



G O V E R N O R ' S  
**FOOD**  
S E C U R I T Y  
P A R T N E R S H I P

---



pennsylvania

2022 REPORT

REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



**pennsylvania**

2022 REPORT

GOVERNOR'S  
**FOOD**  
SECURITY  
PARTNERSHIP



---

WHAT'S INSIDE

BACKGROUND & BASELINE ..... 4

PANDEMIC IMPACTS & INNOVATIONS ..... 7

BLUEPRINT GOAL UPDATES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS .... 13

RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD ..... 31

APPENDICES ..... 36

    ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS ..... 37



# Setting THE Table

**A BLUEPRINT FOR A HUNGER-FREE PA**



BACKGROUND  
& BASELINE



## EVERYONE IN PENNSYLVANIA DESERVES AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD THAT PROMOTES THEIR OVERALL WELL-BEING, HEALTH, AND INDEPENDENCE.

To truly address food insecurity, it takes innovative collaboration among the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to address the social determinants of health (SDOH) and ensure the availability and awareness of interventions and wrap-around services.

That is why, [in September 2015](#), Governor Tom Wolf established the Governor’s Food Security Partnership (GFSP). Comprised of the secretaries and staff of the Pennsylvania departments of [Aging](#), [Agriculture](#), [Community and Economic Development \(DCED\)](#), [Education \(PDE\)](#), [Health \(DOH\)](#), and [Human Services \(DHS\)](#), the GFSP has been responsible for promoting coordination, communication, and joint planning between government programs and entities in the private sector in providing nutrition and food assistance to residents. In September 2016, the GFSP released *Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA (Blueprint)*, which identified the following goals and initiatives to address food insecurity across the commonwealth:

### SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The personal behaviors, conditions, and circumstances in which people live — which research suggests — drive 80 percent of a person’s health outcomes. This includes:

- Access to food
- Access to health services
- Education and employment
- Environmental conditions
- Income
- Housing
- Relationships

## WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

Food security is the access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. The levels of food security measured are:

### HIGH FOOD SECURITY

No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations

### MARGINAL FOOD SECURITY

One or two reported indications — typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house — but little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake

### FOOD INSECURITY

#### LOW FOOD SECURITY

Reports of reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet, but little or no indication of reduced food intake

#### VERY LOW FOOD SECURITY

Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake

1. Every county and/or region in Pennsylvania will have a local food alliance to combat hunger in their local communities.
2. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation rate will increase from 90 percent to 98 percent or higher.
3. The number of children benefiting from free and reduced-price meals during the school year (linked to nutrition programs in summer) will increase from 20 percent to 30 percent.
4. Sixty percent of students benefiting from free and reduced-priced school meals will participate in school breakfast. This is an increase from 47 percent in 2014-15.
5. The Women, Infants, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) redemption rate will increase from 308,000 to 340,000 checks annually.
6. Double SNAP Bucks will be available at all highly accessible, high-need farmers' markets and additional SNAP recipients will have access to SNAP employment and training and SNAP education.
7. Pennsylvanians will have streamlined access to food security information and benefits.
8. The average number of people participating in WIC programs will increase from over 245,000 to 260,000.
9. Pennsylvania will improve access to healthy, nutritious food.

Since then, state agencies have collaborated with federal and local governments, legislators, nonprofit organizations, schools, businesses, and other partners to work towards achieving these goals.

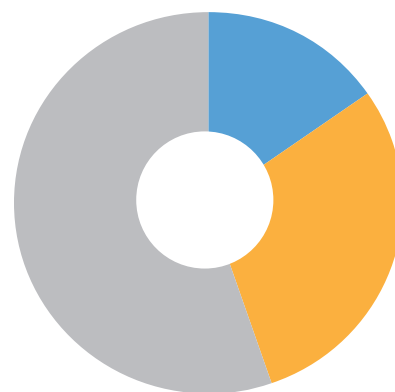
This report serves to outline advancements made in addressing food insecurity — including progress on *Blueprint* goals as well as pandemic-related innovations — and identify recommendations for the next administration to take to continue this important work.



**1 in 8**

**1.52 MILLION PENNSYLVANIANS**

ARE LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE



**445,513**  
CHILDREN

**230,287**  
OLDER ADULTS  
AGES 65 AND OVER



Source: [2021 ACS 1-year estimates](#)

## FEEDING AMERICA: MAP THE MEAL GAP

Year	Total Food-Insecure People in PA	Rate of General Food Insecurity	Total Food-Insecure Children in PA	Rate of Children's Food Insecurity
<b>2015</b>	1,808,660	14.2%	564,440	20.4%
<b>2016</b>	1,760,450	13.8%	521,750	19.3%
<b>2017</b>	1,674,420	13.1%	482,130	17.9%
<b>2018</b>	1,599,520	12.5%	452,690	16.9%
<b>2019</b>	1,534,710	12.0%	437,340	16.4%
<b>2020</b>	1,401,920	10.9%	399,270	15.1%
<b>2021</b>	1,353,730	10.6%	385,880	14.7%
<b>2022</b>	1,136,400	8.9%	347,720	13.1%

Data from 2020 is NOT directly comparable to data from any prior study due to methodological changes made in 2020.

Source: Feeding America: Map the Meal Gap



# PANDEMIC IMPACTS & INNOVATIONS



## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PRESENTED UNIQUE CHALLENGES THAT DRAMATICALLY INCREASED THE DEMAND ON THE STATE’S CHARITABLE FEEDING SYSTEM, AS MANY WHO HAD NEVER NEEDED EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE BEFORE FOUND THEMSELVES IN NEED.

The GFSP took innovative steps to support food security through the pandemic by focusing on improving food distribution and access, securing necessary investments, and collaborating with public and private partners. All changes were implemented following the federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) guidance, and, while the administration has advocated for some of these changes to be made permanent, many will end or return to status quo when the PHE ends.



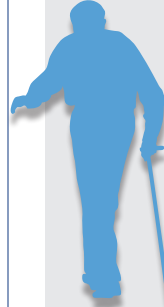
### ► IMPROVED FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS

- Temporarily suspended semi-annual reporting (SAR) and interviews for human services programs through 2021
- Supported [SNAP](#) recipients by:
  - ▶ Adding online purchasing functionality to allow SNAP recipients to use SNAP to purchase groceries through online ordering available through certain retailers
    - This flexibility continues to help remove barriers, such as transportation, for SNAP recipients.
  - ▶ Issuing emergency SNAP allotments to all SNAP households
  - ▶ Accepting SNAP applications over the phone and on-demand interviewing
  - ▶ Expanding SNAP eligibility for college students
  - ▶ Pausing work requirements for individuals receiving time-limited SNAP
- Waived the regulation for face-to-face [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) interviews
  - ▶ In April 2022, DHS promulgated its regulation to amend this provision to effectively meet clients’ needs.
- Empowered Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to complete assessments via telephone rather than face to face
- Enabled AAAs and senior community centers (SCCs) to accept verbal verification of income as part of the service enrollment processes
- Issued guidance to provide congregate senior meals via alternative means such as take-out, curbside pickup, and home delivery, giving older adults the autonomy to determine the best environment for them to receive their meals based on their personal set of circumstances, preferences, and comfort level



- ▶ In August 2022, the Department of Aging [sent a letter](#) to the federal government advocating for the extension of much-needed flexibilities that have allowed SCCs to serve more food-insecure older adults. Congressional action is necessary to make this flexibility permanent.
- **Fortified the in-home meal service** through the [Help at Home \(OPTIONS\)](#) program, ensuring continuity for seniors already enrolled and quick, flexible enrollment for those newly in need of the support
- **Enabled [Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program \(SFMNP\)](#)** applications and vouchers to be distributed by alternative means
- **Secured approval from the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)** to operate the Disaster Household Distribution program from March 29, 2020, through June 30, 2020
  - ▶ Through this program, individuals in need were able to access USDA Foods without having to complete burdensome paperwork. This made the distribution process safer and more efficient for those seeking assistance and for those providing emergency food assistance.
  - ▶ In total, the Department of Agriculture distributed more than \$12.4 million worth of USDA Foods during this time. Because they were distributed as part of a disaster program, USDA later replaced the value of these foods.
- **Waived the need for [The Emergency Food Assistance Program \(TEFAP\)](#), [Commodity Supplemental Food Program \(CSFP or Senior Food Box\)](#), and [State Food Purchase Program \(SFPP\)](#) distribution sites** to obtain physical signatures from clients from March 2020 through June 2022
  - ▶ In July 2022, the Department of Agriculture put a new policy in place that only requires one physical signature per year for TEFAP, CSFP, and SFPP.
- **Identified the need for data system improvements** to better track real-time needs and identify gaps in services

## FEEDING SENIORS & STUDENTS



**21 million**

**MEALS SERVED TO OLDER PENNSYLVANIANS**

MARCH 1, 2020-JUNE 30, 2022

*Many of these meals were made possible due to flexibilities provided by ACL and FEMA.*



**1 million**

**STUDENTS SERVED IN PENNSYLVANIA**

MARCH 2020 THROUGH THE 2020-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

