

FSTF Food Structure Models

Goal: Develop recommendations for a new structure for food organizing which addresses food insecurity in San Francisco based on qualitative data from 8 U.S. cities or counties.

Rank	Criteria
1	Community engagement. The ideal food organizing body effectively engages and incorporates the perspectives and input of community members, particularly those who have directly experienced food insecurity, ensuring their voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process and honored through mechanisms like stipends.
2	Diverse membership. The new body's membership should include a broad range of individuals and organizations, representing various backgrounds including those with lived experience of food insecurity, roles, and interests within the food system, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive pool of expertise, perspectives, and knowledge from different stakeholders. Membership include representation from each district and reflect the cultural diversity of SF.
3	Inclusive membership structure. The body should actively encourage and welcome diverse participation, ensuring representation from a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and demographics to foster inclusivity and equity in decision-making processes. It should promote diverse contributions to the organization's goals and activities.
4	Ensures culturally-appropriate accessibility to resources and information. The body should ensure resources and information are accessible and offered in a culturally-appropriate way. Resources and information should be shared in multiple languages and collaborating with CBOs to guarantee accommodations for people with disabilities.
5	Ensures consistent funding to support community-led ideas/solutions/innovations. The body should support a reliable and continuous financial support system to sustain initiatives and projects initiated by the community, fostering ongoing development and implementation of creative solutions. Solutions should address a variety of issues and ideas, e.g. community kitchen space, community markets, food vouchers, and community-owned grocery co-ops.
6	Able to influence policymakers and therefore local policies and regulation related to food. The body should have the ability to effectively shape and impact the development, implementation, and enforcement of local policies, laws, and regulations that pertain to various aspects of the food system, including production, distribution, access, and sustainability, through the education of policymakers and advocacy efforts. It should make substantial policy recommendations that are often accepted by policymakers and implemented.
7	Addresses food sovereignty. The body should uphold the principles of food sovereignty, which include local control over food systems, the right of communities to define their own agricultural and food policies, and access to culturally responsive, nutritious, and sustainably produced food.
8	Strengthens local food economy. The body should enhance access to local foods produced by our regional food system, enhance the food supply chain, distribution, and contribute to economic development and healthy retail. It should be committed to prioritizing investments in local vendors and infrastructure over external, remote, or corporate solutions.
9	Assesses the current status of food (in)security on a regular basis. The body should have the ability to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the existing conditions and factors related to food security. This includes the ability to gather information about food insecurity from a wide range of sources, like the Biennial Food Security and Equity Report , and stakeholders ensuring a holistic understanding of food security. Sources can include, but are not limited to, government agencies, community-based organizations, academia, and individuals with lived experiences of food insecurity.
10	Autonomy over decision making. The body should have the authority and independence to make decisions, set goals, and recommend policies related to food governance without undue external influence or constraints.
11	Reduces silos across city agencies. The body should promote collaboration and coordination between various city departments and agencies that support food programs to create a more holistic and integrated approach to addressing food-related issues. (e.g., DPH, HSA, HSH, MTA)
12	Addresses food sourcing and worker's rights. The body should prioritize and support action to ensure fair labor practices and ethical sourcing in the production, distribution, and supply chains of food products, promoting the welfare of food industry workers and sustainable food sources. It should prioritize sourcing of food and related resources from the local/regional foodshed.
13	Addresses the dignity of the food shopping and acquisition process. The body should be empowered to hold stakeholders in the food system accountable for the quality of goods and the dignity of services, proactively addressing and preventing discrimination and potential risks at various points of food access.
14	Convenes stakeholders. The body should create space for educational/informational sessions for CBOs and City agencies to share their work. It should facilitate access to information about what works and how to communicate better across organizations.
15	Leverages potential synergies between cross-sector programs/opportunities. The body should address cross-sector or cross-city department opportunities such as Food as Medicine and Housing. It should explore and encourage potential collaborations that span different sectors, to break down silos and encourage cooperation between diverse entities to develop solutions that address interconnected challenges.

