

# Compendium of Recommended Strategies to Address Poverty

## January 2020

Tackling food insecurity at its root requires addressing the causes and consequences of financial instability and economic hardship, as well as weaving strategies for bolstering food resources into existing efforts.

The recommended anti-poverty strategies in this Compendium are taken from the following reports:

1. PCCY-Underwater: What's Sinking Families in Philadelphia 2019
2. Haas Institute@Berkeley- Six Policies to Reduce Economic Inequality
3. Urban Institute-Disrupting Food Insecurity; Steps Communities Can Take 2019
4. City Council of Philadelphia March 2019-Narrowing The Gap; Strategies to Alleviate and Prevent Poverty in Philadelphia
5. FPAC Recommendations to City Food Strategy Working Group, Office of the Mayor (Dec 13, 2019)
6. The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, Temple University- Alleviating Poverty and Promoting College Attainment in Philadelphia, 2018
7. Economy League of Greater Philadelphia + Philadelphia Department of Public Health Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention: Good Eats 2019

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## Workforce and Economic Development

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Reduce barriers to education, training, and employment—such as a lack of access to affordable childcare.
2. Provide additional \$1.5M to the Office of Benefits and Wage Compliance for enforcement staff to enforce and expand current policies (Wage theft, Fair Work Week, Paid Sick Leave).
3. Develop and support collaborations between schools and training programs, and organizations working on benefits outreach and food distribution.
4. Provide resources for short-term credentialing programs to accelerate the transition from training to work.
5. Partner with building trades to provide job training for returning citizens.
6. Increase support for micro-enterprise development & grassroots entrepreneurship.
7. Provide resources to support vocational and middle-college programs.
8. Establish “Living Wage Philadelphia,” a dynamic, voluntary wage certification program.
9. Increase government payment to agencies that employ low-wage, government-funded professionals, such as Direct Support Professionals and child care workers, so that wages are at least \$15 an hour – as the City has already done for all of its employees and contractors – and ideally \$18 an hour.

At the advocacy level:

1. Advocate for SNAP Employment and Training investments that move beyond the traditional emphasis on job search assistance to those that offer job training informed by best practices and trauma-informed supports.

## **Building Assets, Financial Health, and Self-Sustainability**

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Maximize strategies to reduce the pressure of energy costs on household budgets.
2. Increase the reach, value, and uptake of the earned income tax credit (EITC) such as through outreach and tax preparation assistance.
3. Build and expand on programs that automatically enroll workers in retirement plans and provide a savings credit or a federal match for retirement savings accounts.
4. Expand Pennsylvania's Tax Forgiveness program to incomes of at least \$75,000.
5. Establish "Living Wage Philadelphia," a dynamic, voluntary wage certification program.
6. Require surety bonds and/or wage liens for unpaid wages.
7. Enhance outreach about worker protection and fair hiring laws.
8. Integrate financial, banking, and savings interventions in existing programs and platforms (e.g., housing, employment, community colleges, tax preparation, and public utilities) to reach more people and meet them where they are.
9. Protect consumers from unfair, deceptive, or abusive business practices by enforcing municipal consumer protection regulations, collecting consumer complaints, and educating businesses and consumers.
10. Make one-on-one financial counseling, which helps individuals and families manage their debt and daily finances and build credit scores, a right for all Philadelphians, including justice-involved populations.
11. Support savings incentives structured as refundable tax credits, which treat every dollar saved equally, providing equal benefits for lower-income families.
12. Increase government payment to agencies that employ low-wage, government-funded professionals, such as Direct Support Professionals and child care workers, so that wages are at least \$15 an hour – as the City has already done for all of its employees and contractors – and ideally \$18 an hour.

At the advocacy level:

1. Advocate for federal policy changes that can improve the tax credits for some workers who currently do not qualify or who only receive a small credit, such as single adults without dependents.
2. Assess the opportunities for earned income tax credits at the state level. State policymakers can augment the tax credit to address current limitations, as 29 states and DC already do.

## Education

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Incentivize teachers and leadership to remain at the schools where they work, especially schools with a large percentage of low-income children.
2. Increase Early Childhood Education/Childcare Access by increasing funding for Child Care Works, Pre-K Counts, and Head Start; expanding eligibility for Child Care Works; and establishing the legal right to paid family leave.
3. Address food insecurity, housing stability, benefits access, and financial supports for college students.

At the advocacy level:

1. Restore the State's charter school reimbursement to the School Districts.
2. Increase state funding for K-12 basic education and special education.
3. Stop the decline in state subsidies for the city's public institutions.
4. Support efforts to make Child and Development Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) refundable with a higher reimbursement rate.
5. Adjust the work-study exemption to allow students who qualify for work-study and intend to work to receive SNAP.

