



December 10, 2025

From: Members of the Food & Nutrition Workgroup  
Re: 2025 Report of the Food & Nutrition Workgroup

In accordance with Section 155 of Public Act No. 23-204 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30 2025 and Making Appropriations Therefor and Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items Implementing the State Budget, we hereby submit to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters related to Appropriations, the report on the activities of the Food & Nutrition Workgroup for 2025. In line with its statutory mandate to “to develop new best practices and initiatives concerning food security,” Workgroup submits recommended new initiatives for the consideration of the General Assembly.

**Connecticut General Assembly**

**Report of the Food & Nutrition Workgroup**

Public Act No. 23-204 *An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30 2025 and Making Appropriations Therefor and Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items Implementing the State Budget*

Submitted:  
December 10, 2025

## **Food & Nutrition Work Group Membership**

### **Local Food Recovery Organizations**

**Anne Stockton**, Vice President, Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center

**Haley Schulman**, Fairfield County Co-Site Director, Food Rescue US

**Joanna Marrero**, Manager of Inclusion Services, United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern Connecticut

**Jennie Hirsch**, Chief of Staff, Connecticut Foodshare

### **Local Food Insecurity Programs**

**Rev. Sara Smith**, Executive Director, Nourish Bridgeport

**Jennifer Clarke-Lofters**, Community Health Coordinator Milford Health Department

**Reggy St. Fortcolin**, Founder, Fridgeport

**Susan Harris**, Member, Witnesses to Hunger New Haven

### **Local Supermarket Owners**

**Ben Dubow**, Executive Director, Forge City Works/Grocery on Broad

**Patty Smith**, General Manager, Willimantic Food Co-op

**Wayne Pesce**, President, Connecticut Food Association

**SPOT VACANT**

### **Agricultural Producers of Food**

**Herb Virgo**, Executive Director, Keney Park Sustainability Project

**Kerry Kincy**, Farmer, Founder and Director, CNTR

**Renée Giroux**, Executive Director, NWCT Food Hub

**Vetiveah Immanuel**, Farmer, Food Justice Educator & Advocate

### **Representatives of Other Working Groups Appointed by the General Assembly or Executive Branch**

**Heather Peracchio** MS, RDN, CD-N, Assistant Extension Educator, University of Connecticut

*Representative of the Food Is Medicine Work Group*

**Dr. Kristen Cooksey Stowers**, Assistant Professor, University of Connecticut

*Representative of the Federal Nutrition Programs Work Group (On behalf of Dr. Marlene Schwartz)*

**Tida Infahsaeng**, Senior Director of Advocacy and Partnerships, United Way of Coastal and Western Connecticut

*Representative of the CT Food Policy Council*

**Lori Martin**, Executive Director, Haven's Harvest

*Representative of Food Donation Program Task Force*

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## Letter from the Administrator

Dear Members of the Appropriation Committee,

Pursuant to Section 155 of Public Act 23-204, the Connecticut General Assembly created the Food & Nutrition Workgroup, to be administered by the Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst at the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO).

The CWCSEO invited members to participate from across the state in line with the statutory guidance. At the establishment of this Workgroup, the membership and staff agreed to engage in this task to best bring about the goals and intentions behind the legislation, while establishing the groundwork for the series of recommended new initiatives and best practices concerning food security contained herein. The work group established its own procedures and meeting schedule, with 4 quarterly meetings occurring in 2025. In between full meetings, volunteer sub-groups met to draft recommendations following guidance provided by the whole group.

Aside from selecting agenda items for the 1st quarterly meeting when the group was still in the process of selecting its own topics for meetings, the CWCSEO endeavored to merely organize the group and allow members to shape discussion. The recommendations herein are those of the work group members and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the CWCSEO.

On behalf of the work group members listed above, I hereby present this report with hope that its content will help advance food security for all Connecticut residents. The Workgroup will continue meeting to work on further initiatives and best practices in 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christian Duborg". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Christian" and last name "Duborg" clearly legible.

Christian Duborg

Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst, CWCSEO

## Food & Nutrition Workgroup Background

The following report documents the work of the Food & Nutrition Workgroup in 2024 and 2025. In the 2023 Legislative Session, the General Assembly enacted Public Act 23-204 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, AND PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE AND OTHER ITEMS IMPLEMENTING THE STATE BUDGET. Section 155 of this law created the Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst position within the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO). The same section of the law lists the required “duties of the analyst,” which includes:

“(5) Administering a community-focused work group comprised of an equal number of representatives from local food recovery organizations, local food insecurity programs, local supermarket owners, agricultural producers of food and representatives of other working groups appointed by the General Assembly or executive branch to develop new best practices and initiatives concerning food security” (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>

The Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst was filled on January 22nd, 2024. In the absence of any statutory guidance on how group members should be selected, the CWCSEO conducted extensive community outreach and consultations in an effort to identify potential members of a nonpartisan Workgroup that would equally represent the listed categories and different parts of the state. By November of 2024, official invitations were sent out to 20 potential Workgroup members, four individuals from each of the five categories listed in the statute. As some members declined or stepped down from the Workgroup, the CWCSEO issued invitations to replacement members (with input from other members once the Workgroup convened) and attempted to minimize the length of any vacancies. The first meeting occurred on December 9th, 2024.

This report will summarize the activities of the Workgroup since convening and the new best practices and initiatives developed in response to the statutory mandate. In the absence of a termination date in statute, the Workgroup intends to continue meeting in 2026 and submit future reports on its work.

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<sup>1</sup> See, Connecticut General Assembly - Public Act 23-204 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, AND PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE AND OTHER ITEMS IMPLEMENTING THE STATE BUDGET (<https://cga.ct.gov/2023/ACT/PA/PDF/2023PA-00204-R00HB-06941-PA.PDF>)

## Executive Summary

Food insecurity affects a large number of residents across Connecticut. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that from 2021-2023, 10.4% of Connecticut residents were experiencing food insecurity, while Feeding America estimates the number at 14.3% in 2023 and DataHaven puts it at 18% in 2024.<sup>2 3 4</sup> All three sources agree that food insecurity has significantly increased in recent years. Not only are these households at significant risk of hunger, but food insecurity is also linked with increased risk of chronic disease, mental health difficulties, slowed child development, future housing insecurity, and shorter life expectancy, among others.<sup>5</sup> As such, food insecurity represents a serious threat to the wellbeing of the people of Connecticut.

In light of this challenge, the General Assembly created the position of the Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst and created this Workgroup to develop initiatives to combat food insecurity. From December 2024 to December 2025, the full Workgroup met five times and four volunteer sub-groups met a total of 17 times in between full meetings. Each full meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes and each sub-group meeting lasted approximately 1 hour. In each full meeting in 2025, 1-2 presenters shared information about the selected topic(s) with the group ahead of discussion about possible best practices and initiatives to recommend. Presenters included members of the workgroup, municipal government staff, staff from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and staff from the CWCSEO. Group members and members of the public then volunteered to participate in sub-groups tasked with drafting the specific recommendations based on the whole group's guidance.

