



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
{{item.tracking_number}}

Agenda Item Number: 3

Agenda Date: October 27, 2022

In Control: Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee

DEPARTMENT: Health Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Claude Jacob

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

An update on the Council Consideration Request for establishing a food access roadmap to address food insecurity and disparities in food access across San Antonio.

SUMMARY:

Metro Health would like to provide an update to the Council Consideration Request (CCR) filed by Councilmembers Jalen McKee-Rodriguez and Ana Sandoval on January 11, 2022, requesting City staff develop a roadmap to address high rates of food insecurity that impact San Antonio residents and to improve food access across the most vulnerable areas in San Antonio. Metro Health will provide updates for the following recommendations: 1) deliver programs to expand or incentivize the development of healthy food retailers, 2) develop and incentivize local food gardens, 3) consider a vacant-lot program that encourages community gardening, 4) expand the food forest pilot program to city-owned land, and 5) collaborate with VIA to establish bus routes that connect neighborhoods without existing access to fresh, quality, affordable food to a network of grocery stores.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Metro Health presented on this Council Consideration Request at the Governance Committee meeting on March 16, 2022. The Department recommended sending the response to the Community, Health, Equity, and Culture Committee (CHECC) for further review and to be presented to the Committee on October 27, 2022.

In April 2022, Metro Health released SA Forward outlining six strategic priority areas to protect and improve the health of our community. These priority areas include:

- Access to care
- Data and Technology Infrastructure
- Food Insecurity and Nutrition
- Health Equity and Social Justice
- Mental Health and Community Resilience
- Violence Prevention

SA Forward's Food Insecurity and Nutrition priority areas aim to address food insecurity and chronic disease rates through an array of place-based nutrition strategies. This priority area also seeks to operationalize the recommendations from the United Nations' Food Systems Summit Dialogue in May 2021, by working with multi- and cross-sector partners to create solutions and policies that will improve access to more nutritious food options and increase food security among San Antonio residents.

ISSUE:

An estimated 14% of Bexar County residents experience food insecurity. Food insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy life. It is also a household-level economic, social, and environmental condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food that meets cultural or personal needs. Food insecurity may begin with worrying about where the next meal will come from and can lead to missed meals and poor health outcomes. Poverty, low income, unemployment, and other negative social determinants of health are known risk factors that lead to food insecurity. In San Antonio, 17.6% of San Antonio residents live in poverty. In addition, about 20% of children in San Antonio experience food insecurity with around 250,000 children participating in the National School Lunch Program and 150,000 children participate in the School Breakfast Program.

Adults experiencing food insecurity may be at an increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes, such as Type 2 Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic diseases. Children who experience food insecurity may be at increased risk for developmental, cognitive, and mental health issues. Food insecurity and associated health disparities disproportionately affect low-income communities of color in San Antonio.

Metro Health has led several initiatives to improve access to healthy foods and nutrition education including the Healthy Corner Stores program, The Fruit Tree Project, the Tamōx Talōm Food Forest, supporting the design and build of several community and teaching gardens, Viva Health nutrition classes and outreach, and the development of Healthy Food and Fitness council District

Resource Brochures for all 10 City Council Districts. Metro Health staff also support the Food Policy Council's recommendations for City-owned vacant lots.

Three conditions must be met to reach food security: the equitable availability and quality of food, the nutritional aspect and consumption of food, and the economic and physical access to food. With this framework in mind, Metro Health recognizes that food access alone does not solve food insecurity.

In April 2022, Metro Health staff started convening on a weekly basis to initiate work around Food Insecurity and Nutrition. The Food Insecurity and Nutrition Internal Planning (FIN) team includes staff from Chronic Disease Prevention, Policy and Civic Engagement Office (PaCE), Healthy Neighborhoods, and Maternal & Child Health. Since convening, FIN have conducted key informant interviews which are critical to understand diverse perspectives around food insecurity. Key informants have recommended that Metro Health convene a group of diverse stakeholders. Prior to convening external collaborators, FIN plans to align with key COSA departments including Office of Sustainability, World Heritage Office, Neighborhood Housing Services, Department of Human Services, and others to align common goals and strategies. FIN has also drafted an RFP for the Food Insecurity Assessment which includes three overarching deliverables: 1) an assessment of law and policy impact, 2) a Photovoice project using a community participatory action research model for asset mapping, and 3) a data dashboard that tracks food insecurity trends in San Antonio.

The work being done around Food Insecurity and Nutrition align with the ten essential public health services which provide an operating framework for public health to assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets; and protect and promote the health of all people in all communities. These services include communicating effectively to inform and educate people about health; strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it; create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health; and utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public's health.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

No alternatives are recommended.

RECOMMENDATION:

Personnel and funding to facilitate collaboration between multi-sector partners are funded by the CDC Health Disparities grant through September 30, 2023. Metro Health recommends convening partners to address food insecurity in a holistic fashion. Staff also recommend planning and administering the food insecurity assessment and developing metrics to gauge progress in

addressing food insecurity as distinct from food access. Metro Health also commits to supporting coordinated action among partners ensuring the development and implementation of Collective Impact initiatives that address root causes of food insecurity in San Antonio. Metro Health recognizes that personnel, collaboration, policy change, and programming will need to work hand in hand to mitigate the effects of food insecurity for San Antonio residents.