Rank	Criteria
16	Financial sustainability/independence. The ability to secure funding from a diverse range of sources, including government grants, private donations, and philanthropy, to sustain its initiatives and operations effectively.
17	Evaluates the impacts of City-funded solutions on the broader food system. Responsible for assessing the environmental and economic impacts of grant-funded solutions/proposal/innovations on the larger system, including applying an equity lens to funding, impact, and outcomes. The evaluation process functions as a mechanism for accountability, ensuring that the provided funding is effectively driving meaningful change.
18	Reduces silos across non-city entities. How well a food organizing body promotes collaboration and coordination between food justice entities outside of local government. Ex: CBOs, private companies, philanthropy, etc.
19	Connection to local power structures and institutions. The extent to which a food organizing body has established connections, partnerships, and effective working relationships with local power structures and institutions that can influence food related policies, regulations, and resource allocation. Ex: Tech philanthropy representatives serve as members of the body; members include grocery store representatives, farmers, or market organizers
20	Administrative feasibility. The practicality and ease with which the new food organizing structure can be established and effectively operated with the confines of administrative and legal frameworks. It involves assessing the logistical, regulatory, and legal aspects of initiating and sustaining the new body. Details can include the ease of obtaining necessary approvals and support from relevant authorities and identifying legal hurdles or requirements.
21	Political feasibility. The amount of support and willingness of governmental entities needed to establish and operate a new food organizing structure. The degree to which political buy-in and engagement and availability of stakeholders is required to establish the new structure and ensuring its legitimacy
22	Promotes urban agriculture and supports local food production. Foster self-reliance by creating educational opportunities for people to learn how to grow their own food. Develop and implement policies that facilitate urban agriculture, including zoning regulations. Identify and designate spaces for urban ag. Protects existing urban farms, community gardens, and other productive landscapes and the people who tend to them.
23	Close connection to local government. The extent to which a food organizing body has established connections, partnerships, and effective working relationships with local government entities to influence food-related policies, regulations, and resource allocation. Examples include local government employees serve as members of the organization, members are appointed by government officials, or the food organizing body receives logistical and administrative help through their local government.
24	Engages with broader power structures and institutions. Engages and collaborates with influential entities at various levels of government and governance. Examples include federal institutions (FDA and USDA), state-level institutions (CDFR, CDSS, CDPH), educational institutions (UCANR), food policy coalitions (Nourish CA), and farmers' associations (CAFF). Engaging with these institutions ensures alignment with broader governmental strategies, creates opportunities to leverage academic expertise, and improves access to resources.
25	Addresses emerging issues rapidly and nimbly. How quickly and effectively a food organizing body responds to and addresses constantly evolving community needs. This must include a mechanism for ongoing community input, concerns, needs, and suggestions, and may include staffing available to quickly pivot to new projects, and/or public/private influence to get things done.
26	Manages and distributes funding for community-led food innovations/solutions. Oversees financial resources and allocates them to initiatives and projects driven by the community, supporting the development and implementation of innovative solutions within the food system.
27	Coordinates pre-disaster emergency food planning with CBOs and city agencies. Develops and manages an emergency food plan with CBOs and city agencies in advance of a disaster. Activities can include: cataloging existing food resources (i.e., food banks, distribution centers, CBO programs, etc.) and map their locations; developing communication strategies; evaluating potential disaster risks and their impact on SF's food system.
28	Oversees food-related programs. Has the big picture overview of all food related projects and programs occurring in the city. An entity that oversees all food-related programs should help establish and maintain a consistent vision and strategy for addressing food justice. Centralized oversight promotes effective coordination and streamlines the implementation of consistent funding and programs, reducing redundancy and ensuring efficient use of resources that reflects food sovereignty/food justice values and facilitates community-led solutions.

Model 1: Mayor's Office

In this model, an Office would be established in City Hall, under the support and direction of the San Francisco mayor. Similar to the [Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development](#) or other such entities, an office like this would have strong authority to influence the local food economy, hold partners accountable, and direct citywide policy. It would send a strong message that food insecurity is a high-priority issue in San Francisco. It would also likely have sustained funding as long as the current mayor was supportive of addressing food insecurity as a major citywide issue. However, it would likely result in substantial limits on the engagement and influence of diverse community members or others with lived experience of food insecurity.



