

The Anti-Hunger Community Toolkit

Assessing and Advocating for
Your Local Food System

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COLORADO BLUEPRINT
TO END HUNGER



COLORADO **HEALTH** INSTITUTE

Informing Strategy. Advancing Health.

The Anti-Hunger Community Toolkit

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Community members across the state are working toward a Colorado where all people have access to affordable, healthy food in their communities. Achieving this vision requires making changes to our food systems at the local, state, and federal levels.

This work is more important than ever. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, one in 10 Coloradans experienced food insecurity, according to the [Colorado Health Access Survey](#). And the pandemic has had a staggering impact on Colorado households. According to [Hunger Free Colorado](#), in April 2021, 1 in 3 Coloradans were food insecure, with people of color and families with children most affected.

This resource aims to support Coloradans as they assess the strengths and gaps in their local food systems and arm them with the knowledge needed to advocate for changes in their community. This work was commissioned by and conducted in partnership with the [Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger](#) (“the Blueprint”), a five-year plan to end hunger in the state.

1 in 3 Coloradans
were food insecure in April 2021



Source: Hunger Free Colorado

What is the Anti-Hunger Community Toolkit?

The Anti-Hunger Community Toolkit is a resource for community leaders. It helps leaders assess and advocate for change in their local food system by building the public awareness and political will that is necessary for change.

To assess local food systems, community leaders must:

1. *Get started by building a team to guide the work.*
2. *Ask your community what the biggest strengths and needs are in your local food system.*
3. *Take action by determining goals, developing strategies, identifying key players, and communicating your message to key decision-makers in your community.*

The toolkit includes tips for centering equity, questions to consider, and helpful resources. It does not provide one-size-fits-all, step-by-step instructions, because every community food system is unique. This toolkit is best used in conjunction with other resources, such as those highlighted in the **Resource Spotlights** throughout the report and listed in the **Helpful Resources** section on page 16.

Who should use this toolkit?

The toolkit is designed for community leaders who care about their local food system. These might include community advocates and organizers, staff or volunteers at community-based organizations, and other people who fight hunger in their neighborhoods.

How was this toolkit developed?

In June 2021, the Blueprint contracted with the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) to develop and design a toolkit to support Coloradans in advancing anti-hunger work in their local communities.

CHI conducted a literature review and, in July 2021, held four listening sessions with community members and food system leaders to gather input on what the toolkit should look like. The community listening sessions were attended by participants from across Colorado, including rural and urban communities. Spanish interpretation services during the sessions were provided by the [Community Language Cooperative](#).

The toolkit is the product of that work.

What do you mean by food insecurity and hunger?

This toolkit uses the definitions provided by the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger in its five-year plan:

Many Colorado households experience food insecurity at times during the year, meaning their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources. Food insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

Hunger is an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.

Being food secure and having reliable access to enough healthy foods positively influences the overall health and well-being of our neighbors at every stage of life.



1. Getting Started

You want to fight hunger in your community. Where do you start?

One common approach is to assess top priorities in your local food system and then advocate for needed changes. This toolkit will guide you through that process.

To begin, you'll want to create a steering committee and a plan to guide your work.

Form a steering committee.

While many people will ultimately be a part of the assessment and advocacy process, it is important to have a core team — a steering committee — that is dedicated to guiding the work and moving it forward.

The steering committee will be responsible for meeting regularly to lead the food system assessment and advocacy work. It will make decisions such as how to conduct the assessment, how to recruit participants, how to synthesize findings, and what to prioritize for next steps.

The steering committee should be diverse and representative, meaning it should reflect the community it aims to serve. For example, your steering committee should include people of diverse identities and experiences, including different racial/ethnic backgrounds, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and neighborhoods within your community. Your steering committee should also aim to have representation from different types of stakeholders, including people with lived experience of food insecurity; community groups; food relief organizations such as food banks or food pantries; nonprofit groups; faith-based groups; schools; local government; and others who are closely involved in or affected by your community food system.

