

Country	United States of America					
Population	602,204					
Title of policy or practice	COVID-19 Emergency Food Response					
Subtitle (optional)						
URL video	https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17e33tHI-uv4T-keApBhfcspRrINzbP-1?usp=sharing					
Category	05 – FS&D		SDGs		2 – 3 – 10	
Year of start	2020		Year of end		2022	
Actors involvement	Municipal departments	Public institutions	NGOs CSOs	Research centers	Private sectors	International bodies
	16	6	10	1	5	
Budget	<p>€36,400,000 on food boxes</p> <p>€168,257 of private funding and €296,925 of City funding for urban agriculture and community organizations.</p> <p>€4,453,875 for box distribution through 2024</p>					
Brief description	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Baltimore City's Food Policy and Planning (FPP) Division developed a comprehensive Emergency Food Response involving City agencies and nonprofit, business, and community partners. The City distributed over 1.7 million food boxes, including over 1.4 million produce boxes, totaling approximately 178 million servings of fresh fruits and vegetables to residents in Healthy Food Priority Areas (HFPAs) across the city. Due to existing planning efforts, FPP was able to design a multipronged emergency food security response using food distribution as a means to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 and prevent escalating food insecurity due to the pandemic. FPP 1) led the strategic planning for the food security response; 2) conducted mapping and data analysis; 3) oversaw the food box strategies and implementation; 4) coordinated with the Emergency Operations Center and state and federal agencies; 5) leveraged significant public and private funds for food and transportation; 6) expedited Online SNAP; 7) convened Resident Food Equity Advisors and Food PAC; 8) and supported urban agriculture and local food system resilience. Based on the unmet needs of vulnerable populations and the characteristics of Baltimore's food environment, the City partnered with non-profits, government agencies, churches, schools, and rec centers to create over 100 outdoor feeding sites across the city. This model was developed based on CDC and BCHD guidance as a way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 caused by residents moving around the city for food, and to prevent food insecurity as a risk factor for contracting and experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19. We utilized food environment mapping, Census data, and monthly SNAP data to provide fresh produce to communities living in HFPAs. We increased vaccination adherence by identifying neighborhoods with low vaccination rates and partnering with BCHD to deploy mobile vaccination clinics at feeding sites.</p>					
Innovation	<p>We developed an innovative response to rising food insecurity and COVID-19 rates through cross-sector collaboration and mobilization of City agencies. We utilized an equity lens through food environment mapping, Census data, and monthly SNAP data to distribute produce outdoors in HFPAs. Across the country, jurisdictions set up large-scale drive-through sites at food banks, resulting in long wait times and requiring a personal vehicle, and many of these sites lacked fresh produce. Over 30% of Baltimore City residents do not have access to a personal vehicle, so we created a diffused network of sites. This increased accessibility to fresh produce and decreased risk of COVID-19 transmission as residents were able to obtain food outdoors, instead of relying on public transportation or going into poorly ventilated and crowded supermarkets. We were one of first cities in the US to receive 100% reimbursement from FEMA for food related costs, and have been reimbursed for ~34,641,250 Euro, more than any city in the US. We have spent around 14,846,250</p>					

	<p>Euro on regional produce, supporting farms in our region. We protected our seniors, homebound individuals, and Covid positive residents through an innovative grocery box home delivery program. We have delivered over 30,000 shelf-stable grocery boxes to residents' homes through a first of its kind pro bono partnership with Amazon. To increase vaccination adherence, we partnered with BCHD and paired food distribution sites with vaccination clinics.</p>
Impact	<p>We distributed over 1.7 million food boxes, including over 1.4 million produce boxes, and approximately 178 million servings of fresh fruits and vegetables to residents across the city. Beneficiaries of this program included predominantly LatinX and Black communities living in HFPAs, older adults, and youth. Baltimore's long-standing food environment analysis, paired with resident feedback mechanisms, provided insight into the food environment, where vulnerable populations are concentrated, the barriers residents face in accessing healthy food, and how this changed and was exacerbated by the pandemic. FPP mapped demographic information and partnered with Black and Latinx-led organizations to target food box distribution locations to best serve areas with concentrated populations of Black and/or Latinx residents. Through our partnership with BCHD we supplied over 3.1 million meals to older adults. Due to increased vulnerability and COVID-19 fatality, older adult strategies have been focused heavily on home delivery to keep older adults at home. We translated communications into Spanish, publicized feeding site locations on the City's resource directory, and partnered with United Way to ensure residents could easily access information about food and meal distribution and delivery options. We worked closely with our school system to distribute meals and produce boxes at schools across the city throughout the pandemic.</p>
Inclusion	<p>Many food system fields of action were conducted throughout the planning and implementation process. Our response took action in the following MUFPP categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Governance: We partnered with 22 government agencies to distribute over 1.7 million food boxes; ● Sustainable Diets and Nutrition: While much of the US prioritized distributing shelf-stable, calorically dense foods, Baltimore City prioritized fresh fruit and vegetable distribution, thereby improving the nutritional security of our residents during the pandemic; ● Social and Economic Equity: By utilizing data and mapping to prioritize vulnerable communities, partnering with Black and Latinx-led organizations, identifying economic opportunities by leveraging federal benefits, and reducing the need to utilize public transportation and shop at grocery stores; ● Food Production: We partnered with local and regional vendors to support our regional food economy by purchasing almost €15 million of produce from regional farmers; ● Food Supply and Distribution: We created an innovative model that distributed produce directly to communities at over 100 sites and offset COVID-19 related disruptions to our food supply chain; ● Food Waste: We received regular feedback from site leaders to adjust food distribution accordingly based on the specific demand for each site. This reduced waste and allowed us to distribute appropriate quantities of food. We also connected sites that had leftover boxes to other communities in need.
Challenges and learning needs	<p>FPP has managed emergency food procurement contracts with four vendors totaling over \$29 million. A key challenge was that vendors were going 6-8 weeks without payment on invoices. Although we have developed alternative solutions, it would be helpful to understand how to work with city procurement systems to identify solutions to pay vendors in a timely fashion. Additionally, FPP experienced challenges associated with the lack of available City staff members to manage the produce distribution program, identifying funding opportunities for community organizations and volunteers, increasing local and/or regional produce for distribution, and ensuring produce is culturally appropriate for the communities we serve. FPP is also hoping to understand how to identify long-term sources of sustainable funding in order to adequately scale-up produce distribution efforts.</p>