

Meeting Summary Rhode Island Hunger Elimination Task Force (HETF) February 2021

At the first 2021 meeting of the Hunger Elimination Task (2/9), Nessa Richman, Network Director of the RI Food Policy Council, introduced the work of the Food Policy Council and the history of the HETF. Over 75 participants joined one of four lively breakout room discussions regarding the proposed goal and objectives of the HETF, which is to reduce hunger and increase access to healthy, culturally-appropriate food for all RI residents.

Key themes emerged from the breakout rooms (full breakout room notes can be found here):

- Excitement about the HETF goal with particular emphasis on the importance of cultural appropriateness and affordability and interest in measuring progress.
- Identified need for stronger communications, collaboration, and relationship building between organizations, communities, and residents most impacted by food insecurity and injustice
- Interest in planning for longer term food system infrastructure needs and related funding
- Identified need to create clear ways for HETF members to plug in and push work forwards (work groups and other potential structures)

At the second meeting of the HETF (2/19) Andrew Schiff, CEO of the RI Community Food Bank, presented recent data about food insecurity in RI and people served at food pantries, drawing the important connection between economic insecurity and food insecurity. Maria Cimini, Associate Director of Policy at RI Department of Human Services, shared updates on the work of DHS to adapt policies and take advantage of all federal programs to maximize the influx of SNAP and other nutrition program dollars to the state and RI families.

We concluded with an initial discussion about moving forward an Emergency and Supplemental Food Delivery landscape map as a collaborative HETF project. There was strong interest in a resource that would provide local (neighborhood, zip code) information about available services and food access points that can be used by individuals, service providers, and policy makers to meet immediate needs and identify geographical and community-based gaps. Participants added important points about the challenge of maintaining provider data and the need for a printable format.