

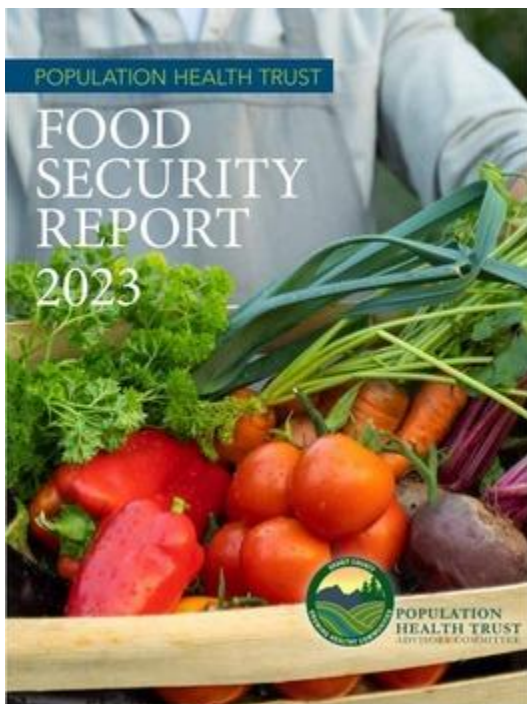


Population Health Trust January Newsletter

Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health

January 2024

It has been a wild month complete with single-digit temperatures and snow! Maybe you made it through the wintery days by making a pot of soup to stay warm. Food brings us comfort and is essential for nourishing ourselves physically and emotionally. Given the importance of food to our health, when our Community Health Survey (CHA) revealed that many Skagitonians experience food insecurity, increasing access to nutritious foods became a priority area for the Population Health Trust (PHT).



Last year, the Trust convened a workgroup to explore the challenge of food insecurity in our community and charged the group with creating a strategic plan to address the issue. The plan was recently released and can be viewed [here](#).

Now that the plan is complete, work has shifted to implementation. To that end, a Food Policy Council (FPC) was established to implement the plan and to continually advance initiatives designed to build a stronger, more resilient local food system. While the FPC will ultimately address all areas of the plan, it cannot do so all at once.

The plan is broad, containing 7 goals, 14 strategies, and 37 action steps. Through conversations and a series of prioritization activities, the FPC has determined that its work will begin in the areas highlighted below.

Exploration of a Shared Kitchen for Meals on Wheels and Head Start

Skagit County Meals on Wheels and Head Start provide quality, nutritious meals to some of our most vulnerable populations, home-bound seniors and kids. During workgroup planning sessions, representatives from both programs identified limited kitchen space as a current challenge. Through collaborative conversations, research, and site tours, the two groups will explore the feasibility of this model for their programs.

Linking Farmers to Available Land

During the planning process, conversations arose regarding challenges small and emerging farmers often encounter when looking to lease or buy farmland. The group envisioned a communication system that would link farmers looking for land with individuals with land for sale or lease. Through research, the group has learned of a platform, [Farm to Farmer](#), created by the Washington Farmland Trust, that seeks to do that. Locally, Viva Farms will be supporting the initiative with the FPC providing support in amplifying communication about the resource.

Farm to School Expansion

The [Farm to School](#) program, funded by the Washington State Department of Agriculture, seeks to expand economic opportunities for farmers while educating students about the connections between food, farming, health, and the environment. Many local school districts have received special procurement funding that has allowed them to purchase local foods for cafeterias. Additionally, Sedro-Woolley and Concrete School Districts provide education and cooking instruction with Farm to School funding. These programs are well-received and beneficial to many kids in our community. The FPC sees the expansion of these programs as an asset to our community and will spend time in exploring possible expansion while also considering current challenges and funding limitations.

Above is a snapshot of our current work. The team meets monthly and at these meetings works to continually advance these priorities in our community. If you would like to learn more about the Food Policy Council or our work, contact Kas Church at kasc@co.skagit.wa.us.

Thank you for your partnership in keeping Skagit County healthy!



The Population Health Trust was founded in 2015 and is the Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health. For more information, check out our [website](#).

Population Health Trust

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