Having a diverse, representative steering committee will encourage more nuanced, equitable conversations and decision-making; expand the relationships and reach of your group; cultivate trust with a broader swath of community members; and lead to more effective change-making.

In some communities, an existing group — such as an already-established food policy council or coalition — may be well-positioned to serve as

CENTERING EQUITY

TIP: Compensate steering committee members for their time. Steering committee members are being asked to commit a substantial amount of time to this work. For many, this means giving up free time or time they may have otherwise spent working for wages. Many may also incur additional expenses related to child care and transportation. How can you make it easy — and minimally burdensome — for all steering committee members to participate fully?

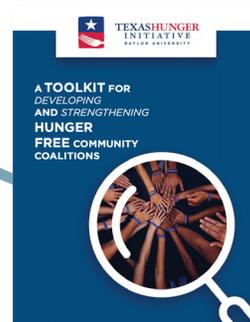
CONSIDER: People with lived experience of hunger offer invaluable expertise on what it's like to experience food insecurity and how best to serve the community. Yet people with lived experience are often treated as “participants,” receiving modest compensation for their time (if they're compensated at all) and being asked to inform the work, rather than lead it. Meanwhile, people with relevant professional experience are more likely to hold leadership positions and be compensated as “experts” or “consultants.” How do you value the expertise of people with lived experience, and how will that show up in tangible ways in your work?

the steering committee. In those cases, it may not be necessary to start a new group from scratch. Building off an existing group may help you leverage existing initiatives, relationships, momentum, and funding. Still, it is important to consider opportunities to engage people and groups who have not been adequately engaged before.



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Want to learn more about recruiting people for your steering committee and building strong anti-hunger coalitions? Check out **“A Toolkit for Developing and Strengthening Hunger Free Community Coalitions,”** a resource from the Texas Hunger Initiative at Baylor University and the Alliance to End Hunger.



Define your community food system.

Once you’ve formed a steering committee, you’ll need to define your community food system.

What is the geographic area you will be focusing on? Your neighborhood? Your city or town? Your county or metropolitan area? Having clearly defined boundaries will help keep your work focused.

Who and what does your community food system include? For example, your community food system likely includes people, places, and things such as:

- Natural resources — like the land, water, air, and climate we need to produce food.
- Farmers and ranchers, processors, distributors, restaurants, retailers, and institutions that serve food — these are the people and organizations that grow, raise, process, package, transport, prepare, sell, and distribute our food.
- Food programs and initiatives — think food pantries, farmers markets, government programs, school meal programs, and the many other ways people are working to improve food access in your community.
- Relationships, partnerships, and coalitions — the ways individuals and groups work together, formally and informally.
- Community leaders — everyday people who make a difference in your food system, from neighbors who make sure everyone gets fed, to gardeners who grow enough produce to share, to community organizers who mobilize people to take action.
- People who eat food — that’s all of us.

Make a plan.

Before launching into the assessment, your steering committee will want to have a plan, including clearly stated goals, roles, and expectations.

As a group, consider questions such as:

- What are our goals for this work?
- What are key guiding principles that will inform this work?
- What is the role of the steering committee? What is expected of steering committee members?
- What do we want to accomplish? By when?
- How often will we meet? When? Will our meetings be in-person, remote, or hybrid?
- How will we know if we have been successful?
- How will we be held accountable to the community we aim to serve?

2. Learning from the Community

Want to develop effective, equitable strategies for helping your community? Talk to your community.

What do community members see as the biggest strengths and weaknesses in your food system? What changes do community members want to see? And how do they recommend getting there?

Connect with stakeholders.

“Stakeholder engagement” refers to the process of talking with and learning from people who are involved with and affected by your community food system.

It’s important to engage with stakeholders representing a diversity of perspectives, including different identities and backgrounds (such as race/ethnicity, age, neighborhood, and income) and positions in the food system (such as people who use food assistance programs, people who run food assistance programs, people who sell food, and people who grow food). Pay particular attention to stakeholders who are most affected by food insecurity, who hold less power in the community, and/or who have historically been excluded or underengaged in anti-hunger work. Consider partnering with individuals, groups, or organizations that have existing relationships and built trust with communities you want to reach. These relationships may be formal (for example community engagement specialists, or tribal liaisons or representatives) or informal (church groups, or parent groups).