Other cities/counties with similar structures

- [Boston Mayor's Office of Food Justice](#)
- [New York City Mayor's Office of Food Policy](#)

Potential Advantages

- Mayoral office will likely result in governmental resources to address food security directly
- High levels of authority to influence citywide (and even regional, state, or national) food policy
- High levels of influence over food sourcing, food acquisition, and other aspects of the local food economy

Potential Disadvantages

- A mayoral-driven model is subject to the whims of the current mayor, and the entire focus and structure may change whenever a new mayor is elected
- Office will have limits on its independence, and likely be seen as influenced by political winds rather than grassroots, community voices
- May be challenging to address more acute food insecurity from community (e.g. respond to individual requests for help with food access)
- May be challenging to hire staff that reflect the cultural diversity of SF and have lived experience with food insecurity

Criteria Definitely Addressed

4. Ensures culturally-appropriate accessibility to resources and information
5. Ensures consistent funding to support community-led ideas/solutions/innovations
6. Able to influence policymakers and therefore local policies and regulation related to food
7. Addresses food sovereignty
9. Assesses the current status of food (in)security on a regular basis
11. Reduces silos across city agencies
12. Addresses food sourcing and worker's rights
13. Addresses the dignity of the food shopping and acquisition process
14. Convenes stakeholders
15. Leverages potential synergies between cross-sector programs/opportunities
17. Evaluates the impacts of City-funded solutions on the broader food system
19. Connection to local power structures and institutions
23. Close connection to local government
24. Engages with broader power structures and institutions
27. Coordinates pre-disaster emergency food planning with CBOs and city agencies
28. Oversees food-related programs

Criteria that *Could Be* Addressed

8. Strengthens local food economy
18. Reduces silos across non-City entities
20. Administrative feasibility
21. Political feasibility
22. Promotes urban agriculture and supports local food production
25. Addresses emerging issues rapidly and nimbly
26. Manages and distributes funding for community-led food innovations/solutions

Criteria Likely Not Addressed

1. Community engagement
2. Diverse membership
3. Inclusive membership structure
10. Autonomy over decision making
16. Financial sustainability/independence

Model 2: Office within an existing City Department

In this model, an Office would be established as part of an existing City Department, most likely either the Department of Public Health (DPH) or Human Services Agency (HSA). As a City Office, this would have similar advantages and disadvantages to a Mayoral-driven model, with strong authority to influence the local food economy and direct some citywide policies, but also challenges for community engagement. Bureaucratic restrictions on hiring for City positions (both in speed and flexibility of hiring) would likely restrict the ability of this Office to hire diverse staff with lived experience of food insecurity, and depending on the current mayor and existing relationships with other relevant City departments, this Office may or may not be in a position to have autonomy over decision-making and/or reduce silos across city agencies.



Other cities/counties with similar structures

- [Los Angeles County Office of Food Equity](#)

Potential Advantages

- High levels of authority to influence citywide food policy and program implementation
- Likely to have high levels of influence over food sourcing, acquisition, and other aspects of the local food economy

Potential Disadvantages

- May find it difficult to set policy and be responsive to community needs without undue influence from the Mayor's Office or the director of the parent Department
- May be challenging to hire staff and engage community members that reflect the cultural diversity of SF and have lived experience with food insecurity
- May be very challenging to reduce silos across city agencies, as the parent department not have authority over the decision-making of other departments
- Likely difficult to receive funding from non-governmental sources; subject to citywide budget cuts and financial constraints applicable to all city departments and offices

Criteria Definitely Addressed

4. Ensures culturally-appropriate accessibility to resources and information
5. Ensures consistent funding to support community-led ideas/solutions/innovations
6. Able to influence policymakers and therefore local policies and regulation related to food
7. Addresses food sovereignty
8. Strengthens local food economy
9. Assesses the current status of food (in)security on a regular basis
12. Addresses food sourcing and worker's rights
13. Addresses the dignity of the food shopping and acquisition process
14. Convenes stakeholders
15. Leverages potential synergies between cross-sector programs/opportunities
17. Evaluates the impacts of City-funded solutions on the broader food system
19. Connection to local power structures and institutions
22. Promotes urban agriculture and supports local food production
23. Close connection to local government
24. Engages with broader power structures and institutions
27. Coordinates pre-disaster emergency food planning with CBOs and city agencies
28. Oversees food-related programs

Criteria that *Could Be* Addressed

10. Autonomy over decision-making
11. Reduces silos across city agencies
18. Reduces silos across non-City entities
20. Administrative feasibility
21. Political feasibility
26. Manages and distributes funding for community-led food innovations/solutions

