

FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

2023 Annual Report



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Overview and History

The legislature established the Connecticut Food Policy Council in 1997 and placed it under the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) administrative authority (PA 97-11, June Special Session (§ 21)).

Our mission is to develop, coordinate, and implement a state-wide food policy that links economic development, environmental protection, and preservation with farming and urban issues. Through these efforts, the Connecticut Food Policy Council is working to create a more resilient Connecticut food system.

The council consists of 12 voting members appointed as follows: (1) six legislative appointees, representing agriculture, anti-hunger programs, the UConn Cooperative Extension Service, and the retail and wholesale food industry; and (2) six state agency commissioners (or their designees), from the departments of Agriculture, Administrative Services, Education, Social Services, Transportation, and Public Health. Additionally, the council includes as nonvoting members all other state agency heads, as defined in statute, and the Environment Committee chairpersons. 2019-R-0173 August 30, 2019.

By statute ([CGS § 22-456](#)) the council must:

1. develop, coordinate, and implement a food system policy linking local economic development, environmental protection, and preservation with farming and urban issues;
2. review and comment on proposed state legislation and regulations that would affect the state's food policy system;
3. advise the governor on the state's food policy; and
4. submit an annual report to the Environment Committee with any recommendations concerning food policy (CGS § 22-456).

2023 Council Membership

Patrick Doyle (KNOX Hartford), Involved in agriculture or in an agricultural organization
Tida Infahsaeng (United Way of Coastal and Western Connecticut), Antihunger organization
Molly Devanney (Highland Park Market), Food Retailer
Martha Page (Hartford Food Systems), Agriculture or Agricultural Organization
Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner of Agriculture
Lynn Peccerillo-Hills (Department of Administrative Services)
Monica Pacheco (Department of Education)
Priscilla Cotto (Department of Transportation)
Marilyn Lonczak (Department of Public Health)
Daniel Giacomi (Department of Social Services)
Shawn Joseph (Brass City Harvest), Produce Wholesaler
Vacant (Cooperative Extension Service)

For more information on the Council, visit the [agency's webpage](#).

FY23 Strategic Plan

In January of 2022, the Council met to determine the role and goals of the Connecticut Food Policy Council. Over the course of several meetings, it was decided that the council would work with William Logue at Quinnipiac Law School and director of the CT Agricultural Mediation Program, to facilitate the development of the strategic plan for the Council moving forward.

The strategic plan laid out the goals of the Council for the next three years, defining common terminology use broadly in food system work, programmatic strategic priorities, and organizational priorities, and laid out a work plan to ensure that the work was carried out in a timely manner. The plan was completed in January of 2023 and formally adopted in May 2023.

Below are the stated goals for the Council for the next several years.

1. Increase the use, awareness, and access to healthy food resources in Connecticut communities. This may include coordination with others leading efforts to promote SNAP participation, acceptance and redemption efforts for producers and consumers by promoting and sharing food assistance organizations and efforts.
2. Support local food groups in collaborative work and convening the groups to share best practices, knowledge, resources, and opportunities. This may include: microgrants, gathering/convening, technical assistance to grantees, inviting organizations and stakeholders to Council meetings.
3. Support the creation or continuation of local food policy councils and other community networks focusing on food access. This may include expanding the website, creating a community of practice, creating a listserv for communication and resource sharing.
4. Fund projects that include community-driven solutions to create a more just food system that empowers communities to grow, sell, and eat healthy foods.
 - Work towards ensuring all Connecticut residents regardless of economic situation, race, etc. have access to fresh, local, culturally relevant food.
 - Include organizations involved in food policy and food systems work and other organizations or entities addressing food insecurity and access in the State of Connecticut.

FY23 Grant

During the July 14, 2022, meeting, the Council voted and approved the creation of a grant program utilizing accrued funds and to be administered by CT DoAg. The Food System Capacity Building Grant (FSCB) provides funds to Connecticut organizations and groups involved in food system policy or creating innovative, localized, programming in their respective communities to increase food access and address food insecurity.

Purpose

The FSCB Grant is intended to support Connecticut communities, projects, or programs that:

- Increase the use of, awareness of, and access to healthy food.
- Support stakeholders in collaborative work to address local food system issues.
- Support the creation or continuation of local food policy councils, anti-hunger coalitions, and similar working groups or networks focused on food systems, food access, and/or community food security.
- Support projects that include community-driven solutions to create a more just food system that empowers communities to grow, process, prepare, sell, and eat culturally preferred healthy foods.