There are many ways to gather ideas from community members, including one-on-one interviews, group interviews (also known as “focus groups”), surveys (both online and on paper), and group engagement at existing gathering spots (like recurring meetings or community events). Regardless of the method or methods you use, be sure to carefully capture what stakeholders share with you — take thorough notes in interviews and focus groups, or compile survey results into a single, easy-to-read spreadsheet. In some cases, it may be appropriate to remove any identifying information from the data you collect to protect stakeholders’ privacy.

CENTERING EQUITY

TIP: Compensate community participants for their time. How will you recognize the time and insights that community members are contributing? The considerations for compensating steering committee members (see page 5) apply here, too.

TIP: Remove barriers to participation. How can you make stakeholder engagement accessible, safe, and welcoming for all community members, including speakers of languages other than English, parents and caregivers, people with limited transportation options, and people with disabilities? Things like interpretation services, child care, transportation supports, and remote options can make the difference between a community member participating fully and not participating at all.

TIP: When engaging stakeholders, be clear why you are asking to speak with them, how the information you collect will be used, what they can expect to come from this work, and when to expect next steps. Transparency is key to creating and maintaining respectful, trusting relationships in the community. If you cannot answer these questions for stakeholders, you are not yet ready to begin engaging stakeholders.

CONSIDER: What work has already been done in your community? Before asking people for their time, figure out what other assessments or community engagement initiatives have come before yours. If someone has already compiled information and insights about your community, you will want to build off that work. Understanding what asks have already been made of community members — what questions have already been posed, what requests and promises have already been made — will help you engage more thoughtfully and respectfully with the people who are donating their time and insights to your assessment.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

For more information on how to engage equitably and meaningfully with diverse research participants, see Boulder Food Rescue's resource,

[A Hand and a Voice: Participation Framework.](#)



Example Guiding Questions

Strengths.

What do you see as the greatest strengths in our community food system? What aspects of our community food system are you most proud of?

Gaps.

What do you see as the biggest gaps or weaknesses in our community food system? Where is the need greatest or most urgent?

Inequities.

Who is not being served by our current food system? What barriers are they up against that must be addressed?

Recommendations.

What do you see as top priorities for improving our community food system? What existing efforts should we improve, expand, or build on? What new efforts, policies, or programs should we put in place? If you could wave a magic wand and make any change to our community food system, what would you want to see?

Analyze results.

Once you have completed your stakeholder engagement, you need to pull out key learnings.

What common themes emerged? For example:

- What did people identify as the strongest parts of your community food system?
- What did people identify as the biggest gaps or weaknesses in your community food system?
- What inequities and barriers did people identify?
- What recommendations did people have for improving your community food system?

It can be helpful to document your findings in a memo or report. The process of writing will encourage you to state key findings clearly and succinctly, and the report can serve as a north star — and a concrete source you can cite — as you put your assessment into action.

CENTERING EQUITY

CONSIDER: When and how should the steering committee circle back to the wider community?

Regular communication with the wider community is key. Touching base with the community can serve many purposes and take many forms, including providing a status update, getting feedback or a gut check on findings or proposals, identifying opportunities to collaborate, and/or seeking the leadership of community members outside of the steering committee. Consider building in these touch points with the community at every stage of this process.

Identify goals.

Once you have gathered your findings, you need to identify goals for your community food system.

A goal is a description of what you want to achieve. It should be responsive to what you learned in your assessment. For example, if community members highlighted child hunger as a pressing issue, one goal for your community food system might be to reduce rates of food insecurity among families with children.

Try to identify 1-5 goals that feel highest-priority to your community. Your goals should be ambitious but specific, attainable, and timebound.

3. Taking Action

It's now time to take your assessment and put it into action.

Develop strategies.

Once you've identified your goals, you'll need to develop strategies for achieving each of those goals.

