

CAMDEN FOOD SECURITY COLLECTIVE

Building off a decade of collective work led by the Campbell Soup Company through the Campbell's Healthy Communities program, the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and Food Bank of South Jersey are launching a new initiative to go deeper on issues around food security in the city of Camden. Of 3,675 Camden City residents who completed a food insecurity screening connected with their healthcare visit in 2020, 37% indicated that in the past 12 months they sometimes or often are worried they will run out of food without the funds to purchase more, and/or the food they purchased didn't last and they didn't have funds to purchase more. Therefore, in February 2019, Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (the Camden Coalition) began conversations with executives from seven organizations involved in food access to ask, "why?"



PROBLEM

Through dialogue with these executives and their senior program leaders, we agreed that food insecurity persists because we have yet to solve affordability and the impacts of structural racism. Affordability and structural racism are challenges in Camden for several reasons:

- Persistent poverty plagues over one third of residents;
- Low wages and/or benefits are insufficient to meet the high cost of living. The average Camden resident has to spend nearly half of their \$27,000 median household income on housing;
- Camden is a hyper-local city with highways dividing its nine square miles and no supermarket. Transportation is a significant barrier for how its primarily Black and Latino residents can access healthy food and safety-net resources;
- Residents rely heavily on local small businesses to purchase food, but these retailers don't have the same purchasing power as larger grocery stores to offer affordable prices on fresh produce and other healthy options; and
- Despite a robust network of supplemental food distributors, this system can be complex and time-consuming for residents to navigate which leads to burdensome access to healthy foods.

OPPORTUNITY

Camden has an abundance of dedicated community-based organizations who have innovated to close some of these gaps through nutrition education, food assistance programs, and wrap-around social services. Within our CHC collective, members like the Food Trust have provided technical assistance to more than 40 corner stores to become "[Healthy Corner Stores](#)." Others have partnered with Parkside Business & Community in Partnership (PBCIP) to leverage new funding in support of the development of more [local produce growers](#) to supply a [food prescription program](#) at Virtua hospital. In the Camden food ecosystem, organizations like Cathedral Kitchen are [training residents in their culinary program](#) while serving the needs of people experiencing homelessness. These are just a few of the community assets to build upon.



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SOLUTIONS

This Food Security Collective is organizing these and other stakeholders to build on the work of the last 10 years and harness our collective power for systems and policy changes that accompany the direct service we've each become so good at. We are organizing ourselves using the Collective Impact model which provides a framework of:

1. A common agenda;
2. Shared measurement;
3. Mutually reinforcing activities;
4. Continuous communication; and
5. A strong backbone.

Through this model, we can achieve an audacious goal in the next 10 years which is greater than the sum of our parts.

The Camden Coalition and the Food Bank of South Jersey have initiated the formation of this collective as co-backbones. Through engagement with a broader set of stakeholders including community residents, health systems, and public agencies, we have outlined this common agenda (Fig. 1) to address upstream causes and create lasting solutions for food security in Camden by 2031.

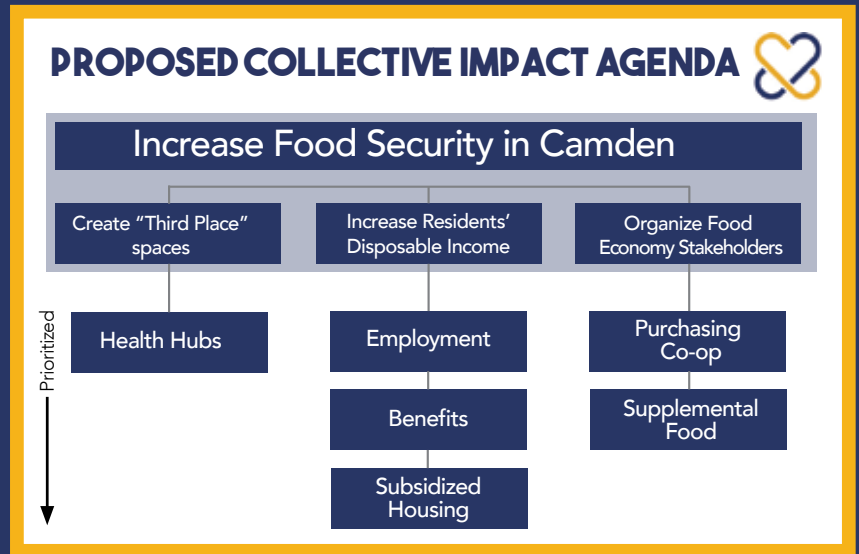


Figure 1: Camden Food Security Collective's Common Agenda

WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that we have our common agenda, through summer 2022 we will continue to engage stakeholders to shape our:

1. Common agenda into logic models and a theory of change;
2. Baseline data collection and progress measurements;
3. Mutually reinforcing activities;
4. Governance model including steering committee, work groups, and advisory boards;
5. Continuous communication mechanisms; and
6. Funding strategy.



HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

If you, or someone you know, would like to be a stakeholder in shaping this collective, please reach out to Evelyne Kane at ekane@camdenhealth.org. If you, or a funder you know, is interested in becoming a funding partner, please reach out to Lavinia Awosanya at lawosanya@foodbanksj.org.