*Comparing the 2018-2019 school year, when free breakfast was not universal, to 2021-2022, when school was fully in-person and breakfast was universally free, breakfast consumption increased by nearly 16 percent.*

*Sources: PA Departments of Aging and Education*

- ▶ In December 2021, the Department of Agriculture invested \$2 million in a contract agreement with [Feeding Pennsylvania](#) to improve data gathering and analysis capabilities within the charitable food network.
- **Secured waivers that allowed all students to receive free school meals** from March 2020 through the start of the 2022-2023 school year, including the summer months when schools were closed
- **Issued guidance that allowed schools and community providers** to safely, effectively, and inclusively serve

meals to as many children as possible, including through alternative methods such as grab-and-go, meal delivery, parent pick-up, bundled meals, area eligibility, and more

- Issued [Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer \(P-EBT\)](#) to more than 1 million children as an alternative and complement to school meals
  - ▶ The P-EBT program, which was administered by DHS in partnership with PDE, proved difficult to operate because of existing infrastructure challenges and variabilities in school operations that did not align with the federal requirements. The departments would support the summer program if these concerns were addressed at the federal level such as by providing summer meals through SNAP.
- [Continually advocated for school children](#) to have consistent access to free, nutritious meals.
- [Adapted the Pennsylvania Healthy Pantry Initiative \(PA HPI\)](#) to find new ways to reach clients regarding

nutrition when face-to-face operations were limited

- ▶ This included the creation of the recipe cards tailored to foods in packed boxes, mobile signs that directed clients to nutrition messaging, and the [PA HPI webpage](#).
- [Pivoted many operations of the Pennsylvania Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\) program](#), including nutrition and breastfeeding services, to virtual TeleWIC platform to support individuals applying for and utilizing the program
  - ▶ DOH is exploring a transition from offline to online electronic benefits transfer (eWIC) delivery system to reduce frequent clinic visits for participants to receive benefits.
  - ▶ The agency is also exploring improvements to WIC's information management system, PA Electronic Nutrition Network (PENN), to streamline appointment flow and improve participants' experience.

## ▶ SECURED NECESSARY INVESTMENTS

- **Between March 2020 and October 2022, distributed:**
  - ▶ Nearly \$56 million worth of USDA Foods, funded through various federal COVID relief funds, through the charitable food system
  - ▶ More than \$129 million worth of USDA Foods provided through TEFAP
- **Allocated nearly \$17 million in administrative funding** to Pennsylvania's charitable food system to support the storage, transportation, and distribution of USDA Foods provided for COVID relief
- **Invested \$25 million to purchase and distribute food** through state feeding programs, including \$10 million for the [Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System \(PASS\)](#) (\$5 million for dairy products and \$5 million for potatoes, fruit, vegetables, meat, and eggs) and \$15

million for the SFPP

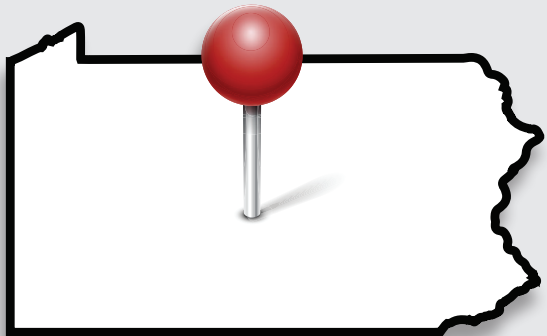
- **Identified and distributed \$1 million in state funding** to support initial food and infrastructure needs of the state's regional food banks in the spring of 2020
- **Invested \$9.6 million to combat food waste** through the [Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection \(DEP\) Food Recovery Infrastructure Grant](#) program in May 2020
  - ▶ According to a survey of 24 of the 145 grant recipients: "These funds helped each recipient organization capture and provide nearly one million additional pounds of food to over 25,000 additional residents over the past year."
- **Invested \$11.4 million, funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP),** to increase cold storage capacity

## CHARITABLE FOOD NETWORK DISTRIBUTION DURING COVID-19

Between March 29, 2020 and April 30, 2022, member food banks of Feeding Pennsylvania and Hunger-Free Pennsylvania, which collectively serve all 67 counties in the commonwealth, reported having served:

# 62,336,297

**TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED (DUPLICATED)**



## 565,000

**INDIVIDUALS SERVED/WEEK**



## 504,565,366

**TOTAL POUNDS OF FOOD**

*Source: PA Department of Agriculture*

within the charitable food network in December 2021

- **Invested \$10 million to create the Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) COVID-19 Relief Fund**, providing grant support to food retailing businesses to ensure that low-income and underserved communities were able to maintain healthy food access and strengthen the local food system
  - ▶ More than [100 grant recipients](#) in 39 counties received funding through this program. In recognition of the disproportionate impact of

COVID-19 and food apartheid on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, and especially Black and African American communities, priority was given to BIPOC-owned businesses and those that serve low-income BIPOC communities.

- **Awarded more than \$12.8 million** through the DCED [Neighborhood Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#)'s Charitable Food Program since the start of the pandemic
- **Distributed \$34 million in federal assistance** to

eligible school nutrition programs to address supply chain issues during 2021-2022

- **Awarded, in August 2021, 288 elementary schools** more than \$7 million in USDA’s [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) to provide students with fresh fruit and vegetable snacks during the school day.
- **Issued, in December 2021, the following federal funds** to assist with revenue losses from the beginning of the pandemic:
  - ▶ Nearly \$45 million to eligible school nutrition programs.

- ▶ \$14 million to eligible participants of the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#)

- **Secured \$1 million in state funding** to support colleges with addressing food insecurity on campuses and launched the [Pennsylvania Hunger-Free Campus Initiative \(PA HFC\)](#)
- **Identified \$21.5 million in state funding** to provide universal free breakfast for all students from October 1, 2022 through the end of the 2022-2023 school year
- **Secured \$220,000 in federal funding** from the USDA to continue [Farm to School Grant Program](#) efforts.

## ▶ COLLABORATED WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS

- **Served more than 21 million meals to older adults** through the AAA network from March 2020 through June 2022
- **Empowered Pennsylvania’s network of regional food banks** to serve an average of 2.4 million individuals each month from April 2020 through August 2022
- **Coordinated the Disaster Feeding Task Force**, a working group of over 300 stakeholders that:
  - ▶ Leveraged capabilities of charitable feeding organizations, voluntary organizations, business partners, and multiple government partners at the federal, commonwealth, and county levels
  - ▶ Served as a venue for sharing timely policy updates
  - ▶ Organized the distribution of 5.1 million meals to support food-insecure residents in the early days of

the pandemic, including:

- 3.9 million meals created through a partnership with [Operation BBQ Relief](#) that empowered restaurants to make meals utilizing excess goods in the commercial supply chain
- 1.2 million shelf-stable meals, including through a [Defense Logistics Agency initiative](#), delivered by the [Pennsylvania National Guard](#)
- **Supported local agencies and volunteers** in offering grocery shopping and delivery to seniors in their community through partnerships with AAAs
- **Participated in the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank Stakeholder Engagement Initiative** aimed at responding to the changing needs in the landscape of food access as the pandemic ensued



*BLUEPRINT*  
GOAL UPDATES &  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## GOAL 1

# EVERY COUNTY AND/OR REGION IN PENNSYLVANIA WILL HAVE A LOCAL FOOD ALLIANCE TO COMBAT HUNGER IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

While at least 35 local food alliances have been developed, efforts on this initiative morphed into creating a Statewide Food Policy Council (SFPC), which ensures that food security work is integrated into the work of the larger food system in a more streamlined, efficient way.

Between 2018 and 2019, the SFPC Exploration Team formed to further develop the concept. The team included representatives from [Black Urban Gardeners and Farmers of Pittsburgh Cooperative](#), [Cabrini University](#), [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Food Pharmacy](#), [Erie Food Policy Advisory Council](#), [Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council](#), [Montco Hunger Solutions/Share Food Program](#), Department of Agriculture, PDE, DOH, DHS, [Pittsburgh Food Policy Council](#), and [York County Food Alliance](#).

While work on the initiative stalled during the height of the pandemic, it resumed in earnest in 2022, with Governor Wolf establishing the SFPC by executive order in late 2022. The council focuses on:

- Ensuring food security and food equity
- Promoting health and nutrition
- Encouraging environmental stewardship
- Sustaining a robust agricultural workforce
- Marketing and economic development of diverse models of food production and distribution
- Reducing food waste

A full-time position within the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Food Assistance manages the SFPC.