Due to the broad nature of statutory language and the lack of specific guidance, the Workgroup discussed and agreed on its own procedures for creating recommendations, suggested their own topics for discussion, and voted in a poll to rank those topics by order of priority. The administrative staff then created proposed agendas based on those selected topics and suggested possible guest speakers to invite, finalizing the agenda after receiving member feedback. The sub-groups created specific recommendations and presented them to the full work group for feedback and approval.

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<sup>2</sup> See, USDA ERS - Food Security in the US

(<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/interactive-charts-and-highlights/>)

<sup>3</sup> See, Feeding America Map the Meal Gap - Food Insecurity among the Overall Population in Connecticut (<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/connecticut>)

<sup>4</sup> See, DataHaven - Study: 40% in state are struggling financially. About 18% reported times of not having enough for food (<https://www.ctdatahaven.org/blog/study-40-state-are-struggling-financially-about-18-reported-times-not-having-enough-food>)

<sup>5</sup> See, CWCSEO - 2024 Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Connecticut

(<https://wp.cga.ct.gov/cwcseo/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Food-Insecurity-in-Connecticut-Report-2024.pdf>)

The list of recommendations below reflects the outcome of these processes. It is the hope of the Workgroup that its work will help advance the work of ensuring food security for all residents of Connecticut.



## Recommended New Initiatives and Best Practices

The Workgroup agreed on a total of 11 recommended new initiatives and best practices under three topics the group discussed extensively in 2025:

### **Food Waste Reduction:**

1. Standardize Expiration Date Labels and Conduct Educational Campaigns Around Them
  - a. Food date labels should be standardized and regulated to include the phrase BEST If Used By: the date after which the quality of the item may deteriorate.
  - b. Updates to standard date labels must be accompanied by a funded educational campaign targeting the public and hunger-relief programs.
  - c. Food past date labels may be donated, so long as it is seemingly wholesome and donated following safe food handling guidelines.
2. Offer Enhanced Tax Credits for Food Donation
  - a. Tax incentives should be expanded to include an alternative tax credit, like a tax refund, that can be used by low-margin businesses, like many farms, in lieu of the enhanced deduction.
  - b. There should be enhanced tax incentives for nutritionally dense produce donations.
  - c. Food rescue organizations may sign off on donations made by food donors direct to community or mutual aid organizations.
3. Expand Organics Recycling Requirements and Prioritize Food Rescue
  - a. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) is responsible for enforcing the state's food donation policies, but requires additional funding to effectively carry out enforcement activities and provide education on compliance.
  - b. All educational entities should be required to share unserved nonperishable or unspoiled perishable food within the school community or donate it to local food rescue organizations or pantries, in accordance with safe food handling guidelines.
  - c. Food that cannot be shared may be donated. Language on shared table best practices must be updated to include whole produce without a peel (e.g. apples, etc.) can be shared and/or donated.
  - d. Funding is needed to support school staff and infrastructure that supports sharing and/or school donation programs, including refrigerators, signage, and other necessary resources.
  - e. Connecticut should invest in food recovery infrastructure such as technology, workforce development, Food Recovery Hubs, etc.
4. Establish Food Recovery Hubs to Provide Central Infrastructure for Food Rescue

- a. Connecticut should invest in Food Recovery Hubs, which act as infrastructure with ample dry and cold storage to aggregate, process, and repackage surplus food donations.
- b. Food Recovery Hubs should be multi-functional to partner with hunger relief organizations in need of additional storage and commercial kitchen space.
- c. Food Recovery Hubs maximize surplus food donations by creating a system that accepts short notice, late night, and holiday donations.
- d. Food Recovery Hubs foster more equitable sharing of food donations.

#### **Local Food Data and Resource Tracking:**

- 5. Establish a Statewide Group/Coalition of Food Alliance/Collaborative Coordinators to Share Best Practices and Coordinate Efforts
  - a. Host quarterly meetings to establish resource sharing, challenges and support among local food coordinators
- 6. Establish a State Template to Standardize Local Food System Data Collection
  - a. At least 1-2 baseline measures should be collected from each pantry
    - i. What types of food do you collect?
    - ii. Where do you receive your food from
    - iii. Does your pantry offer congregate meals?
    - iv. Does your pantry cater to dietary needs/restrictions?
    - v. Is a referral needed
    - vi. Do you have a sustainable source of fresh produce?
- 7. Establish a State Template for Local Food Guides
  - a. Standardized the information being shared on food guides to include but not be limited to;
    - i. Pantries
    - ii. Congregate meals
    - iii. Summer meal info
    - iv. Farmers markets
    - v. Access to bus lines
    - vi. Hours of operation
- 8. Establish or Expand Grants to Enable Local Governments or Nonprofits to Convene Local Food Alliances/Collaboratives and Oversee the Development of Local Food Guides and Local Data Collection
  - a. Could utilize/boost existing programs (ex. Food Systems Capacity Building Grant, GUSNIP)

#### **Food Access and "Food Desert" Elimination:**

- 9. Create a CT-specific Food Desert and Food Swamp Map to Identify the State's Highest Priority Low-Access communities
  - a. Create new 'Food Desert' and 'Food Swamp' indices rather than relying on 2019 USDA maps/methodology

- b. Indices should consider variables including but not limited to
  - i. Transportation access
  - ii. ALICE communities (United Way designation)
  - iii. Smaller retail stores (square footage)
  - iv. Immigrant accessibility
  - v. Digital connectivity
  - vi. Urban vs. rural geography
- 10. Establish Food Desert Relief Program Targeting CT's Low Access Communities
  - a. Supports should include but not necessarily be limited to:
    - i. Tax credits/abatelements (for both capital and operating expenditures);
    - ii. Grants and low-interest loans; and
    - iii. Training, technical support, and mentorship, including assistance for increasing penetration of SNAP/WIC access within retailers
- 11. Amend Existing State Statutes that present barriers to new food retailers
  - a. Amend legislation governing food cooperatives:
    - i. Allow flexibility in co-op structure
    - ii. Address member equity caps
  - b. Enable flexibility to meet WIC retail requirements

## Invited Guest Presenters and Attending Members of the Public

Invited Presenters (whole group or as part of a sub-group):

- Sherill Baldwin, Environmental Analyst, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Kelley Tomlinson, Health Educator, Norwalk Health Department
- Malana Rogers-Bursen, Project Director for Food Security & Environmental Justice, Wesleyan University
- Rex Fowler, Consultant
- Martha Page, Consultant

The work group meetings were open to the public. The following members of the public attended at least one meeting but were not invited presenters at any point:

- Ali Ghiorse
- Anagha Babu
- Caroline Wachino
- Christine Caruso
- Karen Saggese
- Meg Hadley Zimmerman
- Nancy Coughlin
- Rachel Khanna
- Shana Brierly
- Stephanie Johnson

## Sub-Group Members and Meeting Dates

### **Food Waste Sub-Group:**

#### Members

- Haley Schulman
- Lori Martin
- Reggy St. Fortcolin

#### Sub-Group Meeting Dates:

- Friday March 21st, 2025
- Thursday April 3rd, 2025
- Thursday April 10th, 2025
- Thursday April 17th, 2025
- Thursday April 24th, 2025
- Thursday May 1st, 2025
- Thursday May 15th, 2025

### **Local Food Data Sub-Group:**

#### Members

- Jennifer Clarke-Lofters
- Kelley Tomlinson (invited expert guest presenter/participant)
- Tida Infahsaeng
- Christian Duborg (for administrative purposes at request of sub-group members)

#### Sub-Group Meeting Dates:

- Thursday June 26th, 2025
- Thursday July 17th, 2025
- Thursday August 7th, 2025

### **Food Access and “Food Deserts” Sub-Group:**

#### Members

- Ben Dubow
- Dr. Kristen Cooksey Stowers
- Patty Smith
- Rex Fowler (invited expert guest presenter/participant)
- Tida Infahsaeng
- Christian Duborg (for administrative purposes at request of sub-group members)

#### Sub-Group Meeting Dates:

- Thursday June 26th, 2025
- Tuesday July 22nd, 2025
- Friday August 1st, 2025

**Program-Policy and Systems Change Solutions Sub-Group:**Members

- Joanna Marrero
- Lori Martin
- Martha Page (invited expert guest presenter/participant)
- Tida Infahsaeng
- Christian Duborg (for administrative purposes at request of sub-group members)

Sub-Group Meeting Dates:

- Thursday September 4th, 2025
- Thursday October 2nd, 2025
- Wednesday October 29th, 2025

## Workgroup Procedures

As noted previously, the members of the work group discussed and agreed upon their own procedures and meeting cadence in the absence of statutory guidance. The following document was prepared by the administrator to summarize the agreed points of discussion and was reviewed and approved by the Workgroup members.

**Statutory Objective:** “to develop new best practices and initiatives concerning food security” ([Public Act 23-204](#))

**Deliverable:** A document outlining all of the work group’s recommended “best practices and initiatives” to be compiled at the end of each calendar year by the work group’s administrator (currently Christian).

- This document will be maintained on the CWCSEO’s website and submitted to the General Assembly. The work group document will be a separate document with language clarifying the recommendations are those of the work group rather than the CWCSEO.
- The document will be compiled by the administrator after the 3rd quarter regular meeting to be reviewed and approved during the 4th quarter meeting.

### **Procedure for Including a Recommendation in the Final Document:**

1. Topic is discussed by the whole group in a regular meeting
2. Administrator emails the work group asking for volunteers to participate in a topic-specific sub-group.
  - a. *Group members respond via email indicating their interest\**
3. Sub-group meets 2-3 times in between regular meetings
  - a. Template: 1st meeting to discuss challenges that need solving, 2nd to discuss solutions and create the document, 3rd to finalize the document and plan to present recommendations.
  - b. *Sub-group prepares a written document containing recommendations, with previous regular meeting minutes as guidance.\**
4. Written recommendations provided to the whole group by email in advance of the next regular meeting
  - a. *All group members respond with feedback if they have any by email before the meeting or verbally during the meeting\**
5. Written recommendations are presented and discussed in the regular meeting, either approved by the group or given necessary edits.
  - a. Repeat steps 3-5 if edits needed
  - b. If attendance is below 75%, the administrator will include a last call for feedback in the post-meeting email.

\*Note: a \* and yellow highlight indicates an action to be taken by members asynchronously

### **Meeting Logistics:**

- Regular meetings occur once per quarter via zoom (90 minute duration)
- Meeting dates and times are set by the administrator. Invites will be sent to members before the beginning of the calendar year
- Topics for discussion will be set by polling work group members. Any items not covered in the calendar year they are selected will roll over to the following year.
- Template Agenda:
  - Introductions
  - Review of old business (present and discuss recommendations if there are any)
  - New topic presentations and group discussion
  - Next steps and adjourn
- Agenda and any written recommendations will be provided by administrator at least one week in advance
- Special meetings can be requested by any member by emailing the administrator
  - Meeting will be called if at least 33% of current members second the request

### **Miscellaneous Procedures:**

- The work group adheres to the non-partisan requirements of the CWCSEO and does not lobby for or against any specific legislation
- Work group members may rotate off of the group by notifying the administrator via email of their intention to do so
- The administrator of the group will maintain meeting recordings, agendas and minutes, this procedures document, and a directory of all current members somewhere where they are accessible online to all members (google drive, One Drive, etc.)



## Meeting Minutes and Recording Links

The Workgroup held its organizational meeting on Monday December 9th, 2024. The full workgroup meetings for 2025 occurred on Monday February 10th, Tuesday May 6th, Wednesday August 13th, and Monday, November 3rd.

### Food & Nutrition Work Group Organizing Meeting Agenda

Monday, December 9, 2024 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85079255208>

### Meeting Minutes:

#### [Recording Link](#)

Members Present: Reggy St. Fortcolin, Jennie Hirsch, Jennifer Clarke-Lofters, Haley Schulman, Ben Dubow, Herb Virgo, Rev. Sara Smith, Lori Martin, Renee Giroux, Sarah Leathers, Tida Infahsaeng

#### I. Introductions

- A. Christian thanks everyone for attending and for being willing to participate in the work group. States that the goal is to spend about 30 mins covering logistics and an hour discussing content. Before any of that everyone is asked to introduce themselves and their organization

- B. Each member introduced themselves

#### II. Work Group Purpose and Statutory Requirements

- A. Christian presents the following language from [PA 23-204](#) (emphasis added):
  1. Administering a community-focused work group comprised of an equal number of representatives from local food recovery organizations, local food insecurity programs, local supermarket owners, agricultural producers of food and representatives of other working groups appointed by the General Assembly or executive branch ***to develop new best practices and initiatives concerning food security***
- B. Christian notes that there are lots of logistics and procedures that are not spelled out in the statute, which the group will need to decide on.

#### III. Group Discussion: Logistics

- A. Christian says there are 3 things that need to be decided first: How frequently to meet, format of meetings, and how to set agendas. CWCSEO proposes the following as a starting point
  1. Quarterly meetings
  2. 90 minutes over zoom (with option for future hybrid option), scheduled via doodle polls one month in advance.