If a goal is a description of what you want to achieve, a strategy is how you will achieve that goal. When developing your strategies, include who needs to be involved, what needs to happen, and by when.

Some goals might have just one strategy, while others will have several strategies.

CENTERING EQUITY

CONSIDER: How will you ensure that your goals and strategies advance equity? Some goals and strategies seem great at a glance but ultimately allow inequities to persist — or even make existing inequities worse. How will your action plan promote equitable outcomes?

CONSIDER: How can your goals and strategies advance structural, systemic change? A lot of anti-hunger work focuses on meeting immediate, urgent needs. This work is essential to ensuring our community members are fed. But we also need people working to change the root causes of hunger and systemic inequities, in addition to the symptoms. Policy can be a powerful way to target the driving forces behind hunger, including the laws, regulations, and public programs that allow inequalities to persist.

EXAMPLE ACTION:

Goal 1: Reduce rates of food insecurity among families with children.

Strategy 1:

ABC Nonprofit will scale up Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) outreach and enrollment services by placing an enrollment coordinator on site with support from local human services or public health agencies.



Identify on site enrollment coordinator by March 2022.

Strategy 2:

Steering committee members will conduct coordinated outreach to school administrators, the school board, and parent groups to encourage support for and participation in the Summer Food Service Program.



Conduct outreach between January and June 2022.

Strategy 3:

The Policy Advocacy Workgroup will lobby state legislators to create a grant program to fund afterschool meal programs, with priority given to schools with high rates of free and reduced-price lunch eligibility.



Begin engagement with legislators no later than July 2022.

Local Tools for Local Change

There are many routes you can take to make changes to your local food systems, including programs, partnerships, and policy. This table provides some examples that may inspire ideas about what you want to tackle in your local community.

Local Initiatives that leverage federal programs can extend existing resources.

 **SPOTLIGHTS:** *Double Up Food Bucks is a SNAP incentive program that makes fresh produce more affordable and accessible for people with low incomes. At participating retailers and farmers markets, Double Up Food Bucks provides a \$1 for \$1 match on any SNAP purchase, up to \$20, meaning your SNAP dollar goes twice as far. [Nourish Colorado](#) offers resources for spreading the word about Double Up Food Bucks and getting more vendors on board.*

- **Colorado Food Cluster** is a network of organizations working together to deliver supper and snacks for children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Denver Health utilized grant funding to hire an **Enrollment Coordinator** to help increase the number of Medicaid patients enrolled in WIC and SNAP programs.

Food Pantries and Food Banks distribute food to people experiencing food insecurity. Many food pantries and food banks have healthy food initiatives on top of their regular food distribution services, including healthy meal kits, cooking classes, and efforts to increase the availability of fresh produce.

 **SPOTLIGHTS:** *Colorado is home to dozens of food pantries. Locate pantries in your area using [Hunger Free Colorado's Food Resource Map](#).*

- There are also several major food banks in Colorado, including **Food Bank of the Rockies** (Metro Denver, Western Slope, and parts of Northern Colorado), **Care and Share** (Southern Colorado), **Community Food Share** (Boulder and Broomfield counties), **Weld Food Bank** (Weld County), and **Food Bank for Larimer County**.

Community Gardens are pieces of land that are cultivated by groups of people, usually to grow food to eat at home. Community gardens are typically run by local governments, nonprofits, or faith-based organizations. Sometimes food from community gardens is donated to food pantries, schools, or other recipients.

 **SPOTLIGHTS:** *Spirit of the Sun is an Indigenous women-led nonprofit in Colorado working to empower native communities. Through an AmeriCorps program, volunteers have helped to sustain and grow **tribal community gardens** that yield both fresh, healthy foods and opportunities for tribal members' career and economic development.*

- Denver Public Schools offers a **Garden to Cafeteria** program where students grow fresh fruits and vegetables in their school gardens and supply some of their harvest to the school cafeterias. Check out their resource guide for [starting a school garden](#).

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between farmers and people in the community, where households purchase a share of a farm's produce in advance and in return receive deliveries of fresh produce and products such as eggs, meat, and dairy.