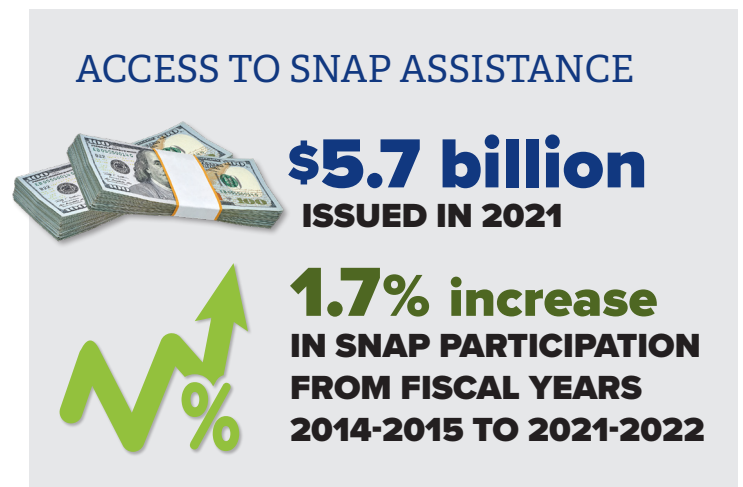


## GOAL 2

# THE SNAP PARTICIPATION RATE WILL INCREASE FROM 90 PERCENT OR HIGHER.

In 2019, the USDA reported that Pennsylvania had a SNAP participation rate of 96 percent. Recognizing that for every one meal our charitable food system can offer SNAP can offer nine, DHS has increased SNAP access by:

- [Expanding eligibility to include community college students](#)
- Launching [SNAP online ordering](#)
- [Streamlining the SNAP application](#) for seniors and people with disabilities by creating the [Elderly Simplified Application Process \(ESAP\)](#)
- Providing [SNAP Employment and Training \(SNAP E&T\)](#) programming statewide, including at 28 [SNAP 50/50](#) training sites that pair private or state funds with federal funding to enhance training opportunities for SNAP recipients with high rates of job placement and wages
- Redesigning the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card to make it look similar to credit/debit cards, which helps reduce stigma
  - ▶ Future efforts are under way to test smart-phone-based EBT payments and/or eliminate the card use altogether.
- Launching the myCOMPASS PA mobile app, allowing clients to easily see their EBT balances, check renewal dates, complete their semi-annual reporting (SAR) form, and submit documentation via the app
- Redesigning DHS's paper applications, notices, and the [COMPASS](#) web portal to continually enhance functionality
- [Increasing SNAP eligibility threshold](#) from 160 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty



income guidelines (FPIG), which expands the program to an estimated 421,942 people in 174,356 households

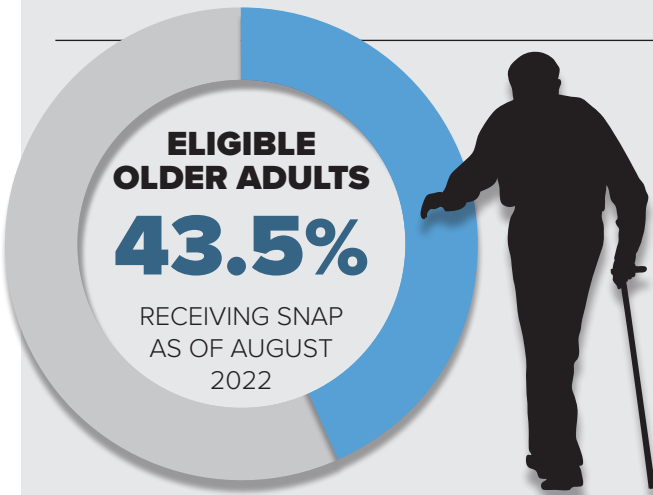
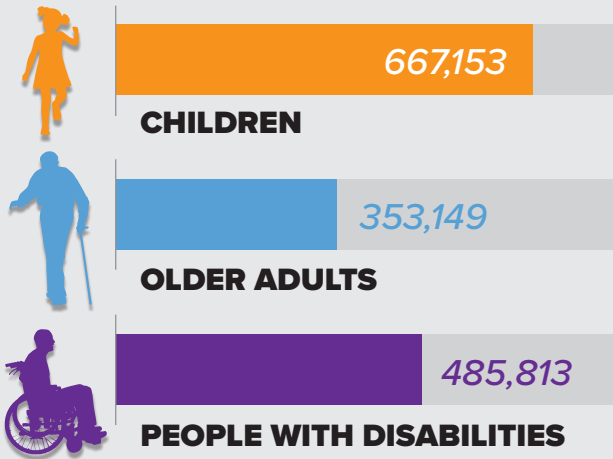
- Working with SNAP outreach partners to target vulnerable populations and [Medical Assistance \(Medicaid\)](#) recipients who are not SNAP-enrolled
- Continuing Heat and Eat, which allows low-income households receiving [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#) benefits to easily maximize their standard utility allowance under SNAP
- Expanding SNAP eligibility to low-income college students enrolled in certain extracurricular activities for first-generation, low-income students
- Issuing clarification that halfway house residents unable to receive meals at their halfway house because of program engagement can be eligible for SNAP

## SNAP POPULATION

# 1.88 million

### TOTAL PA SNAP RECIPIENTS

AS OF SEPTEMBER 2022



**350,000**  
**SENIOR SNAP PARTICIPANTS**

**805,000**  
**TOTAL PA SENIORS ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP**

LESS THAN 200 PERCENT OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL

**2.3 million**  
**TOTAL PA SENIORS**

AGE 60 AND OLDER

*Note:  
The number of adults ages 55 to 64 who had incomes less than 200 percent of the poverty level were adjusted proportionately to arrive at only those 60 and older.*

A gap remains for some households that are Medicaid-enrolled and SNAP-eligible, but not SNAP-enrolled. DHS engaged [Benefits Data Trust](#) to conduct statewide outreach for this population. The [increase in the SNAP grant in 2021](#) will help reduce this gap; DHS hypothesizes that many of these individuals previously may have only qualified for a minimum grant amount, and increased benefit levels will induce more eligible people to apply

Beyond the DHS efforts to expand SNAP participation, multiple state agencies supported this work.



- Established a Senior SNAP workgroup in Fall 2019
- Offers targeted outreach and application assistance to eligible individuals through the [Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly \(PACE\)](#) Application Center
  - ▶ PACE completed outreach to 20,000 households in 2021, leading to the submission of over 4,000 SNAP applications.
- Provides information on SNAP resources through the [Pennsylvania Link to Aging and Disability Resources \(PA Link\)](#), a cross-age, cross-system network of partner agencies that collaborate to serve individuals who need long-term services and supports
- Provides information on SNAP in the annual [Benefits and Rights for Older Pennsylvanians \(Benefits & Rights\)](#) booklet
- Provides information and referral services to individuals in need of community resources, including SNAP, through the AAAs and their affiliated SCCs



- Requires each Senior Food Box lead agency to provide information promoting SNAP in the food box at least once a year



## GOAL 3

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BENEFITING FROM FREE AND REDUCED-PRICED MEALS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR (LINKED TO NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN SUMMER) WILL INCREASE FROM 20 TO 30 PERCENT.

While the pandemic and related area eligibility waivers have impacted PDE’s ability to measure meal counts for the last two and a half years, Pennsylvania has seen success in increasing access to free and reduced-price meals through the [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#), and [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#).

Throughout the 2018-19 school year and the summer of 2019, Pennsylvania schools and organizations participating in the NSBP, NSLP, SSO, and SFSP served nearly 243 million meals to students.

Additionally, from 2018 to 2019, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) served 48.4 million meals across 4,801 child and adult care sites throughout the commonwealth.

To encourage access to school meals, PDE and DHS have:

- Worked with local advocacy organizations to expand program awareness
- Used social media to reach additional eligible families
- Evaluated eligibility for free meals for SNAP, TANF, and some Medical Assistance categories

through COMPASS, with the intention of expanding this eligibility to reduced-priced meals using Medical Assistance data as well

- Sent a summer food mailing to households served

Additionally, the Department of Agriculture supported the school meal programs by increasing the variety of food options available to summer feeding providers. Beginning in the summer of 2018, the department piloted the use of the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program as a complement to the distribution of USDA Foods. For the pilot, 10 total participating sponsors distributed \$21,081 worth of fresh produce at summer sites. As of the summer of 2022, there were 39 participating sponsors who distributed approximately \$217,000 worth of fresh produce at summer feeding sites.

## SCHOOL BREAKFASTS & LUNCHES SERVED ANNUALLY

Year	Meal	Free	Reduced	Total Free/ Reduced	Paid	Total Served
2018-2019	Breakfast	59,254,185	1,770,427	61,024,612	9,012,401	70,037,013
	Lunch	109,669,169	5,766,236	115,435,405	52,782,853	168,218,258

## GOAL 4

SIXTY PERCENT OF STUDENTS BENEFITING FROM FREE AND REDUCED-PRICED SCHOOL MEALS WILL PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST. THIS IS AN INCREASE FROM 47 PERCENT IN 2014-2015.

