

November 9 Community Conversation on Food Security Meeting Minutes and Summary of Feedback

- **Welcome, Purpose, and Check-in**

Purpose of today's conversation:

Discuss our community's ability to access sufficient, safe, and healthy food, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Over 90 participants shared their hope for the meeting.

- **Update from Ramsey County**

Update on the county's food security work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Details can be found on the [presentation slides 5-7](#).

- **Report from last community conversation on September 28**

Summary provided on the previous community conversation held on September 28, details can be found on the September 28 summary [presentation](#).

- **Breakout sessions**

Meeting participants moved into small groups to answer the following questions:

1. Federal COVID funding continues beyond 2020: What should Ramsey County continue to do or do differently on food security?
2. Federal COVID funding ends December 2020: What should be done on food security in Ramsey County? What role can the county play?
3. What partnerships and coordination is needed to start or change to address food security in Ramsey County?
4. What do long-term solutions for food security need to include?

- **Debrief**

Meeting participants returned to the large group and provided a summary of small group discussions and note takers subsequently provided notes from these discussions. Below is a summary of these conversations.

1. Federal COVID funding continues beyond 2020: What should Ramsey County continue to do or do differently on food security?
 - Continue to offer home delivered meals: county residents find it valuable.
 - Commendable how county is making it easier for those trying to work within the system.
 - Focus on serving whole family, rather than different sources of food (schools, home delivered to adults in same household).
 - Continue collaboration, food delivery, education on where resources are found, etc.
 - Maintain what is currently working.
 - County could provide technical assistance to community (gaps analysis) and then get out of the way.
 - Coordinate county, city, state for uniform messaging.

- Grow food in a coordinated way: county could be the coordinating body.
2. Federal COVID funding ends December 2020: What should be done on food security in Ramsey County? What role can the county play?
- Communication, collaboration, coordination and partnership are key in existing resources.
 - Haven Open Door food shelf, like Dakota County.
 - Have food drops at service centers, staffed by volunteers.
 - Continue meetings like these, seeing other organizations and individuals is helpful. Like a Food Commission.
 - County could still play a coordinating role: resources out to communities, map, information to community on food access support, food shelves, government programs.
 - Can the county help facilitate land access before growing season?
 - Community farms, Frogtown Farms, Urban Root, are active: need more irrigation, food storage space for distribution are just two bottlenecks mentioned.
 - Consider coordinating efforts of Meals on Wheels, Federal Older Americans Act funding, Board on Aging, DHS, along with other funding sources.
 - Include college students as food recipients.
 - Current amount of autonomy/responsibility given to community organizations is good.
 - Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) specific foods to prevent food waste: dietary, cultural, and religions restrictions in communities.
 - County could be intermediary to address food waste: people learn how to can food, network where we can fill gaps, surplus network, creating large Craig list for food use.
 - Reduce barriers and bring policy for growing food, community neighborhood gardening
 - St. Paul Public Housing is struggling to continue food distribution with current staff. Explore additional staff such as AmeriCorps.
 - County can play a convening role bringing resources, funders together to create a supportive network for greater impact.
 - Think critically about the resources we do have.
 - Work together to make a difference over the long term for people.
 - Redistribute good and basic needs.
3. What partnerships and coordination is needed to start or change to address food security in Ramsey County?
- Food security is set up in neighborhood basis, a neutral party is needed to bring efforts together in efficient ways.
 - There are benefits in bringing people to be part of a larger conversation in a neutral space that benefits everyone.
 - Work with Met Council to include urban agriculture in comprehensive plans.
 - Recommend HIRED to support young people with housing, rent, food, etc.
 - Need info on county's available land to grow food.
 - Provide a list of organizations that already work in food security, so they can talk to each other and accept food surplus from groups.
 - Fair for All should be expanded.
 - MN Congressional delegation to play a role in agriculture as some legislators have expressed interest.
 - Growers need storage space for distribution, rental space that is affordable, University of Minnesota Extension Services and other departments at the U could help.

4. What do long-term solutions for food security need to include?
 - Refrigerated storage space.
 - Land use for growing food.
 - Small scale agriculture is important for community resilience, with ecological benefits.
 - Affordable housing, transportation, living wage jobs.
 - Cooking, nutrition, and food storage/preserving.
 - Partner with local farmers, include farmers of color ensuring they are engaged in practices to protect the environment.
 - Form a statewide fund for companies to donate to, use funds to decrease student lunch debt.
 - Include a food security question in health care visits to connect people with resources.
 - Solicit feedback so what is decided has the most impact.

- **Conclude – next meeting Monday, December 7**