3. Everyone sends topic suggestions to Christian to be compiled into proposed topics
  - B. Participants agree to quarterly meetings with the option for additional meetings in response to time-sensitive issues.
  - C. Haley: Use google forms to collect input for meeting topics then make a large overall list
  - D. Reggy: agree on quarterly but dates should be scheduled to align with the legislative calendar.
  - E. Herb: 90 minutes for meetings “or as needed if we’re super efficient”
  - F. Rev. Sara, Ben, and Lori: would be best to set schedule for the year all at once so people can plan in advance
  - G. Reggy: 2-3 years out should this group have subcommittees?
  - H. Rev. Sara: create an “exhaustive list” of the topics we know about, each person can own their area of expertise
  - I. Haley: Would be great to have an email group so we can send emails to all other members.
  - J. Rev. Sara: would be ideal to have everyone’s contact info so we can communicate directly.
  - K. Ben: We need time and a system to decide which topics to prioritize when it comes to meeting agenda topics.
  - L. Reggy: We should coordinate with the Food Policy Council since they’re doing very similar work to us.
  - M. Participants agree to create a list of topics for future agendas then have a second form where each person ranks them in terms of time-sensitivity.
- IV. Annual Report Draft Overview
- A. Christian presents slides containing the key findings from the following chapters of the CWCSEO’s annual report on food insecurity:
    1. Food Insufficiency and Insecurity
    2. Nutrition Insecurity
    3. Local Food Economies
  - B. Haley asks when it will be public
    1. Christian says January 15th
  - C. Rev. Sara asks if the fact that some immigrants and refugees are not eligible for federal programs factors into those programs not reaching many or most food insecure households?
    1. Christian says the data used primarily lists income as the primary factor in ineligibility.
  - D. Tida asks if any challenge rose to the top?
    1. Christian says federal nutrition programs due to the number of them and their reach?

- E. Reggy asks if the value of a dollar today relative to a few years ago is in the report.
  - 1. Christian says it currently isn't
- F. Reggy suggests including a snapshot comparing CT data to other states.
- G. Rev. Sara notes that much of the subsidized corn goes to livestock feed
- H. Reggy asks if the life expectancy study has an estimate in terms of years?
  - 1. Christian says he believes the study has it but that he doesn't
- V. Group Discussion: Annual Report Questions and Feedback
  - A. Herb states he's particularly alarmed by the estimate that 2.7% of food spending is on local items
  - B. Reggy expresses hope that the document will be able to provide context for all of the numbers
  - C. Renee notes that one of the biggest barriers to local produce is the food safety certifications required to get food to big box stores. Need to make sure it's cost effective for small businesses to get that
  - D. Lori notes that CT DEEP is coming out with a report in the coming weeks and it would be good to know what data it contains on wasted food.
  - E. Ben notes that we may be missing some people in this group, specifically restaurateurs when it comes to food waste and local food and food as medicine people when it comes to local food.
  - F. Sarah notes it's important to identify priorities in all of the different challenges that exist.
  - G. Rev. Sara notes that it's important to highlight and emphasize the social determinants of health concepts.
  - H. Tida asks if we have labor representation on the group
    - 1. Christian says that we currently do not
- VI. Next Steps and Adjourn
  - A. Christian will send follow up email to members to set dates for 2025 meetings, collect input on agendas, and share contact info.



The Commission on  
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity  
**CWCSEO**  
Connecticut General Assembly

**Food & Nutrition Work Group: 1st Quarter 2025 Meeting**

Monday, February 10, 2025 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82832454835>

## Meeting Minutes:

### [Recording Link](#)

Members Present: Jennifer Clarke-Lofters, Lori Martin, Rev. Sara Smith, Ben Dubow, Reggy St. Fortcolin, Wayne Pesce, Jennie Hirsch, Susan Harris, Haley Schulman, Tida Infahsaeng, Joanna Marrero, Herb Virgo, Renee Giroux

Public Present: Kelley Tomlinson, Christine Caruso, Sherrill Baldwin, Rachel Khanna, Caroline Wachino

- I. Introductions (5 mins)
- II. Review Minutes from Last Meeting, Discuss Old Business (15 mins)
  - A. Key points from last meeting: statutory mandate of the workgroup, logistics (quarterly regular meetings were decided), Google Form for suggesting and ranking agenda items, Christian presented preliminary findings for report.
  - B. Rev Sara Smith: asks for location of published report, important to be able to access easily to share with stakeholders
  - C. Old Business:
    1. Goals, Priorities and Procedures for WG
      - a) Goal: to develop new initiatives and best practices for improving food insecurities
      - b) Christian poses: Who is drafting the recommendations? How we will discuss the content and decide what goes in recommendation? When the recommendation is drafted and submitted to the WG, how will the approval process work?
    2. Commission suggests two meeting processes as a starting point: 1st meeting- community groups/WG members/state agencies give presentations on best practices and barriers followed by open discussion. Agree on broad recommendations. Then, smaller WG meetings to meet and refine recommendation and share proposed recommendation to larger WG for voting
    3. KPSP: how to invite the relevant people to give an accurate snapshot. If it is too big, then you will need more meetings to compile recs. How do we decide who/how many people? Christian shares that he can do outreach to relevant people/ WG members
    4. Susan Harris asks if Zoom or in person? Christian shares that a Zoom link will always be available
    5. Haley Schulman: What is the time period between presentation, analysis, and recommendations? Waiting a quarter between analysis and

recommendation may be too long. Initial discussion follows the guest presentation to form ideas and general ideas, then the small groups meet in the 3 months and then shared at the next quarterly meeting.

6. Reggy: Who are the recommendations targeted to?
7. How and where to share recommendations?
  - a) Christian shares two options: work them into the required report or make its own separate WG document. WG suggests both- putting it in multiple places/formats to expand the reach
  - b) Reggy suggests including costing of recommendations
8. Special meeting requests outside 4 meetings
  - a) How should this meeting be called?
    - (1) Email Commission
    - (2) Susan Harris: Whether or not to call a meeting may depend on the topic or urgency of the need. Rev. Sara Smith: dependent on state/ federal actions as well
    - (3) Joanna Marrero/Lori Martin: Could use polling to determine urgency and have others weigh in on the request
    - (4) Email Christian, poll,  $\frac{1}{3}$  quorum to call meeting
    - (5) Reggy: How to respond to policy developments in a more timely way? Special meeting?
9. Participation from the public
  - a) Meeting dates posted on the website, send out announcement.