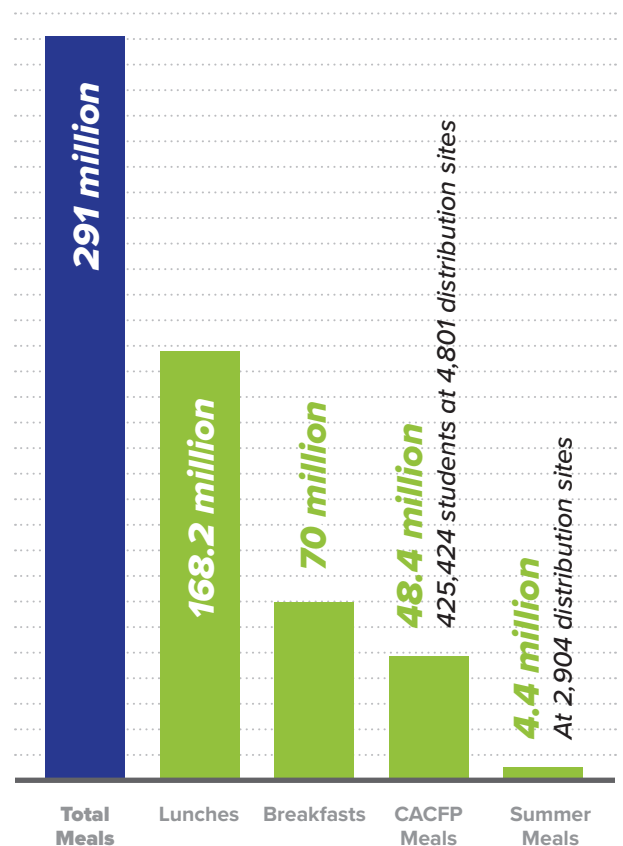
Similar to Goal 3, PDE cannot measure this for the past two and a half years due to inconsistencies during the pandemic. However, in the 2018-2019 school year, 53 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches were also receiving breakfast, marking close to a 13 percent increase since the 2014-2015 school year.

Efforts taken to increase breakfast participation include:

- Creating the Breakfast Brigade
- Participating in breakfast outreach efforts
- Offering mentorship to food service directors interested in starting a breakfast program
- Sharing e-modules on breakfast implementation and expansion
- Increasing availability, through the Department of Agriculture, of more breakfast commodity options for schools to order through the USDA Foods catalog

In September 2022, [Governor Wolf announced a \\$21.5 million plan to provide universal free breakfast](#) for the 2022-2023 school year. The plan took effect October 1, 2022, and will run through the end of the school year. More than 1.7 million Pennsylvania children enrolled in public and private schools, intermediate units, charter schools, career and technology schools, and childcare institutions that participate in the NSLP and SBP will benefit from this state-funded program. The program is funded with prior year funding from the School Food Services General Fund appropriation.

### STUDENT MEALS SERVED 2018-2019



## GOAL 5

THE WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN FARMER'S MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM REDEMPTION RATE WILL INCREASE FROM 308,000 TO 340,000 CHECKS ANNUALLY.

The Department of Agriculture took the following steps to enhance the FMNP:

- Increasing value of checks from \$5 to \$6, meaning every recipient receives \$24 worth of FMNP checks
- Reducing the age to receive FMNP checks from 1-year to 6-months
- Introducing a mobile app to help participants find locations to redeem FMNP checks

Unfortunately, the timing of these efforts has coincided with a decline in WIC enrollment, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and an increase in the funding for [WIC Cash-Value Vouchers \(CVV\)](#). Unlike FMNP, which can only be redeemed at participating farm stands and farm markets for fresh, PA-grown fruits and vegetables, CVV can be redeemed at any

participating WIC retailer for a variety of fruits and vegetables — fresh, frozen, canned, or dried — with no restriction on source state or nation.

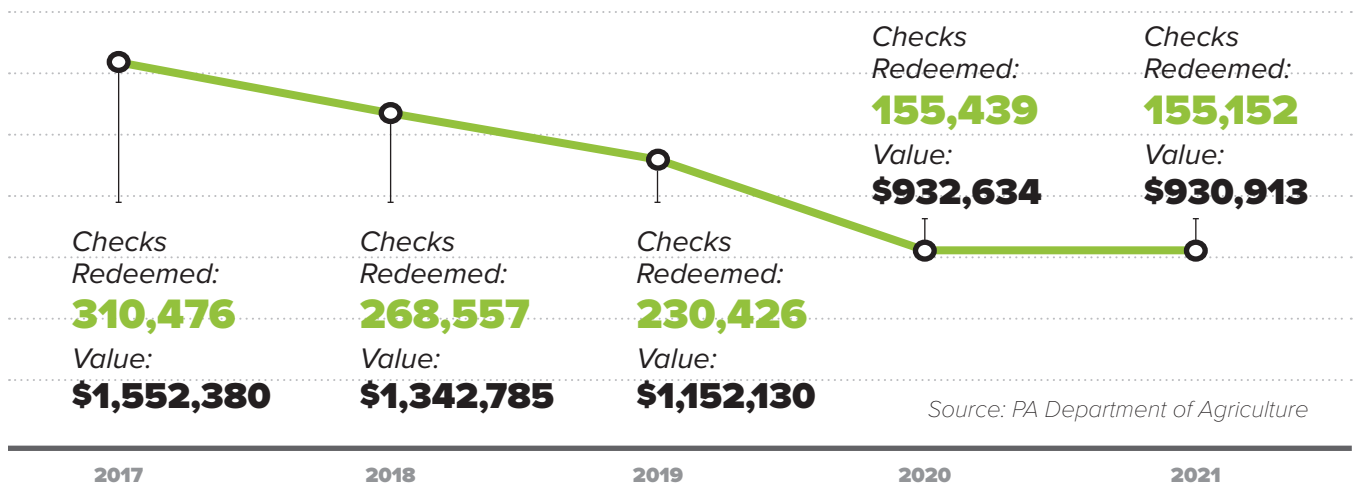
Participants have also indicated barriers surrounding transportation and hours of operation.

As a result, the number of checks redeemed per year has trended downwards since publication of the *Blueprint* (as seen below).

This year, in an effort to increase usage, local WIC agencies have done additional summertime outreach and have had farmers set up markets at WIC clinics when staff are handing out FMNP checks to decrease transportation barriers.

### WIC FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM CHECKS REDEEMED

Note: each check in 2017, 2018, and 2019 was valued at \$5 each. Beginning in 2020, checks were valued at \$6 each



Source: PA Department of Agriculture

## GOAL 6

DOUBLE SNAP BUCKS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT ALL HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE, HIGH-NEED FARMERS MARKETS AND ADDITIONAL SNAP RECIPIENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO SNAP EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND EDUCATION.

Current [Double-Up Food Bucks](#) programs, operated through [USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program \(GusNIP\)](#), require a one-to-one funding match. Due to a lack of state funds for this purpose, the commonwealth has not been able to apply for this program. The Department of Agriculture flagged this as an issue that should be addressed in the next [federal Farm Bill](#), with the recommendation that the state match either be eliminated or significantly reduced.

To expand SNAP employment, training, and education opportunities, DHS has:

- Expanded SNAP 50/50 training sites to 28 locations across the commonwealth
- Removed the requirement for SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed) subcontractors to have local matching funds, making it easier for local providers to participate in the SNAP-Ed program
- Contracted with local Workforce Development Boards to offer programming statewide, ensuring that individuals that have an Able-Bodied Adults

Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirement can be referred to programming to assist with meeting the requirement

The ABAWD work requirement is currently suspended for the duration of the federal PHE. DHS has a statewide ABAWD waiver in place in the event that the PHE ends prior to the end of the current federal fiscal year and is developing a new ABAWD waiver request for the 2023 federal fiscal year with the most generous client approach as possible under current labor market conditions.

## GOAL 7

# PENNSYLVANIANS WILL HAVE STREAMLINED ACCESS TO FOOD SECURITY INFORMATION AND BENEFITS

Beyond the advancements already established in this report, each agency involved in the GFSP has taken numerous steps to achieve this goal.

State agency websites are accessible and offer translation capabilities in over 130 languages or dialects. Additionally, the GFSP agencies share information on nutrition programs, benefits, and other supports through social media.



- Provided nutrition education materials, at a minimum:
  - ▶ On a quarterly basis to individuals receiving meals in congregate settings
  - ▶ Every six months to consumers receiving In-Home Meal service through OPTIONS
- Ensured the AAAs provide annual nutrition screenings to older adults served through home and community-based services or who receive congregate or in-home meals
  - ▶ This helps determine if older adults have a nutritional need due to changes in eating habits or weight, not receiving enough nutrients, having difficulty eating, not having enough money to buy food, or an inability to shop, cook, and/or feed themselves.
- Provided nutrition education materials to the AAAs — at a minimum, on a quarterly basis — in both English and Spanish
- Provided access to a state dietitian and ensures

each AAA contracts with a registered dietitian to monitor and evaluate meals

- Offered direct assistance to eligible people through the PACE program by proactive outreach, form completion, and application submission
- Developed [Spanish translation for the 2022 Benefits & Rights booklet](#) — which includes a section on available meal programs — with plans to continue translation for future editions
- Provided materials to SCCs (upon request) in Russian, Mandarin, Chinese, Polish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Cantonese



- Made the [TEFAP Self-Declaration of Need](#) application form available in English, Spanish, Russian, Nepali, Urdu, Chinese, Arabic, and Haitian Creole
- Made the [CSFP Self-Declaration of Need](#) application form available in English, Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish,

Ukrainian, and Vietnamese

- ▶ It will soon be available in Arabic, Khmer, and Pashto
- Made additional CSFP forms available in English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese
  - ▶ There are plans to expand access to Arabic, Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian.



