



D.C. Food Policy Council Virtual Meeting

Wednesday April 1, 2020 (5:00-6:00pm)

***For D.C. related information on COVID-19, please go to coronavirus.dc.gov*

You can find the meeting presentation with slides on these topics and more information [here](#).

1. Welcome

2. Overview of District Operations RE: Food

- a. On March 24, Mayor Bowser ordered a closure of non-essential businesses; you can read the [mayor's order here](#).
 - i. Exemptions include:
 - 1. Businesses providing foods/household products such as farms, farmer's markets, grocers etc.
 - 2. Social services providing aid, including nonprofit organizations
- b. On March 30, Mayor Bowser ordered a Stay at Home Order; you can read the [mayor's order here](#).
 - i. Essential businesses (as explained above) are allowed to continue operating
 - ii. Volunteers of food/aid organizations are exempt from the order
 - iii. Volunteers should be ready to show shift information to law enforcement
- c. Residential priorities:
 - i. Please stay home if you have food at home
 - ii. Folks should do their best to use up foods at home before going shopping
 - iii. Whenever possible, use home delivery for grocery needs
- d. The District's work is really in three buckets
 - i. Short term response:
 - 1. Emergency food assistance, tracking need, prioritizing safety
 - 2. Ensuring businesses/social service providers are practicing social distancing when they are operating so customers and workers are safe
 - ii. Middle term response:
 - 1. Looking at food supply chain and contingency planning - no disruptions yet
 - iii. Long term:
 - 1. Take measures to stabilize the economy including small business support, unemployment outreach, recovery efforts etc.



3. District government food related response to COVID-19

- a. DC Public Schools (DCPS):
 - i. Free meals are available for all children under 18 at 50 school sites (29 of those are DCPS school sites)
 - 1. 10k meals on average are distributed each day - the amount of meals served has increased since the first week of March 16
 - 2. There are 29 DCPS school sites; there are currently no plans for additional distribution sites
 - 3. All information is available at coronavirus.dc.gov/food
- b. Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL):
 - i. Providing home-delivered meals and groceries to eligible seniors
 - 1. On average there are 4500 deliveries/week, 31,500 meals distributed (each delivery includes 7 packs of frozen meals or 7 packs of shelf stable grocery items)
 - ii. Launched a referral line to connect seniors with resources: (202) 724-5626
- c. DC Health
 - i. Increasing home delivery to seniors participating in Grocery Plus
 - 1. There are 6,000 seniors with limited incomes who participate in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program/Grocery Plus program
 - 2. Working with the Department of For-Hire Vehicles to utilize drivers for senior meal delivery
 - ii. DC WIC serves about 11,000 women, infants and children per month
 - 1. Local agencies continue to send out WIC checks to families
 - 2. Have requested all possible waivers from USDA including waiving:
 - a. In-person WIC check pick up
 - b. In-person applying (folks can apply over the phone; learn more [about eligibility and application process here](#))
 - 3. Increased eligible items on WIC food list to ensure that families can find the items they need to redeem their WIC checks
 - a. Now includes additional container sizes, food items, etc.
 - b. Expanded food list can be found [here](#)



- c. Working closely with grocery stores to ensure that WIC participants can access all that they need including formula
 - d. Participants with checks for special formulas may order these formulas at [any authorized Pharmacy location](#). These pharmacies have 48 hours to obtain your special formula.
- 4. DC Health is finalizing interagency communication strategy to spread the word on WIC now that more households might be eligible

d. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE):

- i. Working with DHS to implement Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits for households with children who rely on free school meals
- ii. Have applied for all waivers offered by USDA
 - 1. Looking for additional ways to expand SNAP, TEFAP, school meals and other food access programs
- iii. Free meals for all students at school sites (both DCPS and charter school sites)

e. Department of Human Services (DHS):

- i. Reminder: it is important to encourage all eligible households to file their FY2019 taxes because those who do not file will not receive the federal stimulus check ([learn more here](#))
- ii. Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)
 - 1. The P-EBT benefit will be \$133/month for each child who receives free school meals
 - 2. For households already receiving SNAP, P-EBT benefits will be automatically added to their SNAP benefits
 - 3. For households not already receiving SNAP, OSSE and DHS are working to identify those families who can get P-EBT
- iii. SNAP
 - 1. DHS trying to identify families who may now be eligible for SNAP
 - a. Service centers are closed but folks can apply for SNAP and TANF and other benefits through the Combined Benefit Application on [DHS website here](#)



- b. Folks can also apply by picking up and dropping off an application at a DHS service center or mailing in an application ([learn more about those options here](#))
 - c. There has been an uptick in applications since online portal was opened
 - d. Folks still need to submit verification documents
 - e. If folks are already on SNAP, benefits will be continued (no need to recertify during the pandemic)
- 2. DHS is has applied but has not yet heard back on a few USDA waivers, including:
 - a. Emergency Allotment: allows maximum benefit for household not already receiving the maximum benefit amount
 - b. Hot food purchases
 - c. Online purchasing for SNAP participants
- f. The FPC is coordinating stakeholders, developing policy, and representing DC in national and international forums

4. Nonprofit/business updates related to essential businesses

- a. Nonprofit Organizations:
 - i. There are so many amazing organizations providing meals and groceries throughout the community. You can find out more about available food resources on the [District's website here](#).
 - ii. Capital Area Food Bank, DC Central Kitchen and Martha's Table continue to distribute groceries
 - iii. Food and Friends have no-contact food delivery for chronically-ill and homebound patients
 - iv. World Central Kitchen and Dreaming Out Loud are distributing at community meal sites
 - v. DC Central Kitchen continuing to distribute fresh produce to Healthy Corners at 50 percent discount for vegetables
- b. Businesses:
 - i. Many restaurants provide free meals to kids, healthcare workers, etc.
 - ii. You can find out more about available food resources on the [District's website here](#).