### III. Developing Best Practices: Food Waste Reduction (35 mins)

#### A. Sherill Baldwin: Food Waste Prevention & Food Recovery Roadmap

1. Suggestions: Date labeling, tax incentives for food donations, food donation law, provide grants for food reduction efforts, statewide consumer education campaigns
2. Rev. Sara Smith: asks what Haven's Harvest about improving labeling practices
3. Reggy: suggests collection of policy recommendations, better definitions to clarify meaning of food waste terms
4. Tida Infahsaeng: For orgs required to comply, there are no funds to implement it—is this correct? Waste generators will be triggered by the law but schools may or may not have funds
5. Sherrill Baldwin: shares national event (Food Waste Prevention Week), this year on cooking leftovers.

#### B. Haley Schulman and Lori Martin: Food Recovery in CT

### IV. Topics for Small Group

#### A. Policy

B. Education

C. WG Feedback

1. Reggy: we can split WG across both topics
2. Haley Schulman: should focus efforts on specific areas of the state that could use food recovery most
3. Jennifer- Clarke Lofters: educating across communities(in schools and PTOs)
4. Lori: Mentions RI law that excess food from schools needs to be recovered– could be interesting to look into. Need to re-educate ourselves about food safety in general
5. Sherill Baldwin: Schools don't know that sharing tables are legal. Could we set up school food pantries?
6. Kelley Tomlinson: shares Norwalk has food pantries in HS and family center which has been well received
7. R. Khanna: HB 6917 (AN ACT CONCERNING THE MANAGEMENT OF SOLID WASTE IN THE STATE) coming up for public hearing
8. Tida: Think about narrative/concerns that feeding more children through universal school meals increases food waste.
9. Haley Schulman: objections that schools who receive federally funded school meals may have less interest/ perception that there is a restriction on the food being donated
10. Renee Giroux: during COVID when there were free school meal program, there was connection with farmers that was beneficial all around and with minimal waste due to educational piece. The majority of farmers through CT are food insecure, which should be highlighted and fit in with other concerns.
11. Reggy: Needs to be better communication when different organizations come to support Bridgeport to reduce waste
12. Haley Schulman: VA has enhanced tax incentives for farmers

V. Developing Best Practices: Local Data Collection and Tracking Resources (30 mins)

- A. Item postponed for 2nd quarter meeting due to time limitation.

VI. Next Steps, Agenda for Remaining Meetings, and Adjourn (5 mins)

- A. Next regular meeting in May
- B. Email Christian if interested in small group to develop recommendations on policy, education, and community models



### **Food & Nutrition Work Group: 2nd Quarter 2025 Meeting**

Tuesday, May 6, 2025 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89593820018>

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

#### [Recording Link](#)

Members Present: Jennifer Clarke-Lofters, Lori Martin, Ben Dubow, Reggy St. Fortcolin, Susan Harris, Tida Infahsaeng, Herb Virgo, Renee Giroux, Heather Peracchio, Anne Stockton, Kristen Cooksey Stowers, Patty Smith

Public Present: Kelley Tomlinson, Anagha Babu, Shana Brierly, Rex Fowler, Ali Ghiorse, Stephanie Johnson, Caroline Wachino

#### **I. Introductions (5 mins)**

#### **II. Review Minutes from Last Meeting, Discuss Old Business (20 mins)**

A. Lori Martin presents a document with the proposed recommendations around food waste initiatives, including:

1. Standardize and regulate date labeling practices on food and pair with a public education campaign on how to interpret.
2. Create state-level refundable tax credits for food donations at the state level.
3. Update organics recycling law to require education entities to donate surplus food and provide funding to expand storage and donation infrastructure
4. Establish food recovery hubs to facilitate storage and transportation throughout the state

B. No questions or feedback from the work group or public, Christian says he will follow up with members via email to finalize

#### **III. Developing Best Practices: Local Data Collection and Tracking Resources (30 mins)**

A. Jennifer Clarke-Lofters and Kelley Tomlinson present on the practices in their towns of Milford and Norwalk, respectively.

1. Both towns have Food Security Work Groups/Alliances convened by the town's Health Department
2. Milford created and distributed surveys in their town, one for providers and one for residents, to identify the state of food insecurity in town, what data is being maintained by organizations, challenges that exist, and the efficacy of certain resources such as the town food guide.
  - a) Primary challenges for organizations were lack of storage and funding
  - b) About half of 14 Milford organizations reported having limited food choices, exactly half provided fresh produce and/or meat
  - c) 514 residents responded, 10% didn't have enough to eat, 42% are not able to access desired foods sometimes, 40% stated a healthy diet is not affordable for them.
  - d) Only 28% of Milford respondents knew about the food guide, 47% never used it.
  - e) 14% of residents didn't know where to find food resources
3. Both towns maintain and update a "food guide" showing where residents can get food support in their town.
  - a) Jenn emphasizes the importance of consistent language, ensuring that everyone is calling the food guide the same thing.
  - b) Kelley says that their food guide not only includes food pantries and emergency resources, but SNAP and WIC enrollment supports.
  - c) Kelley says that they added eligibility requirements and bus routes to each entry based on community feedback.
  - d) Kelley notes that Norwalk updates theirs twice a year, adding summer meal sites for the summer food guide.
4. Kelley shares a few challenges with regards to local data:
  - a) Local providers don't collect the same data, no standardized metrics for tracking impact
  - b) Limited information cross-sharing, sometimes state-level info is not disseminated equally and/or is outdated.
5. Work Group Members and attendees ask a number of questions after the presentation:
  - a) Reggy asks if there's a convening of local food alliances to share information and initiatives.
    - (1) Currently there is nothing formal, communication is ad-hoc and word of mouth
  - b) Susan asks if these alliances get city support or other outside resources



- (1) Milford health department and some nonprofits receive city support, same in Norwalk
  - c) Tida asks if the CHNA (Community Health Needs Assessment) and CHIP (Community Health Improvement Plan) continue to be opportunity to access resources and make connections
    - (1) Norwalk does one every 3 years, provides data around food and nutrition and it gets highlighted as a health priority
  - d) Stephanie mentions the Farmington Valley Health District is creating their first CHIP and food insecurity is a major topic in the findings. She asks if federal funding changes are having an impact
    - (1) Uncertainty is a challenge, town is looking for alternative funding sources to share with local nonprofits. Milford is also creating a food insecurity fact sheet to share on social media to encourage more community donations to offset losses in federal support.
  - e) Christian asks what the time and resource needs would be for a town that doesn't currently have a food guide to create one.
    - (1) Jenn hosts a 1-hour meeting once a month, with at most 2 hours of work outside the meeting. The buy in from alliance/work group members has lead to a sharing of work.
    - (2) Kelley says the biggest lift comes at the beginning of the process when you're building out your list and building relationships with local food orgs. After that it's just regular updates.
- B. Caroline summarizes the CWCSEO food guide/database project she's been working on.
- 1. So far the CWCSEO database is populated by an opt-in survey. The survey has been updated to be shorter and easier to fill out.
  - 2. CWCSEO checked which towns did and did not have food guides currently, used models like Milford and Norwalk to create a best-practices guide and toolkit to help towns without a food guide create
    - a) Kristen notes that UConn and Foodshare are doing state-level work to create new food and nutrition insecurity data available statewide. It should be available later in the year.
- C. Group Member Discussion: Preliminary Recommendations
- 1. Christian encourages work group members to consider possible recommendations, such as:
    - a) Reggy mentioned the possibility of a formal network connecting local food alliances
    - b) Kelley mentioned standardized metrics for impact