- Made it easier for food banks and other feeding programs to understand the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) by developing a [checklist for applicants](#) interested in the program



- Launched the [PA HFC initiative website](#) to provide resources and strategies for addressing food insecurity on college campuses
- Developed the [Finding Your Way in PA](#) app to connect students and families experiencing homelessness with local services and resources, including food banks
  - ▶ The app is available on three platforms (Web, Google Play Store, and Apple App Store), features a simple design with list and map view to easily find and connect to services, features a Chatbot to users find services, and lists of various national crisis hotlines that can provide users with emotional support



- Ensured local WIC staff maintain a list of accurate local referrals to share with participants in need
- Distributed a community services brochure to each WIC applicant, which provides information on various community resources including food banks and pantries and other emergency food assistance programs
- Worked with the commonwealth's Chief Accessibility Officer to improve access to WIC education, outreach, and referral materials to better serve those whose first language is not English



- Continually updated and improved its online and print application for benefits, COMPASS, and myCOMPASS app, including through a partnership with [Code for America](#) in 2021
- Ensured all forms deemed "critical to access" are translated into top six languages spoken in the commonwealth
- Added SAR to the myCOMPASS app.
- Opened the InspiriTec call center to SNAP applications
- Provided two cultural competency classroom trainings for DHS staff
- Provided [county assistance office \(CAO\)](#) staff with trauma-informed care training
- Prioritized outreach and education around SNAP, food assistance programs, and available education and training programs available to SNAP recipients

## GOAL 8

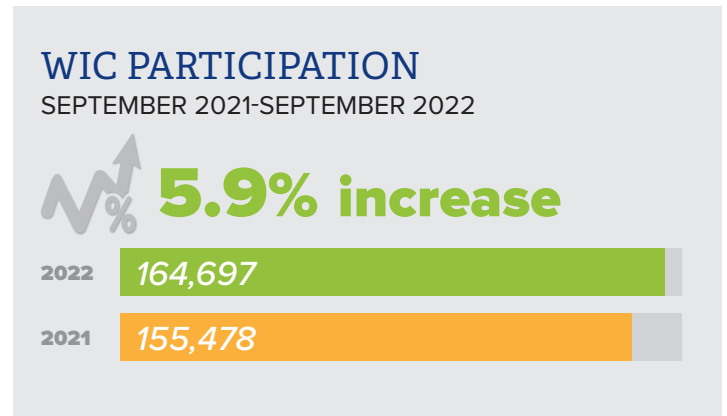
THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN WIC PROGRAMS WILL INCREASE FROM MORE THAN 245,000 TO 260,000.

Nationally and in Pennsylvania, WIC participation has steadily declined over the last few years and was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, participation in WIC has increased 5.9 percent in the past year, with the program serving 164,697 participants as of September 2022.

Increasing participation and utilization of WIC is a priority for DOH's Bureau of WIC. DOH has taken several steps to increase participation. In 2019, eWIC was successfully implemented in Pennsylvania. The acceptance and use of the eWIC card and accompanying electronic shopping applications improved participant experience. While many WIC services were offered through virtual appointments during the pandemic, due to the offline eWIC benefit delivery system, participants still had to visit the WIC office in-person to have benefits loaded onto their cards.

DOH is currently exploring a transition from an offline to online eWIC benefit delivery system to further improve the program reducing the number of clinic visits for participants to receive benefits.

To further increase participation, DOH administers a grant program to connect medical liaisons with local WIC agencies to build relationships with the health care community. The liaisons act as a resource for health care providers by providing education on the positive behavior changes achieved through WIC nutrition education, the science behind the WIC food packages, and the positive health outcomes



associated with participating in the program.

DOH also works with other state agencies to increase awareness, participation, and utilization of WIC. DOH receives SNAP participation data from DHS, which is used by the Bureau of WIC to conduct outreach to households about the benefits of the WIC program. DHS also sends a WIC brochure to households when a newborn is added to a Medical Assistance case. Additionally, the PA Link call center refers grandparents raising grandchildren to the WIC program to determine eligibility for services and supports.

## GOAL 9

# PENNSYLVANIA WILL IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY, NUTRITIOUS FOOD.

Beyond the advancements already established in this report, each GFSP agency has made great strides in achieving this goal.



- Expanded eligibility criteria for home-delivered meals for seniors through the OPTIONS program in 2018 by:
  - ▶ Removing the requirement to be homebound
  - ▶ Changing the requirement from “having a nutritional risk” to “having a nutritional need”
  - ▶ Prioritizing meal as a service
    - When an AAA establishes a Wait List for services, individuals waiting for In-Home Meals are placed at the top of the Wait List and will receive a meal before other services are provided.
- Partnered with [National Foundation to End Senior Hunger \(NFESH\)](#) to pilot the [What a Waste](#) program at nine SCCs from July 2016 through the spring of 2017
  - ▶ According to NFESH’s final report, the What a Waste program:
    - Decreased food waste sent to landfills by an average of 74 percent
    - Increased the nutrients consumed by an average of 7 percent overall
    - Increased the collection of voluntary donations by an average of 46 percent at the centers that have adopted NFESH’s recommendations

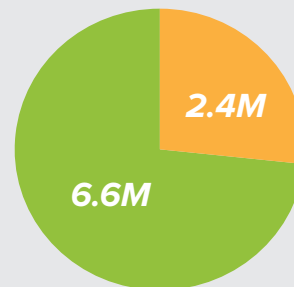
### SENIOR MEALS 2021-2022



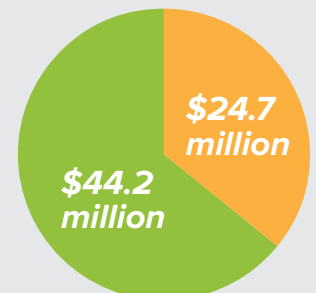
# 82,252

**CONSUMERS FEDS**  
at approximately 500 PA senior community centers

#### MEALS SERVED



#### COST OF MEALS



● Congregate Meals ● Delivered Meals

- ▶ Although some recommendations were already required by existing policy, the Department of Aging incorporated additional best practices into policy, such as:
  - Utilizing a reservation system
  - Encouraging suggested donation signage at the center
  - Liberalizing leftover policies
  - Utilizing food waste appropriately



- Surveying participants for consumer preference
- ▶ As a result of the pilot, the Department of Aging encouraged SCCs to apply for funding to implement the program through the annual [SCC Grants](#).
- Required the AAAs to survey their consumers regarding meal preferences to better inform menu planning and meal options
- Worked with the [Penn Asian Senior Services](#) and Philadelphia-area food banks to increase Asian community enrollment in the Senior Food Box Program



- Implemented the [PASS program](#), which provides an efficient mechanism for Pennsylvania’s agricultural industry to donate safe, wholesome food products while being reimbursed for the costs involved in harvesting, processing, packaging, and transporting these foods
  - ▶ Without [PASS](#), these food products would have gone to waste.
  - ▶ While created through Act 113 of 2010, the program was unfunded until the 2015-2016 state budget.
    - By the end of Governor Wolf’s term, the administration will have invested \$24.5 million into this program: \$14.5 million in state funding, \$10 million in federal funds.
  - ▶ From April 2016 through August 2022, PASS:
    - Distributed more than 23.6 million pounds of surplus food to 13 local, charitable food distributors, ultimately serving more than 2,700 local charitable food partners, including food pantries, soup kitchens, feeding programs, and shelters in all 67 counties
    - Sourced more than 80 different Pennsylvania-produced products from 192 farmers, processors, and growers located in 50 counties
    - Generated more than \$39 million in economic output