Criteria Likely Not Addressed

1. Community engagement
2. Diverse membership
3. Inclusive membership structure
16. Financial sustainability/independence
25. Addresses emerging issues rapidly and nimbly

Model 3: Collective impact model with decentralized leadership and only a fiscal intermediary

In this model, a citywide, grassroots initiative would be established that follows the [principles of collective impact](#). Rather than being led by a specific organization or city department, this initiative would work to engage multiple stakeholders in an equitable way where all voices are heard and drive the work forward together. Most collective impact initiatives do not have established 501(c)(3) status or similar, because that structure would imply a single leader or board of directors. Rather, it has a decentralized structure supported by a “backbone” - a team of people dedicated to coordinating the initiative’s work, often with a fiscal intermediary to receive and disburse initiative funding as needed.

- Other cities/counties with similar structures**
- [Detroit Food Policy Council](#) (also technically incorporated as a 501(c)(3))
 - [Maine Network of Community Food Councils](#)
 - [The Knox County Food Council](#)

Potential Advantages

- Supports diverse stakeholders and communities to address food security issues in mutually reinforcing, coordinated ways – existing models (like in Detroit) deliberately include stakeholders that may not be found in other food policy councils, such as local farmers and grocery store owners
- If community organizations, governmental agencies, private companies, and unaffiliated community members all have representation in the grassroots collaboration, this can allow for diversity of perspectives and approaches

Potential Disadvantages

- The decentralized structure inherent to collective impact initiatives requires a strong backbone team to help maintain direction and momentum for this work, as it can be very challenging
- Can advocate, but will likely have limited influence over structural changes or policy setting
- A fiscal intermediary and ongoing fundraising or grant prospecting will be required to sustain operating costs and pay for backbone staff

Criteria Definitely Addressed

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community engagement 2. Diverse membership 3. Inclusive membership structure 4. Ensures culturally-appropriate accessibility to resources and information 7. Addresses food sovereignty 8. Strengthens local food economy 9. Assesses the current status of food (in)security on a regular basis 10. Autonomy over decision-making 11. Reduces silos across city agencies 12. Addresses food sourcing and worker's rights 13. Addresses the dignity of the food shopping and acquisition process 14. Convenes stakeholders 15. Leverages potential synergies between cross-sector programs/opportunities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Evaluates the impacts of City-funded solutions on the broader food system 18. Reduces silos across non-City entities 19. Connection to local power structures and institutions 20. Administrative feasibility 21. Political feasibility 22. Promotes urban agriculture and supports local food production 25. Addresses emerging issues rapidly and nimbly 26. Manages and distributes funding for community-led food innovations/solutions 27. Coordinates pre-disaster emergency food planning with CBOs and city agencies 28. Oversees food-related programs |
|--|--|

Criteria that *Could Be* Addressed

6. **Able to influence policymakers and therefore local policies and regulation related to food**
16. Financial sustainability/independence
23. Close connection to local government
24. Engages with broader power structures and institutions

Criteria Likely Not Addressed

5. **Ensures consistent funding to support community-led ideas/solutions/innovations**

Model 4: 501(c)(3) model where an existing CBO is funded to lead the collaborative efforts citywide

In this model, an existing community-based organization that already has 501(c)(3) status would be designated to lead this work and be provided with funding to support these efforts. While they may also continue to provide direct services, advocacy, or any other existing work of the organization, for this effort they would function in a convening role, tasked with involving other stakeholders and community members to do collaborative work on food security throughout San Francisco.

- Other cities/counties with similar structures**
- [Milwaukee Food Council](#) (also say they use collective impact for their work)
 - [Chicago Food Policy Action Council](#)

Potential Advantages

- By funding an existing CBO with a strong reputation for quality work in this field among both policymakers and community members, this model could result in the shortest time from model selection to full implementation
- An independent CBO can easily receive donations and grants, and direct funds quickly to areas most in need
- Most CBOs can hire diverse staff quickly, and regularly engage community members in the work with minimal bureaucracy

Potential Disadvantages

- Unless this CBO has an established relationship with a point person in government dedicated to citywide food systems work, it will be limited in its ability to make lasting structural or policy changes, even when needs are identified
- Working with an existing CBO to implement this work will mean that the history of that organization will influence its ability to have strong relationships and buy-in with other CBOs, governmental agencies, and community members