Farmers Markets are events where farmers and other producers sell goods directly to community members. Many farmers markets are organized and operated by community organizations, public agencies, or public/private collaborations with volunteer support.

 **SPOTLIGHT:** *The [Colorado Farm Fresh Directory](#) provides information on where Coloradans can find farmers markets, CSAs, and more.*

Farm-to-School Programs connect schools with nearby farms to incorporate locally grown foods into school breakfasts, lunches, and snacks. They can be a powerful way of supporting local agriculture while promoting child nutrition.

PROGRAMS

No-Cost Grocery Programs offer food to community members at no cost. Most no-cost grocery programs are open to all community members and do not require identification or proof of income.

Many no-cost grocery initiatives collect donations from local food retailers and re-distribute them to neighborhoods that face barriers to accessing healthy food. In this way, they reduce food waste while increasing equitable access to fresh food.

- 🍏 **SPOTLIGHTS:** *Denver Food Rescue* receives donations of fresh fruits and vegetables from over 50 food retailers, which volunteers pick up (usually on bicycles!) and bring to no-cost grocery programs around Denver.
- **Food to Power** organizes no-cost grocery sites around Colorado Springs in collaboration with community leaders. Sites also offer recipe-sharing, cooking classes, and other fun events, as decided on and organized by each community.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with Local Agriculture and Gardeners can be a powerful way to direct fresh local food to neighbors experiencing food insecurity. For example, gleaning programs collect excess fresh foods from farms, gardens, farmers markets, grocers, and restaurants and redirect that food to those in need. And “Grow a Row” efforts encourage farmers and gardeners to plant an extra row of produce each year to donate to food-insecure households.

- 🍏 **SPOTLIGHTS:** *East Denver Food Hub* is a wholesaler that aggregates food from local farms and distributes it to people in need.
- **The Good Food Collective’s Fruit Gleaning Program** in Southwest Colorado sends people to local backyards to pick fruit that would have otherwise gone to waste.

Coalitions are organized groups of stakeholders working towards a common goal. They can be a powerful way to collaborate across organizations and sectors.

- 🍏 **SPOTLIGHT:** *Western Slope Food System* brings together diverse stakeholders to increase the production and consumption of local food in the region. Partners include the state and county government agencies, private foundations, grocery retailers, universities, farms, and nonprofits.

Preventive Food Pantry Initiatives screen people for food insecurity during regular visits with primary care or social service providers. Providers then write “prescriptions” for supplemental, nutritious foods, which community members can redeem for healthy foods at no cost to them. They are an example of how medical providers and direct service workers can connect people with needed food supports.

- 🍏 **SPOTLIGHT:** *Valley Food Partnership’s Local Pharmacy Rx* fosters collaboration between educators, producers, social service agencies, and health care providers in Delta, Montrose, and Olathe.

POLICIES

Zoning Codes. Changing local zoning codes can enable community members to sell fresh produce and homemade food products out of their homes.

Consider speaking to your local city council or town board during committee meetings or public hearings to discuss the impact of zoning code changes on local food systems.

Food Safety Regulations. Adjusting local food safety regulations can make it easier for mobile grocery retailers to provide healthy, fresh food options in neighborhoods that lack access to a grocery store.

- 🍏 **SPOTLIGHT:** *The Denver Sustainable Food Policy Council* was founded to advise the city on matters of food policy, including mobile markets.

Municipal Household Composting Programs. Introducing a municipal household composting program can make a major difference in local food waste management.

- 🍏 **SPOTLIGHT:** *Table to Farm Compost* offers a curbside collection service for food scraps and other organic material through a permit from the city of Durango.



Identify and cultivate local champions.

Many strategies will require collaboration with local partners to develop a game plan and get the work done. And some strategies, particularly those that involve policy change or large financial investments, will likely require engagement from local leaders, such as elected and appointed officials or school administrators.

Review your strategies and determine: What key players need to be on board in order to get this work done and get it done well? Where are the opportunities to build more political will to transform current food systems?