## SFPP DISTRIBUTION

JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021

### POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED



**20.8 million**

• Annual State Budget

**12.9 million**

• State Allocation of CARES Funding

### INVESTMENT IN FOOD PROGRAM



**\$18.2 million**

• Annual State Budget

**\$15 million**

• State Allocation of CARES Funding

### SFPP PROGRAM TOTALS

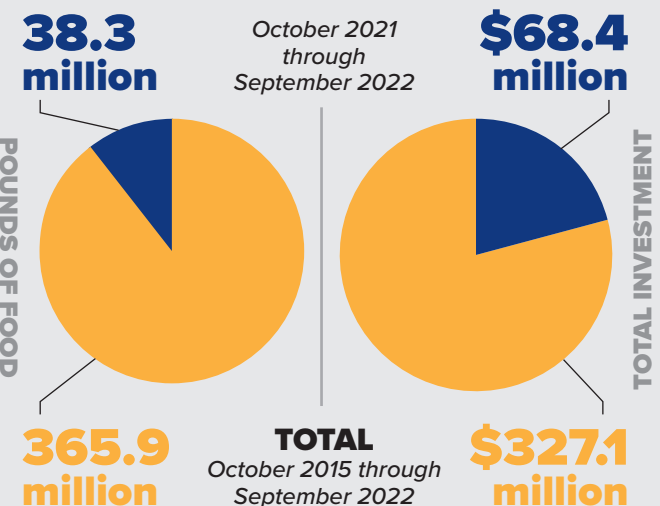
**205.6 million**

• Total distribution from July 2015-June 2021

**\$121.8 million**

• Total investment from July 2015-June 2021

## TEFAP DISTRIBUTION



- ▶ PASS was used as the model for [USDA's Farm to Food Bank](#) program, which was included in the 2017 federal Farm Bill.
  - To date, Pennsylvania has received \$702,930 from USDA's Farm to Food Bank program.
  - These funds have been used to leverage the PASS program, providing an additional source of funding for the department to reimburse the agricultural industry for costs associated with product donations.
- Received \$15.2 million from USDA to implement the [Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program \(LFPA\)](#) in Pennsylvania
  - ▶ These funds will be used to complement the PASS program by procuring top-graded, high-quality product grown and produced in Pennsylvania for distribution throughout the charitable feeding system.
- Led the nation in providing cash grants to counties for the purchase and distribution of food to low-income individuals through the [SFPP](#)
  - ▶ Pennsylvania is one of a small number of states in the nation to provide state revenues for an emergency assistance program for its low-income citizens, and the commonwealth's program is the largest of its kind.
- Improved access to fresh, nutritious food in food apartheid through both the [FFFI](#) and [Pennsylvania Farm Bill Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Program](#)
- [Raised income eligibility](#) from 160 percent to 185 percent of the FPIG for those receiving support from Pennsylvania's network of food banks and pantries through TEFAP and SFPP
- [Increased CSFP distribution by more than 20 percent](#) from May 2021 to September 2022, in partnership with [Hunger-Free Pennsylvania](#), by:
  - ▶ Rebranding CSFP in Pennsylvania as the "Senior Food Box Program"
  - ▶ Removing income verification requirement
  - ▶ Transitioning the application to a self-declaration of eligibility

## PASS DISTRIBUTION

### POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED



**2.5 million**

2021-2022

**23.6 million**

April 2016 through August 2022

### INVESTMENT IN FOOD PROGRAM

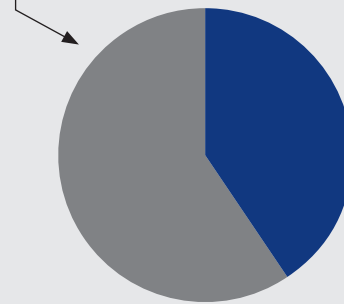


**\$2.2 million**

2021-2022

**\$24.5 million\***

April 2016 through August 2022



**\$14.5 million**

• State fundinG

**\$10 million**

• Federal funding

*\*Resulting in \$39 million of economic output.*

- ▶ Gathering program recommendations and first-hand experiences from clients, including through a listening session with [First Lady Wolf](#)
- ▶ Partnering with [DoorDash](#) to offer free monthly food box delivery to seniors
  - DoorDash delivery is now available in Bucks, Columbia, Dauphin, Erie, Fayette, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Luzerne, Montgomery, Montour, Philadelphia, Washington, Westmoreland, and York counties.
  - [Since its initiation](#), the partnership has made almost 42,000 deliveries to approximately 9,000 unique participants.

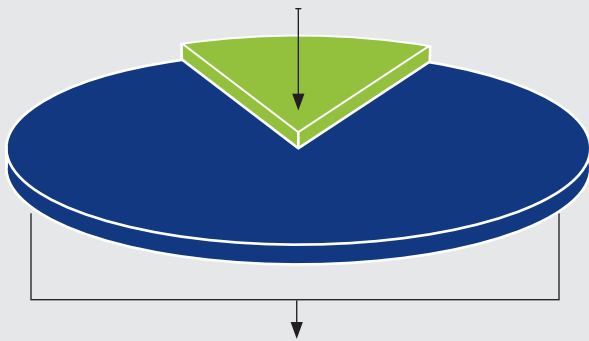
## CSFP DISTRIBUTION

FOOD BOXES DISTRIBUTED

# 393,550

**FOOD BOXES DISTRIBUTED  
FROM 36,218 ASSIGNED SLOTS**

OCTOBER 1, 2021-SEPTEMBER 30, 2022



# 2,852,529

**TOTAL FOOD BOXES DISTRIBUTED**

OCTOBER 2015 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2022

- ▶ Partnering with the Department of Aging and the PACE call center to proactively contact and enroll eligible seniors in the program
  - [To date](#), PACE has processed more than 20,000 applications, with around 60 percent of applications resulting in enrollment.



- More than doubled the [NAP](#) Charitable Food Program tax credits for corporations that support feeding programs and food banks, incentivizing community collaboration and donation
  - ▶ Throughout the past seven fiscal years, an estimated \$30.5 million has been awarded through

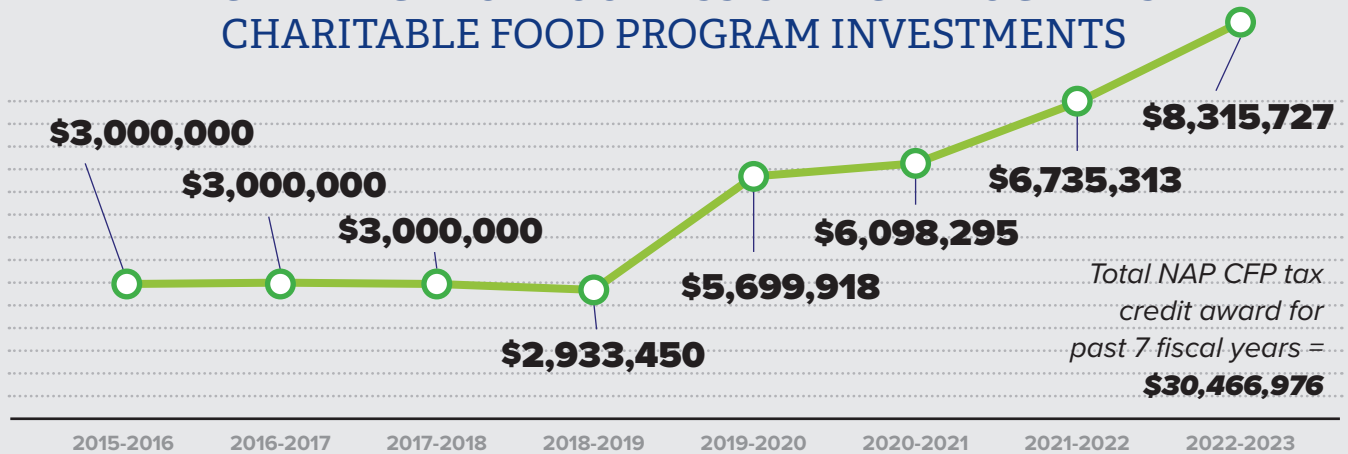
this program. An additional \$8.32 million has been allocated for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

- Placed a focus on donations of fresh produce, rather than the typical canned food provided by retail grocery chains, within the NAP
- Made a concentrated effort to create food infrastructure that better serves vulnerable and diverse populations
  - ▶ This includes creating smaller food distribution operations at trusted community centers, such as [Lenfest Center](#) in Hunting Park.
- Worked with urban farming initiatives that make it easier for urban dwellers to access fresh produce
  - ▶ These programs also offer the benefits of food education, blight elimination and neighborhood beautification in areas that have experienced chronic disinvestment.
- Participated in a yearlong regional stakeholder review with the [Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank](#) that led to the establishment of more flexible ways for food partners to connect with the food bank's programs
- Participated, along with the Department of Agriculture, in a semester-long analysis of food access issues with graduate students from [Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy](#)
  - ▶ The final presentation and report evaluated the impact of the COVID-19 FFFI and found that the top utilization of the funding was for refrigeration.



- Launched the [PA HFC designation program](#) to help institutions address hunger by building a coalition of colleges and universities focused on:
  - ▶ Addressing hunger and other basic needs for their students, including through SNAP awareness and application assistance
  - ▶ Creating opportunities for connection among

## DCED NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM'S CHARITABLE FOOD PROGRAM INVESTMENTS



- student hunger advocates
- ▶ Providing resources and strategies for campuses
- ▶ Supporting opportunities to apply for grants related to addressing food insecurity
- Implemented a [\\$1 million PA HFC grant program](#) to support campus anti-hunger efforts
  - ▶ Advocacy of First Lady Wolf, PDE, and students and organizations across the state led to the creation of this grant in the 2022-2023 state budget.
- Administered a universal free breakfast program to continue providing breakfast to more than 1.7 million Pennsylvania children enrolled in public schools, intermediate units, charter schools, career and technology schools, and childcare institutions for the 2022-2023 school year
- Regularly applied for and has been awarded USDA Farm to School Grant funding for promotion of local foods to be incorporated into child nutrition programs and for agriculture education for Pennsylvania children
- Hosted the statewide [Farm to Child Nutrition Summit](#) for information-sharing and networking among agricultural and child nutrition stakeholders
- Offered an [e-learning module](#) that provides training on purchasing local foods for child nutrition programs and incorporated this information in other trainings
- Developed the [Pennsylvania Harvest of the Month](#) program, with resources for schools, early care and

- education and summer meals programs, to introduce program participants to Pennsylvania agricultural products and facilitate learning about those products
- Expanded resources and increased access to breakfast for students via the [School Breakfast Mini-Grants](#)
  - ▶ Throughout the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years, nearly 400 schools were awarded mini grants totaling approximately \$1.4 million.
- Worked with advocates and community partners to develop the School Breakfast Task Force, which meets to discuss and assign out actionable plans to increase access to school breakfast meals for students
- Promoted and incentivized early childhood education (ECE) providers to participate in the CACFP by including participation in [Keystone STARS](#), Pennsylvania ECE's quality rating and improvement system
  - ▶ This achievement, made in collaboration with DOH, marks the beginning of a process that will incentivize and reward CACFP participation while offering additional support to ECE programs that serve children disparately impacted by food and nutrition insecurity.
- Offered on-site, state-wide hands-on culinary trainings for school staff as part of the [USDA Team Nutrition Training Grants](#)
  - ▶ These sessions are designed to increase staff's knowledge of scratch-based cooking and preparation of school meals that are attractive and healthy.



