

2020 DC Food Policy Priorities

The DC Food Policy Council has identified the following priorities across five strategic themes to strengthen the District's food system in 2020. To accomplish these priorities, the Council will strive to create welcoming spaces and discussions that engage diverse voices and perspectives. We welcome partners to support and contribute to our work.

Food Access & Equity:

1. **Create a DC Good Food Investment Fund to invest in locally-owned food businesses serving District neighborhoods with low access to healthy food.** As a public/private partnership, this Fund would provide catalytic grants, flexible loans, and technical assistance to address the District's persistent grocery gap, preserve and support small businesses owned by District residents, and create high-quality jobs.
2. **Promote programs that explore how nutritious food can improve health.** The District is at the forefront of piloting innovative programs that provide nutritious food to help prevent and treat diet-related disease. Strengthening connections with the healthcare industry, continuing to collect data to analyze program effectiveness, and increasing awareness among District stakeholders will be key to demonstrating the connection between food and health.
3. **Celebrate and increase awareness of new grocery options in DC.** In 2019, several new grocery businesses opened or announced plans to open in low food access areas in the District, including: Lidl in Ward 7, Market 7 in Ward 7, and Good Food Markets in Ward 8 (all set to open in 2020), and Fresh Food Factory in Ward 8 (opened in 2019). Celebrating these businesses and encouraging residents to visit the new stores will sustain these businesses and encourage future investment.

Entrepreneurship & Food Jobs:

1. **Identify strategies to increase affordable commercial kitchen space, cold storage, storefronts, and retail opportunities for District food entrepreneurs.** District residents who own hyperlocal food businesses struggle to access commercial kitchens, storefronts, and retail partners to bring their products to market. As real estate prices increase, more support is needed to create a thriving hyperlocal food business economy.
2. **Deploy innovative strategies for food businesses to support high-quality food jobs and careers.** In 2019, the Food Policy Office within the Office of Planning, Department of Employment Services, and the Workforce Investment Council created the DC Food Workforce Development Strategy to create more meaningful career pathways within the food sector. In 2020, this Strategy will be amplified and deployed to District agencies and businesses.
3. **Identify and catalogue District regulations and licensing that present challenges for small food businesses.** Many small food businesses in the District struggle to navigate the complex, costly process of obtaining the necessary government approvals and licenses to open for business. Greater understanding of these challenges will help businesses plan their course of action and highlight opportunities for the District to streamline its requirements.

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Nutrition & Food System Education:

1. **Conduct a DC nutrition education landscape analysis.** At the DC Nutrition Educators Summit in July 2019, educators called for a comprehensive summary of nutrition education programs in the District to better understand the gaps and opportunities for expanding access to nutrition and food system education for District residents.
2. **Enhance collaboration among DC nutrition educators.** At the DC Nutrition Educators Summit in July 2019, educators expressed the need for shared resources including: curriculum, evaluation metrics, funding coordination, and asset mapping. A well-organized collaborative approach will enable food and nutrition educators to achieve their goals.
3. **Increase connections between the healthcare sector and nutrition and food system education.** Healthcare providers are currently unaware of many nutrition education resources available to patients. To address that gap, the Council plans to research national best practices on referrals to nutrition and food system education and encourage collaboration between educators and clinicians to learn needs and opportunities.

Urban Agriculture:

1. **Expand the Urban Land Lease Program and Urban Agriculture Tax Credit in collaboration with the new Director of Urban Agriculture.** In 2019, the District created a crucial new resource for urban farmers: the Director of Urban Agriculture position within the Department of Energy and the Environment. The new Director will need support and guidance to expand the Urban Land Lease Program and Urban Agriculture Tax Credit, as well as provide other key assistance for farmers. The Food Policy Council will convene forums and provide on-going guidance to support the new Director.
2. **Explore funding opportunities for an Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:** In collaboration with the new Director of Urban Agriculture and University of the District of Columbia, the Council plans to identify funding to assist farmers with needed infrastructure to make their farms thrive. Common infrastructure needs include hoop houses, greenhouses, water infrastructure, and cold storage. These relatively small investments would greatly increase the amount of fresh, locally-grown produce available year-round to District residents and would promote job creation as farms expand their operations.

Sustainable Supply Chain:

1. **Determine how District food policy can address climate change and increase the District's preparedness for severe weather events.** For the District to be a national leader among cities tackling climate change, it will be crucial to create food policies that decrease the District's carbon footprint. At the same time, food policy can play a critical role in better preparing the District for increasingly frequent severe weather events.

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- 2. Publish the centralized kitchen study.** In 2020, the DC Office of Planning will develop and publish a study required by the Healthy Students Amendment Act of 2018 on best practices for developing a centralized kitchen in the District. A centralized kitchen could prepare and store food for public institutions; support local farmers; and provide job-training programs. The Food Policy Council will convene stakeholders to provide guidance on the study, which will be released in fall 2020.
- 3. Develop best practices for institutional food procurement in the District.** Building on research conducted in 2019, the Food Policy Council will convene key District agencies, private institutions, and other partners to consider how food procurement can be a tool to promote health, sustainability, and equity.