As you work to identify key allies in this work, consider:

- **Who are local champions for anti-hunger work in your community?** These could be elected or appointed officials, key allies in the school system or other local institutions, leaders of community organizations or faith groups, or other community members who are already advancing anti-hunger work in your community.
- **Who are key players who could become powerful anti-hunger champions?** These are leaders or community members who are not currently anti-hunger champions but who are well positioned to make a difference and who could be persuaded or empowered to join the cause.

Your food system is expansive and complex, and if you want to make ambitious changes, having local change-makers on your side will help.

Here are some examples of key influencers in local community food systems – and the types of decisions they have control over:

Public Officials

- **City councils and town boards.** In Colorado, cities usually have a council and towns usually have a “board of trustees” made up of about five to eight members. City councils and town boards are responsible for approving the city/town budget, establishing tax rates, making local laws (like raising the local minimum wage), and zoning.



Plug In: You can give public input by signing up to speak at a committee meeting or public hearing. You may also be able to email comments ahead of the city council meetings. Most Colorado towns and cities have a website. Navigate to yours easily via [this website](#).

- **Mayor.** Mayors are city officials elected by voters. They are typically a leading member of the city council. Mayors have the power to approve or veto ordinances and resolutions passed by the city council. They also enforce the ordinances and regulations of the city and oversee the annual budget.
- **City manager.** The city manager is appointed by city council for an indefinite term. They make recommendations and advise the city council on city affairs, finances, and future needs of the city.
- **County commissioner.** County commissioners are elected officials that serve four-year terms. Colorado counties have between three and five county commissioners, depending on population size. County commissioners are responsible for county program budgets, county taxes, and public infrastructure like roads and bridges.



Plug In: The board of county commissioners meets at least monthly, and sessions are open to the public. Find your county’s website [here](#).



- **State legislators.** The Colorado state legislature, also known as the Colorado General Assembly, includes the Colorado House of Representatives and the Colorado State Senate. Members of the House are elected for two-year terms; members of the Senate serve four-year terms. State legislators pass bills on a wide range of public policy issues affecting Coloradans across the state.



Plug In: You can contact your legislators by phone, mail, or email. Find your state legislators [here](#).

- **State board of human services.** The state board of human services consists of nine members serving four-year terms appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Colorado Senate. The State Board of Human Services is a rule-making body responsible for adopting rules for programs administered and services provided by the Colorado Department of Human Services.
- **U.S. senators and representatives.** There are two U.S. Senators and seven U.S. Representatives representing Colorado in Washington, D.C. As members of Congress, these elected officials have the power to enact federal legislation.



Plug In: Learn how to contact your U.S. Senators [here](#). And find your U.S. Representative [here](#).

School Officials

- **School board.** School boards are groups of elected officials that oversee school districts. Their members are elected to serve four-year teams. School boards employ the superintendent, oversee the school district budget, adopt district policies, and establish school district goals. Many school board meetings are open to the public, and most boards permit public comment during those meetings.
- **Superintendents and principals.** The superintendent is hired by the school board to oversee the school district; principals are hired to oversee individual schools. Superintendents and principals must balance the needs of students and families, staff, the school board, and taxpayers. They regularly hear from parents as part of their day-to-day work.
- **School nutrition directors.** School nutrition directors oversee the food service in schools, including school meal programs. They report to the superintendent. Many school nutrition professionals are members of the [School Nutrition Association of Colorado](#).
- **Parent groups.** Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) meet regularly to improve and support parental involvement and parent-teacher relationships in the local community. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) advocates on behalf of children and educators at the local, state, and national levels.

Other Leaders and Decision-makers

- **Individuals with lived experience.** Engage anti-hunger champions who may not necessarily have formal roles in anti-hunger work to learn from and partner with individuals with lived experience and expertise.
- **Local public health leaders.** Colorado has a decentralized public health system, meaning each county is required to either operate a local public health agency or participate in a district public health agency. Public health leaders promote population and environmental health through various programs and services.
- **Local human services leaders.** County human services departments administer various programs, services, and benefits (such as SNAP and food distribution programs).
- **Food policy councils and coalitions.** Some regions of Colorado have food policy councils or coalitions, which advise local elected officials on food policy and advance local food initiatives.