- Increased access to healthy food and beverage options and chronic disease information in food banks and pantries across the commonwealth through the [PA HPI](#), in partnership with [Feeding PA](#)
  - ▶ PA HPI currently works in three food banks and 89 food pantries, with plans to bring another 10 pantries on board in the coming months.
  - ▶ PA HPI has also expanded with SNAP-Ed funding to reach an additional 50 pantries.
    - Pantries are assessed when entering the program and in six-month intervals to track progress in five key categories: inventory, environment and healthy nudges, nutrition policies and guidelines, health promotion and marketing, and services, resources, and training.
    - Cohort 1 pantries, which are the 30 pantries that have been in the program the longest, have shown significant improvements in all five categories, with their total scores improving from 15.2 at baseline to 27.7 at the third and latest assessment.
  - ▶ In June 2022, SNAP-Ed chose PA HPI as a new practice-tested intervention for their [toolkit](#), which is featured nationally for replication.
    - Interventions are chosen for the toolkit by peer-experts who review supporting evidence, including outcome data, for intervention effectiveness.
- Partnered with the [Keystone Kids Go](#) to support child care programs that currently participate in CACFP and encourage more eligible programs to participate in an effort to increase access to nutritious meals and snacks and curb disparities in food access across the state
- [Examined regional CACFP participation](#) in Pennsylvania in the context of food access and poverty, especially in regions where food insecurity and poverty rates are high, to identify regions where CACFP participation should be promoted and supported
- Partnered with [Tuscarora Intermediate Unit](#) to annually offer the PA Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (PA NAPSACC) mini-grant program to 100 licensed ECE programs across the state
  - ▶ The mini-grant program uses the evidence-based Go NAPSACC tool to guide ECEs through a continuous cycle of quality improvement (CQI) focused on improved nutrition and physical activity practices and policies.
  - ▶ The [PA NAPSACC](#) CQI process guides providers through self-assessment, action planning, implementation, policy development, reassessment, and reflection.
  - ▶ Participation empowers program leadership and includes individualized technical assistance to increase knowledge and improve the quality of ECE environments.
- Partnered with [Feeding PA](#) and [Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition \(SEAMAAC\)](#) to assess the cultural relevance of foods, resources, and other materials offered in SEAMAAC's food pantry in Philadelphia
  - ▶ This project was funded through the [National Association of Chronic Disease Directors' Building Resilient Inclusive Communities](#) grant in 2021, which aims to promote nutrition security, physical activity, and social connectedness among communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including communities of color, older adults, and low-income communities.
  - ▶ The department contracted with the [Research & Evaluation Group at Public Health Management Corporation](#) to conduct the evaluation.
  - ▶ The results of the evaluation are being used to inform the development of culturally responsive and inclusive materials, such as health information and recipes, and the procurement of culturally relevant foods in participating PA HPI pantries.

- Created a new PA HPI task force focused on achieving health equity through food sourcing
  - ▶ The group is examining how to better provide cultural, religious, and traditional foods to meet the needs of all pantry clients.
- Implemented cultural competency training with staff who provide breastfeeding services for participants as part of the [PA WIC](#) Annual for federal fiscal year 2022.
- Provided access to nutrition education and healthful foods through 23 local WIC agencies in all 67 counties of the state
- Continued to explore and evaluate new technologies to further streamline the WIC application process and improve participant experience



- Improved SNAP access, as outlined in Goal 2
- Provided reimbursement for organizations participating in the CACFP
- Worked to implement RISE PA, a platform to screen for unmet social needs, including food security, housing security, and employment, and allow providers to make referrals to community-based organizations
  - ▶ DHS is working with four health information organizations to procure a single, statewide RISE PA tool vendor that will be able to do closed-loop referrals for SDOH needs.
  - ▶ DHS expects the RISE PA tool to be procured and functional by mid-2023.
- Worked with Medical Assistance managed care organizations (MCOs) and home-delivered meal programs to offer healthy nutrition to Medical Assistance participants

- ▶ While Medicaid dollars cannot be used to pay for food, MCOs work with food organizations, such as [MANNA](#) in Philadelphia, to provide nutritional education services and case management for people who receive medically tailored meals.
- ▶ MCOs also:
  - Support members in applying for SNAP
  - Educate members on making the most of their SNAP benefits
  - Complete SDOH screenings for members receiving case management, which can identify nutritional support needs
  - Make referrals to local community-based organizations, including food pantries, which can help meet [SDOH](#) needs
- Developed the [Parent Pathways Learning Network \(PPLN\)](#) to establish or advance systemic supports for parenting students and their families — including access to food
  - ▶ PPLN was created in partnership with the [Hope Center of College, Community, and Justice](#) at Temple University and was funded in part by the [Aspen Institute's Ascend Program](#).
  - ▶ The network now serves seven member colleges and universities across the state that, at no cost, receive:
    - Training and technical assistance from parenting student experts
    - Coaching from Hope Center staff and Pennsylvania agency affiliates
    - Peer-learning engagements provided via remote web-based platforms, including one focused on food security and how parenting students can access SNAP and other community resources to support their families



# RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD



ADDITIONAL ACTION IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY IN PENNSYLVANIA. THE BELOW RECOMMENDATIONS ARE FOCUSED ON IMPROVING FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS, SECURING KEY INVESTMENTS, AND COLLABORATING WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS.

## ► IMPROVE FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS

- **Continue to address the SDOH through actions such as:**

- ▶ Increasing the minimum wage
- ▶ Supporting the development of affordable housing
- ▶ Enhancing public transportation services
- ▶ Addressing the rising costs of healthcare
- ▶ Addressing the rising costs of higher education
- ▶ Increasing availability of culturally relevant foods within the charitable food system to ensure resettled refugees, immigrants, and others have access to food products from their cultural backgrounds
- ▶ Ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in building and program development

- **Expand food rescue and recovery efforts** by supporting programs that divert food headed to landfills and ensuring proper cold storage capacity within the charitable food network

- ▶ According to DEP's 2022 Pennsylvania Food Waste to Renewable Energy Assessment, Pennsylvania's industrial, commercial, and institutional establishments generate an estimated more than 2.7 million tons of food waste each year.
- ▶ Beyond the loss of wholesome food that could have helped feed families in need, food waste also creates methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate

change and has been implicated in health risks.

- ▶ Beyond the PASS program, organizations supporting this work in Pennsylvania include:

- Mid-Atlantic Regional Cooperative
- Sharing Excess
- 412 Food Rescue
- Food Connect Group
- Food Recovery Network
- Philly Food Rescue
- Rolling Harvest Food Rescue

- **Increase TANF grant amount to assist eligible households** in stabilizing after a financial crisis and improving overall food security and repeal the \$1,000 asset limit for TANF eligibility

- ▶ The TANF cash assistance grant, unchanged since 1989, has only eroded in value, making it difficult for households that are the least likely to be able to prepare and procure healthy and nutritious foods.
- ▶ This is particularly important from a racial equity perspective, given that 12 percent of Pennsylvanians identify as Black or African American, yet Blacks and African Americans make up 53 percent of all TANF beneficiaries.
- ▶ Pennsylvania is one of only six states with a \$1,000



asset limit, which means people must spend down and keep down their assets in order to qualify for TANF. State legislation is necessary to repeal or amend this regressive asset limit.

- **Explore implementation of an electronic benefit delivery system for the FMNP and SFMNP**
- **Collect annual reports from PA HFC grant recipients** to identify best practices and analyze program effectiveness
- **Address additional collegiate basic needs** that impact hunger, including housing insecurity, mental health, and transportation barriers
- **Further improve SNAP access by:**
  - ▶ Issuing policy to expand the scope of SNAP student eligibility, unless Congress acts to make SNAP student eligibility permanent at the federal level
  - ▶ Ensuring all PA ABAWDs can receive SNAP until at least March 31, 2024
    - DHS could issue some of its limited discretionary exemptions for the small number of ABAWDs who moved to Pennsylvania in 2023 and will not be covered by the statewide ABAWD waiver.
  - ▶ Modifying messaging, processes, and systems to better capture transportation-related dependent care expenses, including the cost of transporting a child to child care
    - Due to a reduction in SNAP interviews during the pandemic, there may be SNAP households with unreported child care transportation expenses. If documented, these expenses could increase the

household’s grant amount.