- c) Christian asks if all towns should have a food alliance/food guide, and if so what tools would need to be available to make that possible

#### IV. Developing Best Practices: Food Access and “Food Deserts” (30 mins)

##### A. Christian provides a brief review of primer materials

1. [Public Act 23-204](#) created a tax credit for grocery stores to open in LILA Areas/“Food Deserts”
2. [USDA Food Access Research Atlas](#) (FARA) shows where Low-Income, Low-Access (LILA) areas are in the state, though the data
3. New Jersey [state food desert index methodology](#) measures food deserts at the state level, independent of federal data.
4. Using the food desert index, New Jersey created a [Food Desert Relief Program](#), providing about \$40 million in tax credits, technical support, grants, and more to support grocery stores that open in state-identified food deserts and accept SNAP and WIC EBT.
5. Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) report concluded that the CT tax credit from Public Act 23-204 was not usable due to low funding levels, its one-time and time-limited nature, and the bureaucratic challenges to receive the tax abatement.

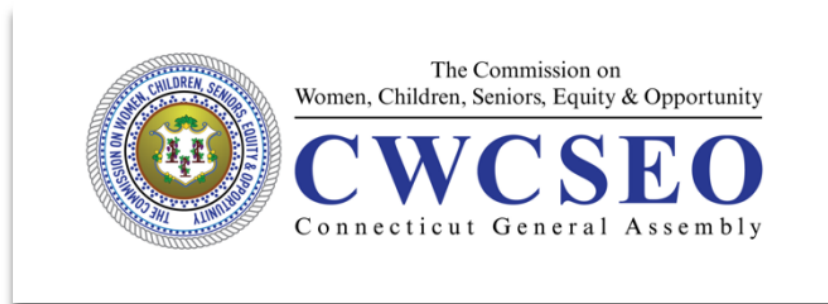
##### B. Group Members Discuss Preliminary Recommendations and Topics of Importance

1. Tida states that she ran a program that ran a food desert incentive program similar to New Jersey’s. One of the big challenges they faced is that the operators don’t own the land or building, so property tax abatement wasn’t a sustainable way to improve food access. EFOD is a better way to look at development.
2. Rex states that New Jersey creating their own mapping is also advantageous because its designations have made more stores eligible for more federal and private funds. Property taxes can be a deal-breaker in high-tax municipalities. Also notes that in Hartford the optimal location isn’t inside a “food desert” but could serve almost all of North Hartford because it’s at the intersection of 9 public bus lines.
3. Patty states that as a grocery store in a LILA area, the CT tax abatement is “a drop in the bucket.” Grocery stores are low-margin businesses and cost of food is the biggest expense. Hard to be competitive on price as a smaller, independent stores who can’t work with big distributors.
4. Kristen states that often organization needs and client needs differ, and having input from both sources is critically important.

5. Rex states that CT should create a fund that can provide resources to grocery stores in LILA areas similar to other states like New Jersey and Pennsylvania
6. Rex also recommends removing labor-peace agreement requirement from current law.
7. Kristen recommends the state embed food and health into a broader community revitalization program. A proposal already exists for something like this in Hartford.
8. Patty recommends the state model its co-op laws to make opening one more logistically viable.

**V. Next Steps, Agenda for Remaining Meetings, and Adjourn (5 mins)**

- A. Christian makes a few final asks for the group.
  1. Promote [annual report input form](#) and [database form](#)
  2. 2025 Report Preview
    - a) Collecting community initiatives
- B. Christian notes the next regular meeting is August 13th 12 PM - 1:30 PM, work group members can request a special meeting in the meantime via email.



**Food & Nutrition Work Group: 3rd Quarter 2025 Meeting**

Wednesday, August 13, 2025 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83811655395>

**Meeting Minutes:**

[Recording Link](#)

Members Present: Joanna Marrero, Reggy St. Fortcolin, Wayne Pesce, Tida Infahsaeng, Lori Martin, Anne Stockton, Jennie Hirsch, Susan Harris, Renee Giroux, Patty Smith

Public Present: Kelley Tomlinson, Rex Fowler, Ali Ghiorse, Martha Page, Karen Saggese, Nancy Coughlin, Meg Hadley Zimmerman, Shana Brierly

- I. Introductions (5 mins)
- II. Review Minutes from Last Meeting, Discuss Old Business (20 mins)

- A. Christian shares the previous meeting minutes and reminds the group of the initial presentations on local food data collection and food access/“food deserts.” He informs the group that the volunteer sub-groups have worked to turn the whole-group guidance from the previous meeting into written recommendations that they will present today.
- B. Kelley Tomlinson presents the local food data sub-group’s 4 recommendations:
  - 1. Build a statewide group or coalition of local food collaborative/alliance/policy council administrators to coordinate local efforts across the state.
    - a) Include local groups (ex. Danbury Food Collaborative) and food system sector groups (ex. CT Farmers Market Association)
    - b) Question: Where should such a group “live”?
  - 2. Identify funds to support local resource tracking and data collection via 211 and local food collaboratives
    - a) Identified existing grants such as GUSNIP and Food System Capacity Building Grants as options
  - 3. Create a state template to help standardize data collection efforts
  - 4. Create a local food guide template for towns to create local food guides
- C. Christian opens the floor for questions/feedback
  - 1. Anne Stockton asks how local food guides would be different from 211?
    - a) Kelley states that local food guides are resources for their respective communities in addition to 211
  - 2. Susan Harris asks if it would be more accessible as a website than a physical guide?
    - a) Kelley notes the CWCSEO’s online map project. Christian explains that the CWCSEO is creating a statewide food resource map and database, which hopefully would be filled with info collected from local food guides
  - 3. Susan notes that keeping data updated will be a challenge
    - a) Christian agrees and notes that if each food guide is updated locally, that will make a statewide map much more viable
  - 4. Ali Ghiorse states that Greenwich is in the early stages of developing such a food guide and notes the importance of connecting data and policy
  - 5. Anne asks about the motivation for recommending a quarterly meeting for the statewide group, noting there are already so many groups around food meeting.
    - a) Kelley notes that it was picked for the purposes of striking a balance to not be too sparing or too much of a burden on people’s schedules