Plug In: Colorado is home to the following groups — see who's doing work in your area:

- ▶ [Colorado Springs and El Paso County Food Policy Advisory Board](#)
- ▶ [Denver Sustainable Food Policy Council](#)
- ▶ [Jefferson County Food Policy Council](#)
- ▶ [Lake County Food Access Coalition](#)
- ▶ [Northwest Colorado Food Coalition](#)
- ▶ [Pueblo Food Project](#)
- ▶ [Roaring Fork Food Alliance](#)
- ▶ [San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition](#)
- ▶ [Valley Food Partnership](#)
- ▶ [Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council](#)

- **Community-based organizations.** Many community-based organizations hold power, resources, and relationships in your community food system making them trusted partners. These groups include nonprofits, religious communities and faith-based groups, food distribution sites, and other community food initiatives, such as community gardens.
- **Private funders.** Funders are individuals, families and organizations that contribute money to causes they care about. For example, foundations support initiatives, programs, and organizations in the form of grant funding. Sometimes companies such as hospitals also contribute resources to anti-hunger work as part of their community benefit work.
- **Agriculture.** Farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers sit at the core of our food system. Some are involved with associations or unions, such as the [Rocky Mountain Farmers Union](#).
- **Retail and restaurants.** Places where food is sold and purchased are a critical component of the food system, including supermarkets, grocery stores, corner stores, farm stands, and restaurants. They inform things like where food is sold, what types of food are available, and how much it costs.
- **Other institutions.** Consider engaging:
 - **Hospitals.** Health care professionals care about social factors that contribute to their patients' health status, including access to healthy foods.
 - **Long-term care facilities and nursing homes.** Older adults are more susceptible to hunger and hunger-related disease.
 - **Prisons and correctional facilities.** Formerly incarcerated people and the children of currently incarcerated people are at high risk of experiencing food insecurity.
 - **Universities.** Universities and colleges can leverage their research and resources (including grants, staff, and students) to support local and regional initiatives to improve food systems.

Communicate your message — or make your ask.

Once you've identified your goals, strategies, and what players will be involved, it's time to communicate your message and ask your audience for their support.

Before approaching a local change-maker or community partner with a request, consider:

What do you want to say?

People are busy, and they might have a just short amount of time to talk with you. Be prepared to communicate clearly and succinctly: 1) what you want them to do and 2) why it matters.

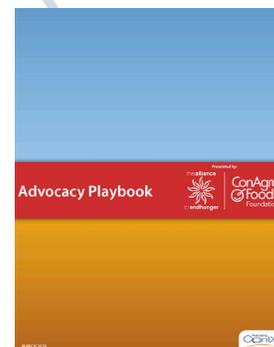
***Tip:** Trying to persuade an elected official or local leader to get on board? Do your research and figure out what they campaigned on or what their stated priorities are. Then use that information to help make your case. For example, if a leader has promised to improve access to healthy food, support families, or promote equity, point to those goals as a reason they should get behind you.*

How do you want to say it?

What is the best way to reach out to the person or group: In person, such as through a one-on-one conversation or a public meeting? In writing, as with an email, a letter, or a one-page fact sheet? All of the above?

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Check out the [Alliance to End Hunger's Advocacy Playbook](#) for more detailed information on how individuals, groups, and organizations can advocate for change. The playbook includes tips on how to contact your elected officials, testify at public hearings, write letters to the editors and press releases, and more.



Do you want to engage a wider audience, too?

When reaching out to local leaders, especially elected officials, it can be helpful to have a broad coalition of support. If you want to reach out to the broader community, consider options such as writing op-eds or letters to the editor in the local paper, running social media campaigns, setting up a table or handing out flyers at community events, circulating petitions or going door-to-door, and digital storytelling, such as creating videos, podcasts, or other online materials.





Keep it up.

Assessing priorities in your community, developing solutions, and pushing for change are iterative processes (you'll go back to the drawing board sometimes), and the fight to end hunger won't be won overnight. Celebrate the small victories, and assess your progress along the way. The following questions will help you measure success at various stages.

