

# City of Austin – Food Access Response to COVID-19

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FOOD POLICY MANAGER

CITY OF AUSTIN



OFFICE OF  
SUSTAINABILITY

CITY OF AUSTIN

# Background

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- Austin Public Health asked the Office of Sustainability Food Team to take on the food access response to the Pandemic
- Emergency Operations Center – Social Services Branch
- Utilized existing relationships
  - Food Access Coordination group → Food Access Task Force
- Primary functions:
  - Coordination
  - Communications
  - Funding and Policy

# Food Access and Emergency Food

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- Existing barriers to food access exacerbated by pandemic response
- Identify and meet immediate needs in priority populations → plan ahead for ongoing needs → keeping ahead of on-going changes to food insecurity
- Initiatives:
  - Food distribution to populations experiencing homelessness (EAT Initiative)
  - PPE for organizations
  - Direct distribution to individuals (grocery boxes/prepared meals)
  - Farmers Market support
  - Food recovery
- Continue tracking emerging food access needs:
  - Caregiver meals at schools
  - WIC shopping pilot program

# Communications

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- Interagency Task Force communications
- EOC reporting structure
- United Way/2-1-1 + ConnectATX
  - Map of food resources
- Facilitate connections between organizations



# Food Access/Food Distribution Models

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- Keep Austin Together
- Neighborhood Pop-Up Grocery Model
- Good Apple



# Policy and Funding

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- State and federal policy tracking
  - Federal relief legislation
  - Changes to SNAP and other nutrition programs
  - P-EBT outreach
- Local funding – OOS, APH, Travis County HHS, All Together ATX
- Brief Council members, EOC Social Services Branch, City Management on critical food access needs, funding needs

# Data Collection Project with UT-SPH and Dell Med Pop Health

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Anecdotal evidence/understanding of increases in food access needs



Purpose: Identify high-need populations (geographic areas, populations, specific barriers, etc.)



Planning currently informed by existing data and organizations participating in Food Access Task Force



Expanding network, but need to capture full scope of food access barriers and emerging needs



Conversations with UT-SPH and with Dell Med



**Goal: Identify highest-need populations to inform resource allocation and ongoing food access planning**

# What's next?

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- Planning for next steps
  - Extension of emergency feeding programs/funding
  - How long will the “official” pandemic response last?
- Food Policy Board recommendation
- Incorporate UT findings into policy and planning work
- Regional Food Systems Collaborative
- Food systems resilience planning
- SNAP Incentive Working Group
  - Recommendation for HSSC in October