can sign up [here](#).
- I'd now like to turn it over to Randi Belhumeur within RIDOH's Division of Community, Health and Equity to give highlights that pertain to HETF

2:15 pm

**Key Data from 5 Year Food System Retrospective Report
(Overview by Randi Belhumer, RI Department of Health Division
Community Health and Equity)**

- We want to provide you with some history/context around the Hunger Elimination Task Force, as we think it will be helpful to ground us all on where we were, pre-COVID, where we are now, and then, with your

input, where we are going.

- As already mentioned, ensuring food security was one of the five focus areas back in 2017. To ensure food security, the former Director of Food Strategy launched HETF, which included members from the Inter-Agency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) and many community leaders, some of you, who are here with us today.
- When HETF was launched, some community partners participated alongside IFNPAC and the Director of Food Strategy. Under the former Director, HETF met for a year. In 2018, HETF presented recommendations to Gov. Raimondo, broken out into six sections:
 - 1) Economic Development
 - 2) Expanding Food Purchasing Power
 - 3) Streamlining and Maximizing Participation in Existing Programs
 - 4) Addressing transit challenges
 - 5) Grounding in data to drive decision making
 - 6) Supporting the safety net.
- As we rolled into the pandemic, IFNPAC, the Governor's Office and some of you all rallied together into a work stream to address the issues of food access. RIDOH entered into a formal agreement with the RIFPC to facilitate and project manage the HETF in the absence of a Food Strategy Director and during a time when we were all working to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders. What became clear was the need for robust staffing including a Food Access and Equity Manager to own some of this work. RIDOH successfully procured some CDC COVID funding in 2021 to formally contract with the RIFPC to continue their management of HETF on behalf of the IFNPAC and we hired our first Food Access and Equity Manager. We felt it important to provide this context to you, along with the pre-read, in the hopes that it is helpful as we move into breakouts. The pre-read has been organized into topics for our breakouts.
- I want to share findings from the 5 Year Retrospective around the focus area *ensuring food security for all Rhode Islanders* to help us develop priorities for the 2030 plan.
 - In 2022, the HETF launched a monthly newsletter, called the RI Food Access Bulletin (RIFAB) to keep HETF members informed of each other's work and provide timely updates about important policy changes and funding opportunities. 450 people are subscribed. At these quarterly meetings, we typically

have 50-100 HETF members in attendance.

- HETF was crucial in helping the RI Foundation conduct outreach to all eligible nonprofit organizations for \$20million American Rescue Plan Act funding during the pandemic.
- Through the partnership between RIDOH, Commerce, and RIFPC, we have increased staff capacity to support the HETF and stronger coordination on food security issues across government, industry, and community organizations. This built critical capacity to support more coordinated programs and activities which improve food access and food assistance.
- Funding for statewide emergency food plan secured Through RIFPC, funding for a statewide emergency food plan was secured. This emergency food plan will be a companion to the 2030 Food Strategy.
- SNAP incentive advocacy led by the Rhode Island Public Health Institute and NourishRI campaign resulted in a state pilot of “Eat Well Be Well”. This program aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in the state by offering an incentive for the purchase of fruits and vegetables.
- Additionally, we now have more data available to address hunger. RIFPC has their data dashboard and emergency food site map.
- Finally, RIDOH launched the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Strategic Plan 2023-2028 which is helping to secure funding to reignite the HEAL Program (formerly the Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Program) within our Center for Chronic Care and Disease Management

2:20 pm

**Orientation to Breakout Room Discussion
(Overview by Juli Stelmaszyk, Director of Food Strategy)**

- Before we send you into breakout rooms, I want to orient you to the discussion being held there. We’re not trying to identify solutions at this moment. We want to identify the problem and set a direction for priorities which will help us develop strategies for 2030. This is the chance to elaborate on these themes.
 1. What has worked well? Provide specific examples.
 2. How do we know it has worked well and/or is continuing to work well?

3. Is this an area that you feel we need to continue to grow? Are there communities/people missing from this conversation; if so, who are they?
 4. What doesn't exist in the current landscape? What are the gaps? Be specific, provide examples.
- To that end we have organized breakout rooms a bit different than we have in past HETF meetings. Each breakout room will be focusing on a particular issue area within hunger relief work as shown in the pre-read. In a few minutes, you will have the option to choose which room you would like to enter. Please note, you can move rooms at any time. The breakout rooms will be divided as follows
 1. Food Access & Recovery
 2. Food Access, Transportation & Delivery
 3. Food Access & Collaboration Across Hunger Relief Work
 4. Food Access & Suitable Meals for Students and Older Adults
 5. Food Access & Partnerships with Healthcare Programs
 6. Food Access & Nutrition Education
 7. Food Access & Supplemental Food/Nutrition Programs
 8. Food Access & Evaluation of Hunger Relief Programs
 - There will be a facilitator in each room to capture your discussion in notes that we will later consolidate and share out.

2:45 pm Breakout Session

3:15 pm Breakout Session Report Out

- **Please see Breakout Session Takeaways.**

3:25 pm Final Meeting Announcements

- Thank you all for joining us today!

Our next meeting will be November 14, 2023 from 2-3:30pm!