Short term: tracking progress

1. Who have you brought into the orbit of anti-hunger work? Who or what organization is involved now that wasn't before?
2. What materials have you created to support your work? Are you seeing them distributed anywhere? Infographics, fact sheets, blogs, flyers, webinars, etc.?
3. Have you seen increases in community engagement? Additional followers on social media accounts, volunteer sign-ups, articles in the news?
4. How are you seeing your stakeholder group show up in new venues?

5. What are you seeing and hearing from your elected officials?

Long term: measuring impact

1. What policy changes have occurred to support your local food system (within organizations, institutions, cities, counties, regions)?
2. What new partnerships have formed or grown to support your local food system?
3. Have new programs been created, or existing programs strengthened, to improve your local food system? Are more individuals accessing services than they were before?
4. Have attitudes toward anti-hunger work changed? Among institutions, food retailers, elected officials, community members?
5. To what extent has there been a decrease in people experiencing hunger in your community?

It will take hard work from people at all levels and from all corners of society to create a world where everyone has access to affordable, healthy food in their communities. Thank you for doing your part.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

General Resources

[Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger.](#)

Visit the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger website to read more about the work, sign up for updates, and learn how to get involved.

[No Kid Hungry.](#)

State and federal policy advocacy ideas, research, and data on child hunger.

[Hunger Free Colorado.](#)

A variety of resources, including information on food resources, county-level data on SNAP enrollment ([Food Stamp Impact Reports](#)), and data on the prevalence of food insecurity in Colorado during the COVID-19 pandemic ([COVID Food Insecurity Survey](#)).

[Alliance to End Hunger.](#)

Database of national anti-hunger resources, including toolkits, research, and case studies.

Community Engagement and Coalition-Building

[Toolkit for Developing and Strengthening Hunger Free Community Coalitions.](#)

[Texas Hunger Initiative at Baylor University and the Alliance to End Hunger.](#)

Detailed information on creating and implementing effective anti-hunger coalitions, including tips on getting started, taking action, and assessing your work.

[A Hand and a Voice: Participation Framework.](#)

[Boulder Food Rescue.](#)

Resource to support nonprofits and other human service organizations in integrating meaningful community participation into their work.

[IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.](#)

[International Association for Public Participation.](#)

Framework for understanding the spectrum of public participation in decision-making.

Policy and Advocacy

[Alliance to End Hunger Advocacy Playbook.](#)

[Alliance to End Hunger and ConAgra Foods.](#)

Detailed guidebook on advocacy for individuals, groups, and organizations. Includes tips on contacting elected officials, testifying at public hearings, writing letters to the editor and press releases, and more.

[Local Food System Policy.](#)

[Lindsey Day Farnsworth, Community, Local and Regional Food Systems National Extension Project Team.](#)

Examples of local food system policy interventions, including land-use controls, economic development incentives, licensing and regulations, and programs and services.

[Food Policy Networks.](#)

Database of food policy resources, research, and training and technical assistance.

[Project Protect Food System Workers.](#)

Data and organizing resources in support of food system workers.

Data

[American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.](#)

Publicly available data on race/ethnicity, income, age, SNAP and WIC program use, and free and reduced-price school meal eligibility, among other measures. To view data for a particular state, county, census tract, or school district, search for and select a data table of interest, click “Customize Table,” click “Geos,” and select the desired geographic areas.

[U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service.](#)

Data and research on food insecurity and federal nutrition assistance programs, such as SNAP and WIC.

[Feeding America. Map the Meal Gap.](#)

State- and county-level data on food insecurity and nutrition program eligibility.

[Colorado Health Access Survey. Colorado Health Institute.](#)

Data on rates of food insecurity and various health metrics available for download by region and demographic group. For additional assistance with this data set, contact CHAS@coloradohealthinstitute.org.

[Colorado Pulse Poll. The Colorado Health Foundation.](#)

Annual poll that assesses various health topics impacting Coloradans, including hunger and food insecurity.



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