- ▶ Providing a platform for small retailers, farmers, and farmer’s markets to accept online SNAP sales
  - DHS could also evaluate the potential of providing a “ready” platform to those that want to participate but could not afford the startup costs.
- ▶ Considering limitations to administrative overpayment collections for individuals in certain categories and/or for how long collections can be made
  - DHS and the Office of State Inspector General are currently reviewing related policies of other states.
- **Bolster WIC by:**
  - ▶ Developing a WIC Participant Portal to make it easier for clients to share information with program staff and manage appointments and other participation details
  - ▶ Making improvements to PENN to streamline appointment flow and improve participants’ experience
  - ▶ Exploring online shopping capabilities once the PA WIC system is capable
  - ▶ Providing information on healthy eating in between WIC appointments to encourage utilization of benefits
- **Support Child Nutrition Programs by:**
  - ▶ Further promoting and incentivizing licensed ECE providers to participate in the CACFP
  - ▶ Promoting participation in the school breakfast program
  - ▶ Promoting awareness of and participation in the summer meals program

## ▶ SECURE KEY INVESTMENTS

- **Increase funding investments** in the PASS program, allowing the Department of Agriculture to continue to expand the program by sourcing product from agricultural producers in more counties across the state
  - ▶ Continue to leverage USDA funding made available through the LFPA and USDA/TEFAP Farm to Food Bank funding
- **Recapitalize the FFFI program** and expand its scope

to include new and innovative food programs such as the Produce Marketplace in Allegheny County and the Food Helpers program in Washington County

- **Increase the Neighborhood Assistance Tax Credit** from \$36 million to \$72 million to impact more programs that use the Charitable Food Program
- **Pass legislation to increase the tax credit amount** from the current limit of up to 55 percent to up to 75 percent to align with the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) or up to 90 percent to better align with the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program and make NAP more competitive and attractive for businesses
- **Increase funding for state oversight of and outreach for the summer meals program**
  - ▶ Currently, PDE does not receive enough federal money to fully staff and administer this program or conduct outreach.
- **Invest state funding in a PA Farm to School program**
  - ▶ A robust investment of state funds in farm-to-school sourcing will help increase access to healthy and nutritious food for Pennsylvania’s youngest residents.
  - ▶ Michigan’s 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms program could be used as a reference. The initiative has grown from a pilot funded at \$250,000 in 2016 to a \$9.3 million program in fiscal year 2022-2023.

- **Increase state funding for the PA HFC program** to increase access to food pantries on college campuses and assist college students and their families with applying for assistance, such as SNAP and WIC
- **Increase the minimum SNAP benefit for seniors and people with disabilities**
  - ▶ Many senior households operate on a fixed income and the rising cost of inflation continues to stretch already tight budgets. An increase to the benefit would increase food security and good nutrition for older adults.
  - ▶ In the 2022-2023 state budget, Governor Wolf proposed an increase from the current minimum benefit of \$20 per month to \$35 per month, but the state legislature did not act on the proposal.
- **Ensure that dedicated funding exists to enable the commonwealth to apply for Double-Up Food Bucks program** to incentivize fruit and vegetable purchases via SNAP
- **Identify future funding to support the PA Link’s efforts to provide food delivery to consumers in need**
  - ▶ The PA Link is currently using a portion of grant funds to collaborate with local grocery stores, restaurants, and online/mobile food ordering and delivery services to provide delivered groceries and food to consumers in need. Future funding is needed so PA Link can continue this important resource.

## ▶ COLLABORATE WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS

- **Form greater connections between PA WIC and DHS’s Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF);** the foster care population; Medical Assistance MCOs; and SNAP households with newborns, due to the categorical eligibility status
- **Develop an action plan to help promote the use of**

**FMNP benefits,** including a cohesive communications strategy and concrete steps that can be taken to improve the program

- **Increase coordinated, collaborative outreach efforts across agencies, offices, and external partners** to better inform the public about existing food security

programs and supports

- **Share best practices among PA HFC designees and grant recipients**, including through a convening in the spring of 2023
- **Encourage PA HFC designees to recertify their efforts every two years**
- **Participate in the following federal advocacy efforts:**
  - ▶ Work with USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to:
    - Seek enhancements to the ESAP demonstration project to improve the application and renewal process
    - Identify limited circumstances in which interviewing is not necessary to appropriately process eligibility following the PHE
    - Gain approval for the use of a Standard Medical Deduction for the SNAP grant, which does not require budget neutrality
  - ▶ Encourage USDA to reexamine the state funding formula for school meal programs
    - The current formula does not fund states sufficiently to provide proper oversight of and outreach for the program.
  - ▶ Advocate that Congress legislate the Summer EBT

program as a component of the SNAP program to increase its effectiveness

- Congress previously discussed legislation which would base Summer EBT on the NSLP, but NSLP is not sufficiently standardized to support the administration of a statewide benefit based on its available infrastructure.
- ▶ Advocate for the following changes in the next federal Farm Bill:
  - Increase the CSFP income threshold from 130 percent FPIG to 185 percent FPIG, bringing it in line with Senior FMNP
  - Reduce the GusNIP state match from 50 percent to 10 percent of the total project cost
- ▶ Advocate for Congress to reauthorize the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, which expired in September 2015, to address critical child nutrition issues and update vital programs like WIC, WIC FMNP, NSLP, SBP, CACFP, SFSP, and Special Milk Program
  - Agricultural hot topics, such as school milk and the role of other commodities in school feeding programs could be addressed through this reauthorization.



# APPENDICES



# ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition	Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
<b>AAAs</b>	Area Agencies on Aging	<b>OCDEL</b>	Office of Child Development and Early Learning
<b>ABAWD</b>	Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents	<b>OPTIONS</b>	Help at Home
<b>ARP</b>	American Rescue Plan	<b>PA HFC</b>	PA Hunger-Free Campus
<b>Benefits &amp; Rights</b>	Benefits and Rights for Older Pennsylvanians	<b>PA HPI</b>	PA Healthy Pantry Initiative
<b>Blueprint</b>	Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA	<b>PA Link</b>	PA Link to Aging and Disability Resources
<b>CACFP</b>	Child and Adult Care Food Program	<b>PA NAPSACC</b>	PA Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care
<b>CAO</b>	County Assistance Office	<b>PACE</b>	Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly
<b>CQI</b>	Cycle of Quality Improvement	<b>PASS</b>	PA Agricultural Surplus System
<b>CSFP</b>	Commodity Supplemental Food Program	<b>PDE</b>	PA Department of Education
<b>CVV</b>	WIC Cash Value Vouchers	<b>P-EBT</b>	Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer
<b>DCED</b>	PA Department of Community and Economic Development	<b>PENN</b>	PA WIC management information system, PA Electronic Nutrition Network
<b>DEP</b>	PA Department of Environmental Protection	<b>PHE</b>	Public Health Emergency
<b>DHS</b>	PA Department of Human Services	<b>PPLN</b>	Parent Pathways Learning Network
<b>DOH</b>	PA Department of Health	<b>SAR</b>	Semi-annual reporting
<b>EBT</b>	Electronic Benefits Transfer	<b>SBP</b>	School Breakfast Program
<b>ECE</b>	Early childhood education	<b>SCCs</b>	Senior Community Centers
<b>ESAP</b>	Elderly Simplified Application Process	<b>SDOH</b>	Social determinants of health
<b>eWIC</b>	Electronic benefits transfer for WIC	<b>SEAMAAC</b>	Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition
<b>FFFI</b>	Fresh Food Financing Initiative	<b>SFMNP</b>	Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program
<b>FMNP</b>	WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program	<b>SFPC</b>	Statewide Food Policy Council
<b>FPIG</b>	Federal Poverty Income Guidelines	<b>SFPP</b>	State Food Purchase Program
<b>GFSP</b>	Governor's Food Security Partnership	<b>SFSP</b>	Summer Food Service Program
<b>GusNip</b>	USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program	<b>SNAP</b>	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
<b>LFGPA</b>	Local Food Purchase Assistance Agreement Program	<b>SNAP E&amp;T</b>	SNAP Employment and Training
<b>MCOs</b>	Managed Care Organizations	<b>SNAP-Ed</b>	SNAP Education
<b>Medicaid</b>	Medical Assistance	<b>SSO</b>	Seamless Summer Option
<b>NAP</b>	Neighborhood Assistance Program	<b>TANF</b>	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
<b>NFESH</b>	National Foundation to End Senior Hunger	<b>TEFAP</b>	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
<b>NSLP</b>	National School Lunch Program	<b>USDA</b>	U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>OAA</b>	Older Americans Act	<b>WIC</b>	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children



pennsylvania