6. Anne notes that quarterly can be more of a burden than people think especially with so many other meetings.
  - a) Christian states that the whole group in the May meeting had expressed interest in some sort of coordinating structure for local food groups, which was the inspiration for this recommendation. He notes that the group could theoretically be folded into another group depending on the goal, but if it lives under a government group then there would be restrictions on policy and advocacy work.
- D. Christian shares the [Work Group Procedures Document](#) in the chat and explains the next steps the document outlines.
  1. The Work Group will have to submit a document to the General Assembly outlining its recommendations at the end of the calendar year.
  2. Christian will compile that document between this meeting and 4th quarter meeting in November
  3. What recommendations go into the document is determined by what the group approves after presentations like these ones.
  4. Since attendance is below 75% today, Christian will send an email to the whole group listing the recommendations with a last call for feedback or suggested changes. Recommendations with no suggested changes will be adopted as is.
- E. Rex Fowler and Patty Smith present the recommendations of the Food Access Sub-Group
  1. Create a CT-specific Food Desert Map to identify high-priority areas
    - a) Develop and use new food desert and food swamp indices rather than USDA maps
  2. Establish a Comprehensive Food Desert Relief Program to encourage grocery stores in those areas via tax credits, grants, loans, and technical assistance
  3. Amend state statutes to remove barriers to opening and operating a store
    - a) Update the food co-op statute
    - b) Provide maximum flexibility for meeting WIC vendor requirements
- F. Christian opens the floor for questions/feedback
  1. Martha Page asks what was the logic behind keeping the terminology of “food deserts”
    - a) Rex states that the group considered that question, and is open to alternative terminology

2. Martha notes that the “food desert” terminology is still recognized by the federal government, also asks if the work group considered recommending something like the Massachusetts SNAP Doubling Program HIP?
    - a) Christian states the work group didn’t discuss that because its focus was on grocery stores, but that the CWCSEO has formally recommended a CT version of HIP be created
  3. Anne asks who would do the work of creating the food desert index and the formula
    - a) Rex states the group didn’t get into details but hopes to learn from the example of New Jersey when they present to the state on September 17th
  4. Anne states that she’d be very interested in this map and the data it creates, but worries that areas like Southeastern CT might be de-prioritized by the formula
    - a) Christian notes that the New Jersey model was to do statewide listening sessions to identify variables for their formula.
- G. Christian states that he will be drafting a “report” on these recommendations to present to the group for approval at the 4th quarter meeting and once it is approved submit it to the General Assembly.

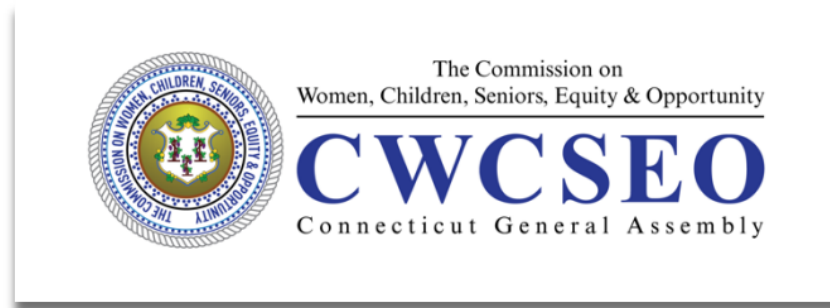
### III. Developing Best Practices: Capacity Building in the Food System (Infrastructure) (30 mins)

- A. Christian states that this item will be delayed to the next meeting as one of the presenters was not able to attend.

### IV. Developing Best Practices: Program Policy and Systems Change Solutions (30 mins)

- A. Christian presents the CWCSEO 2025 State of Food Insecurity in Connecticut Report draft, its policy recommendations, and how they were developed.
- B. Christian opens the floor for questions or feedback
  1. Anne asks when the final report will be released
    - a) Christian states it’ll be submitted to the legislature in November then released to the public in December or January
  2. Martha asks if there’s been any recommendations to remove things from SNAP
    - a) Christian says no but that he is following Arkansas and Colorado’s waiver application, as they ask for approval to add prepared foods to SNAP.
  3. Susan notes that Summer Meals have been renamed to SUN Meals, and that the CWCSEO should be promoting SUN Bucks as many families don’t know about it.
    - a) Christian agrees especially since the program is fairly soon.

V. Next Steps, Agenda for Remaining Meetings, and Adjourn (5 mins)



**Food & Nutrition Work Group: 4th Quarter 2025 Meeting**

Monday, November 3, 2025 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88090478807>

**Meeting Minutes:**

[Recording Link](#)

**Members Present:** Reggy St. Fortcolin, Heather Peracchio, Ben Dubow, Susan Harris, Jennifer Clarke-Lofters, Haley Schulman, Joanna Marrero, Tida Infahsaeng, Kristen Cooksey Stowers, Patty Smith

**Public Present:** Martha Page, Melvette Hill

- I. Review Minutes from Last Meeting, Discuss Old Business (15 mins)
  - A. Christian introduces the Systems Change Sub-Group to present their recommendations
  - B. Martha states that the Sub-Group “swung for the fences” with large policy changes the group deemed necessary to make progress on food security
  - C. Christian shares screen and reads the 5 recommendations produced by the sub-group:
    1. Create a permanent fund to pay for food programs in the state budget
    2. Create a State Food Office in the Executive Branch and an Office of the Food Advocate in the Office of Government Accountability
    3. Require Regional and Statewide Planning for Food Production, Processing, Distribution, Consumption and Recovery
    4. Establish the Right to Food (similar language to Maine’s)
    5. Form a fully non-governmental CT Food Coalition which can coordinate food policy advocacy among community organizations
  - D. Christian notes that while CWCSEO recommendations are completely separate and do not bind this work group in any way, recommendations 1 and 3 are in direct alignment with pending CWCSEO recommendations.

- E. Reggy asks if creating these new food positions in state government would replace or be in addition to the Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst Position currently held by Christian
  - 1. Martha responds that there is room in this topic (food insecurity) for there to be multiple places which have activity going on. This would not get rid of the Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst Position but would bring more heft to the work.
  - 2. Christian adds there are things he can't do in the Legislative Branch of government that these new positions could do
- F. Melvette notes policymakers will be thinking positions over people and asks if the intention in creating more roles was to create support in both the Executive and Legislative branches of government
  - 1. Martha responds that was the intention
- G. Christian notes that attendance is slightly over 50%, but below the 75% threshold so approval of the recommendations will be done by email. He asks if anyone has any initial thoughts or feedback
- H. Reggy asks how the fund would be controlled
  - 1. Christian says the group can specify where it would be. Notes that the CWCSEO recommendation would be to create the fund in the state budget and follow the normal budget process.
- I. Christian asks for any revisions to 3rd quarter meeting minutes to be made in chat
- II. Developing Best Practices: Capacity Building in the Food System (Infrastructure) (20 mins)
  - A. Reggy presents the background of his and his partners work in assessing food infrastructure needs and the findings of the survey they conducted for infrastructure needs of 60 food providers, with the key needs being:
    - 1. Refrigeration and freezer capacity
    - 2. Larger and more efficient building spaces
    - 3. Reliable transportation
    - 4. Updated technology to manage inventory and logistics
    - 5. Improved energy efficiency
    - 6. Specialized equipment
    - 7. Staffing and Operational Support
  - B. Martha asks to see the graphs summarizing results again. Notes that a lot of the respondents have operated for more than 10 years
  - C. Haley notes that a lot of the respondents are much smaller programs where a little bit of money would make a significant impact, which seems more doable than one massive investment
    - 1. Reggy agrees and notes a lot of respondents were places of worship such as churches that also had a small pantry