## Housing

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Improve housing voucher utilization.
2. Encourage the production of new affordable units. Strategies include density bonuses, reduced regulatory barriers, expanded housing opportunities through inclusionary zoning, and the elimination of single-family zoning.
3. Create a dynamic linkage fee to provide resources for affordable housing; funds from this fee go to replenish the city's affordable housing supply.
4. Require preservation or creation of affordable housing for tax incentive recipients.
5. Require that housing built on public land contain affordable units.
6. Fully leverage the benefits of the new federal qualified opportunity zones program.
7. Partner with health care institutions to support positive affordable housing outcomes for low-income Philadelphians.
8. Help families stay in their homes through eviction prevention.
9. Increase tenant access to affordable counsel in housing court.
10. Create a data collection and advanced notification framework for rentals and evictions.
11. Provide resources to improve rental units in exchange for rent stabilization.
12. Provide emergency housing options, time-limited Section 8 vouchers, and coordinated rapid re-housing support for homeless or near homeless college students.
13. Expand support provided by public housing authorities to their residents transitioning to college.

At the advocacy level:

1. Advocate for source-of-income anti-discrimination laws.

2. Advocate for state and local governments to increase housing subsidies for low-income households, which would supplement federal subsidies.
3. Advocate for fair allocations of tax credits and community development funds.
4. Pass Fair Chance Housing legislation.
5. Increase the supply of housing vouchers.

## Transportation

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Experiment with incentives to locate affordable housing near transit options.
2. Offer free or low-cost shuttle services in underserved neighborhoods to increase access to economic opportunities and vital services.
3. Experiment with alternative payment methods for car- and bike-sharing programs for people without bank accounts or credit cards.

At the advocacy level:

1. In urban and suburban areas, initiate or expand public transportation subsidies for low-income families.

## Health

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Encourage health care providers to screen for food insecurity.
2. Foster partnerships and explore ways to engage health care providers in supporting access to healthy food to address the social determinants of health.
3. Integrate food security strategies in diabetes interventions.
4. Provide health screenings and healthy food interventions at food pantry sites.
5. Emphasize early outreach to address food insecurity and improve birth outcomes among pregnant mothers (better utilize WIC).
6. Prioritize strategies to improve food security for people with disabilities.
7. Improve access and consumption of fresh produce among low-income and under-resourced Philadelphians.

At the advocacy level:

1. Expand eligibility for free and subsidized Children's Health Insurance Program, including to undocumented children.
2. Preserve the Affordable Care Act.

## Social Safety Net

\*\*Develop and apply a racial equity lens to all strategies (see page 11)

1. Maximize access to SNAP benefits.
2. Share benefits enrollment data for cross-enrollment.
3. Improve the reach of child nutrition assistance programs, such as The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Specific action items:

- Address the decline in summer meals and inequities in summer meal locations.
  - Increase participation in the national school breakfast and lunch programs at targeted schools that underutilize these programs.
  - Expand the availability of after-school snack and supper programs and a full calendar of school break meals.
  - Explore opportunities to improve the quality and appeal of food provided in the child nutrition programs.
4. Tailor SNAP outreach strategies to seniors, who typically participate in SNAP at lower levels than other age groups.
  5. Provide public benefits access and on-campus supports to college students at public universities and community colleges.
  6. Improve access to healthy food options at food banks and food pantries.
  7. Build resilient local and regional food systems that support access to healthy, affordable food for all neighborhoods.
  8. Create and implement city-wide strategy for food recovery.

9. Create and implement a city-wide strategy for good food procurement. Good food is defined as health-promoting, locally-oriented, sustainably-produced, and fair.
10. Expand distribution of food vouchers for college campus food.
11. Increase emergency aid programs for college students.

### **Develop and Apply a Racial Equity Lens to All Strategies**

1. Create commitment and capacity to address persistent disparities in food insecurity rates among communities of color. Applying a racial equity lens can help communities respond to structural racism and its consequences. Communities should consider individual needs and challenges when developing and implementing strategies. African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American communities have distinct needs, and significant diversity exists within each of these communities.
  - ➔ Assess whether priorities identified to address food insecurity in the community recognize disparities among residents, are focused on removing barriers and improving opportunities, and engage with how discrimination may affect the risk of food insecurity and impede strategies designed to address it.
  - ➔ Evaluate public policies and organizational practices designed to address food insecurity to ensure that they do not further disadvantage communities of color and to assess whether they make meaningful progress in reducing disparities (and, if not, how they can be improved). Bread for the World Institute has developed a methodology to support policymakers, organizations, and communities in their efforts to apply a racial equity lens in the food and nutrition space and beyond.
  - ➔ Help communities learn more about racial inequities and food insecurity, including the role that inequity in assets and wealth plays in increasing food insecurity risk for communities of color. Bread for the World Institute's simulation tool has been used across the country to help individuals, communities, organizations, and policymakers see these connections and inspire them to work toward achieving racial equity.
  - ➔ Center those with lived experience at all phases of work in the community, including during needs assessment, design and implementation of strategies, organizational and community leadership, and evaluation.