- iii. Grocery stores opening early for seniors and vulnerable populations
- iv. Farmer's markets are operating and taking measures to ensure safe social distancing
 - 1. Hugo from FreshFarms -
 - a. Important to keep markets open
 - b. There is no shortage of food by farmers at this time

5. Ways You Can Help During the Pandemic

- a. Stay at home!
- b. Volunteer (while practicing social distancing)
 - i. DC Food Project has a great [list of food orgs](#) looking for volunteers
 - ii. Organizations are seeing a steep decline in volunteers
 - 1. Volunteers supporting emergency food providers are essential
- c. Share resources:
 - i. Share the District's food resource page which includes a map of available resources: [coronavirus.dc.gov/food](#)
 - ii. DC Food Project [website](#): dcfoodproject.org/emergency-food-access
 - iii. Share DC Greens [email](#)
- d. Buy local:
 - i. Support farmer's markets, local food hubs and upcoming spring/summer CSA's
 - ii. Support local food retail businesses who carry local food products
 - iii. Purchase takeout, delivery, and gift cards at restaurants (and tip well!)
- e. Donate
 - i. DC Greens has highlighted several local food organizations who need support; [link here](#)
 - ii. RAMW has created a Coronavirus Worker Relief Fund to support services and food provided to industry workers by Hook Hall Helps; [link here](#)
 - iii. ROC United DC launched a DMV Restaurant Worker Fund; [link here](#)
 - iv. 4P Foods launched a Emergency Food + Farm Fund for Greater DMV/VA; [link here](#)

6. Updates from working group updates

- a. Most of the working groups met before this meeting; you can find the schedule of the FPC [working group meetings here](#). We will post information for the May meetings as they become available.
- b. Food Access and Equity
 - i. Three vulnerable groups to remember in outreach during this time



1. People who lack access to transit
2. Senior adults
3. Those who are not seniors or youths -- the missing middle
- ii. Social distancing is not always happening at distribution sites
- iii. No noticeable disruptions in food supply at this time
- iv. Important to distribute and circulate widely food access information
 1. Again, those resources are:
 - a. District's food resource page which includes a map of available resources: coronavirus.dc.gov/food
 - b. DC Food Project [website: dcfoodproject.org/emergency-food-access](https://dcfoodproject.org/emergency-food-access)
- c. Urban Agriculture
 - i. A lot of members had to switch their business models from restaurant sales to direct sales
 1. There are almost too many services to use direct service
 2. There is a need for direct delivery platform as organizing routes for delivery is challenging
 - ii. Shared fear around essential business designation
 1. Thinking through ways how farmers/volunteers/etc. demonstrate essential designation whether through an official letter or something else
 - iii. Food safety standards can't be sacrificed as we distribute emergency food rapidly
 - iv. Farmers are thinking about contingency plans for their farms
 1. What happens if farmers get sick? Who will fill in this role as this is a specialized task - can we employ unemployed folks from the restaurant industry? Would this be a call line or list of backup farmers
- d. Sustainable Supply Chain
 - i. Looking to share food handling practices with resident-led groups (such as Mutual Aid Networks)
- e. Nutrition and Food System Education
 - i. Exploring how to pivot to online nutrition education
 - ii. Planning for a Collective Nutrition Education Day



- iii. It's important that there is access to healthy food and encouragement for nutrition education and important to center addiction/mental health during this time of high stress
- iv. Food is an important element to mental health and self-care
- v. Cities in Europe are good examples of places doing nutrition education during this time

f. Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs

- i. [Small Business Administration Economic Injury Loans and Loan Advance](#)
 - 1. The SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program provides working capital loans of up to \$2 million to local authorities to distribute to small businesses. These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, and other bills that cannot be paid because of the pandemic's impact.
 - 2. Up to \$10,000 loan advance are available for small businesses which will likely not need to be repaid
 - 3. Application is very short; [learn more about how to apply and find the application here](#)
 - 4. Learn more about [other SBA products and services here](#).
- ii. [DC Small Business Recovery Microgrant Program](#)
 - 1. The District launched a microgrant program to cover employee wages and benefits (including fringe benefits associated with employment, such as health insurance), accounts payable, fixed costs, inventory, rent, and utilities.
 - 2. The application closed April 1 at 12 pm
 - 3. More than 6,000 businesses applied for the loan
- iii. Our working group did not meet this month, but we will plan to meet in early May

7. Closing:

Thank you for joining us and for all that you are doing to support the District's local food system. We are thankful that our local food community is so positive and collaborative during this difficult time.

- i. Helpful resources for understanding federal food policies
 - 1. [FRAC's COVID-19 Federal Resource](#)
 - 2. [USDA Food and Nutrition Services COVID-19 Website](#)
- ii. Email dcfoodpolicy@dc.gov with any questions/concerns/updates