- D. Reggy said there should be a tiered system of grants, with some quick and easy microgrants for small infrastructure needs and bigger ones for larger needs
- E. Joanna notes they are getting an uptick in requests for food for homebound individuals or those with transportation issues. It would be helpful to offer free transportation to and from pantries when needed similar to how HUSKY offers transportation for medical appointments.
- F. Jennifer agrees and mentions that lots of people don't know what services they are eligible for. Every food pantry should be able to connect clients to services and benefits.
- G. Susan says that in towns that have more than one pantry there should be coalitions similar to New Haven's CFAN to coordinate efforts, exchange information, and maximize the efficacy of available infrastructure.
- H. Jennifer agrees and notes that coalitions need to combat the perception that pantries are in conflict with each other
- I. Reggy mentions technology as an important infrastructure piece. Proposes an "internal database" to facilitate digital communication between individual providers
- J. Jennifer says that such a platform should help pinpoint what barriers exist for each pantry and how resources/infrastructure can be shared to overcome those challenges
- K. Christian mentions that while Renee is not in attendance today infrastructure and resource sharing are a big part of her organization's work
- L. Reggy notes that only are refrigerated vans expensive but the insurance on them is also a prohibitive cost that will need to be addressed
- M. Haley states that the community fridges have been hugely useful where they currently exist. One special partnership was installing and stocking one at a community health center. Models like that can overcome transportation barriers if families are already going there for an appointment. Food Rescue US has also considered putting community fridges at donor sites to temporarily store food awaiting transportation
- N. Martha echoes the previous statement of using this as a potential catalyst for coordination among pantries, which is always helpful.
- O. Heather says that putting food at medical appointment locations is particularly powerful because, as previously noted, HUSKY provides transportation to medical appointments so families will be able to access the food
- P. Susan notes that there could opportunity for positive overlap with food as medicine efforts
- Q. Reggy says infrastructure support should also be given to farmers who donate their surplus food

- R. Susan suggests all day bus passes to distribute to food pantries to give out to clients
  - S. Christian notes that he will follow up via email to get volunteer for the sub-group and provide them with information
- III. 2025 Report Review (40 mins)
- A. Christian notes that the report is to document the Work Group's activity and summarize its recommendations. It will be submitted to the General Assembly
  - B. Christian provides overview of the report document, reading key passages and summarizing each section
  - C. Haley notes that there have been a number of changes at the federal level since the group last met. One example of this is the end of the USDA measuring food insecurity. She asks if there's an opportunity to add in new updates in response to those developments
    - 1. Christian notes that current Work Group procedures require a full 2 meeting and sub-group process. The group could collectively agree to change those procedures to allow for new additions, schedule a special meeting before the end of the year to go through the full process, or add any new recommendations into the 2026 Report
    - 2. Tida asks what the timeline for the 2026 Report would be
      - a) Christian states that absent changes to the current procedures by unanimous agreement, the 2026 Report would come out next December
    - 3. Martha asks if the group could amend the timeline to create an interim/supplemental report
      - a) Christian says that as long as the group agrees and meets with the purpose of "developing new initiatives and best practices"
    - 4. Haley states a supplemental report makes the most sense to her, believes it's important to acknowledge certain recent developments won't be covered by the regular report
      - a) Christian notes a number of members give thumbs up in support of this suggestion and Kristen agreed with the proposal in the meeting chat
  - D. Martha asks where this report will go once the group submits it
    - 1. Christian notes that in the absence of a Committee of cognizance, it will be submitted to the Appropriations Committee, the Legislative Library, and posted on the CWCSEO website. That's the end of the required actions but once it's public members are free to promote it as individuals
  - E. Martha notes that making it available may not make it interesting, and asks if the group could create a slide deck to summarize the report.
    - 1. Christian says he can compile a slide deck if the group requests it

- F. Heather notes a typo in the minutes included in the report, and recommends changing “noon” to “soon” on page 29.
    - 1. Christian corrects the typo
  - G. Christian asks if members are comfortable with the report as-is or if there’s any initial feedback
    - 1. Christian notes no members express objections and several give thumbs up reactions
  - H. Christian states he will follow up by email with another opportunity for feedback and final approval. If any member objects to something it will be removed so only points of consensus are submitted
- IV. 2026 Planning (10 mins)
- A. Christian notes that since the statute sets no end date for the Work Group, the CWCSEO’s understanding is that the Group keeps going. As a result, the group needs to make 3 decisions
    - 1. Will current members re-commit to participate in 2026 or indicate their intention to transition out of the group?
    - 2. Does the group make any changes to procedures and processes?
    - 3. How should the group schedule 4 quarterly meetings for 2026?
  - B. Christian notes there is already one suggested change to procedures
    - 1. Allow the group issue interim reports in response to timely issues
  - C. Susan asks a clarifying question about whether the Work Group can have influence in the state legislator
    - 1. Christian states the Work Group as a whole can’t create or endorse bills or lobby but individual members can act independently
  - D. Susan states she intends to stay on for 2026 and ask if meetings can be scheduled in the morning for next year
  - E. Martha says Christian should pick four dates now and send them in advance
  - F. Christian notes Jennifer, Reggy, Joanna, Patty, and Tida in the chat said they want to stay on and are ok with Christian picking dates.
  - G. Christian notes that Kristen in the chat suggested alternating morning and afternoon meetings and that Christian should ask the group time preferences via email
- V. Next Steps and Adjourn (5 mins)
- A. Christian invites members to save the date for the CWCSEO Report Launch Webinar - 1/16/2026 10 - 11:30 on Zoom
  - B. Christian will send an email to the whole Group with several key items
    - 1. Meeting minutes and recording
    - 2. Final call for feedback on the 2025 Report
    - 3. Final call for feedback on the Systems Change Sub-Group recommendation

4. Volunteers for Infrastructure Sub-Group
5. Call for re-upping or rotating off for 2026
6. Call for suggested changes to procedures
  - a) Allow the group issue interim reports in response to timely issues
7. Input for ideal dates/times for 2026 meetings