Criteria Definitely Addressed

- 4. Ensures culturally-appropriate accessibility to resources and information
- 7. Addresses food sovereignty
- 8. Strengthens local food economy
- 9. Assesses the current status of food (in)security on a regular basis
- 12. Addresses food sourcing and worker's rights
- 14. Convenes stakeholders
- 20. Administrative feasibility
- 22. Promotes urban agriculture and supports local food production
- 25. Addresses emerging issues rapidly and nimbly
- 26. Manages and distributes funding for community-led food innovations/solutions
- 28. Oversees food-related programs

Criteria that *Could Be* Addressed

- 1. Community engagement
- 2. Diverse membership
- 3. Inclusive membership structure
- 6. Able to influence policymakers and therefore local policies and regulation related to food
- 10. Autonomy over decision-making
- 15. Leverages potential synergies between cross-sector programs/opportunities
- 16. Financial sustainability/independence
- 17. Evaluates the impacts of City-funded solutions on the broader food system
- 18. Reduces silos across non-City entities
- 19. Connection to local power structures and institutions
- 21. Political feasibility
- 23. Close connection to local government
- 24. Engages with broader power structures and institutions
- 27. Coordinates pre-disaster emergency food planning with CBOs and city agencies

Criteria Likely Not Addressed

- 5. Ensures consistent funding to support community-led ideas/solutions/innovations
- 11. Reduces siloes across city agencies
- 13. Addresses the dignity of the food shopping and acquisition process

Model 5: 501(c)(3) model where a new organization is started to lead the collaborative efforts citywide

This model is nearly identical to Model 4 (a 501(c)(3) model where an existing CBO is funded to lead the collaborative efforts citywide), except that instead of designating an existing community-based organization to lead this work, a new 501(c)(3) would be created for this specific purpose. In this case, the sole mission of the new organization would be to create and maintain a food security structure for San Francisco. It would be unencumbered by existing politics or interagency conflicts. However, it would require legally establishing a new organization, securing office space, and hiring new staff before this work could begin, with a considerable amount of time and effort required.

Other cities/counties with similar structures

- [Milwaukee Food Council](#) (also say they use collective impact for their work)
- [Chicago Food Policy Action Council](#)

👍 Potential Advantages

- Creating a new CBO to do this work will mean that the power politics and histories of existing CBOs in this space will not present challenges to its function
- An independent CBO can easily receive donations and grants, and direct funds quickly to areas most in need
- Most CBOs can hire diverse staff quickly, and regularly engage community members in the work with minimal bureaucracy

👎 Potential Disadvantages

- Starting a new CBO is time-consuming and slow, and will require finding space, hiring all new staff, etc.
- Unless this new CBO rapidly creates an established relationship with a point person in government who is dedicated to food systems work at the citywide level, it will be limited in its ability to make lasting structural or policy changes, even when needs are identified

☑ Criteria Definitely Addressed

- 4. Ensures culturally-appropriate accessibility to resources and information
- 7. Addresses food sovereignty
- 8. Strengthens local food economy
- 9. Assesses the current status of food (in)security on a regular basis
- 12. Addresses food sourcing and worker's rights
- 14. Convenes stakeholders
- 21. Political feasibility
- 22. Promotes urban agriculture and supports local food production
- 25. Addresses emerging issues rapidly and nimbly
- 26. Manages and distributes funding for community-led food innovations/solutions
- 28. Oversees food-related programs

❓ Criteria that *Could Be* Addressed

- 1. Community engagement
- 2. Diverse membership
- 3. Inclusive membership structure
- 6. Able to influence policymakers and therefore local policies and regulation related to food
- 10. Autonomy over decision-making
- 15. Leverages potential synergies between cross-sector programs/opportunities
- 16. Financial sustainability/independence
- 17. Evaluates the impacts of City-funded solutions on the broader food system
- 18. Reduces silos across non-City entities
- 19. Connection to local power structures and institutions
- 23. Close connection to local government
- 24. Engages with broader power structures and institutions
- 27. Coordinates pre-disaster emergency food planning with CBOs and city agencies

☒ Criteria Likely Not Addressed

- 5. Ensures consistent funding to support community-led ideas/solutions/innovations
- 11. Reduces siloes across city agencies
- 13. Addresses the dignity of the food shopping and acquisition process
- 20. Administrative feasibility