The application to submit proposals for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 FSCBG Grant was open from September 15, 2022, through November 15, 2022. Applicants could apply for up to \$10,000.

Eligibility

The following entities were eligible to apply for the FSCB Grant:

- Local Food Policy Councils and/or food working groups
- Agricultural producers, singularly or jointly, provided such producers are owners or tenants of existing agribusiness within the State of Connecticut
- Food pantries
- Farmers' markets
- Community Gardens, including municipalities or organizations operating a community garden
- Food retailers, such as grocery stores, corner stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, mobile food markets, or retail food outlets operated by an emergency food program or food hub

Grant Categories

1. Creation or Continuance of a Local Food Policy Council or Food Working Group
2. Equipment
3. Pilot CT Grown Purchasing Program for Retailers
4. Farmers' Market Access
5. Food Waste and Recovery
6. Community Gardens

Awarding Priorities

1. Projects that prioritize capacity building of groups who are working on systemic, holistic approaches to feeding people and working in sectors throughout the food system.
2. Projects that support organizations and groups that are led by marginalized communities including black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), members of the LGBTQ+ community, and persons with disabilities.
3. If a project incorporates procurement, then projects who purchase CT Grown farm products may receive priority.

DoAg received 58 number of applications totaling \$569,711.62 in funding requests. The Food Policy Council members reviewed and scored applications and selected eight (8) for funding totaling \$79,812.88 in grant awards.

Grantees began their projects in March of 2023 and have through September of 2024 to complete them.

FY23 Grantee Descriptions and Awards



Equipment

Daily Bread Food Pantry, Danbury: *Refrigeration Expansion.* Funds to purchase additional commercial refrigeration equipment to enable them to purchase and store more perishable food- especially locally grown and locally-produced food. \$10,000.00.

Nutrition Securities Solutions (N.S.S.) Food Pantry, New Haven: *Walk-in Fridge-Freezer for Specialized Food Assistance.* Funds a walk-in freezer/refrigerator storage for the N.S.S. food warehouse. \$10,000.00.

New London Area Food Pantry, New London: *Walk in refrigeration.* Funds the purchase, delivery, installation and evaluation of a 7'10" by 9'10" walk in refrigeration unit to be installed at the New London Food Pantry. \$10,000.00.

Studio Bibleway (Bibleway Temple Nation), Hartford: *Increasing Access to Healthy Food in Hartford's Northend.* Funds the purchase of a freezer (approximately \$4,000), glass door

refrigerator approximately \$3,000), and shelving (\$1500). An additional \$1500 will be used to support a per-diem resource coach to promote positive health outcomes. \$10,000.00.

Creation/Continuance of Food Policy Council or Working Group

New London Community Meal Center: *Food Justice Action Team.* Supports work in partnership with FRESH New London, and the Food Justice Action Team (FJAT) of the Health Improvement Collaborative (HIC) of Southeastern CT. These funds will support the ongoing role of administration and facilitation with stakeholders including mapping current food systems assets, initiatives, and partnerships in the region and identifying overlaps in the sustainability plans of area health, wellness, and social service agencies. The project will also establish a database to invite participation from citizens those not typically included in food issues planning. \$9,812.88.

Danbury Food Collaborative (through United Way of Western CT): *Danbury food collaborative data modernization.* Funds the pilot of a data modernization project, integrating data management infrastructure to work more collaboratively and efficiently to help DFC members improve and expand community outreach, service, and delivery. \$10,000.00.

Stamford Food Collaborative (through United Way of Western CT): *Stamford Food Collaborative Marketing Strategy.* Funds work with a local marketing firm to create a marketing strategy plan for the SFC, which will include coordination of direct market research with partners and community members. The primary outcome of this project is the creation of an SFC marketing plan that will be a roadmap for implementing marketing and outreach strategies that increase awareness and encourage participation in SFC member food security initiatives. \$10,000.00.

Community Garden

Grow Windham: *The Windham Community Growers' Collective.* Funds an initiative led by young BIPOC growers from Windham to build equity and resilience into our local food system through improving access to land, knowledge, and resources for local urban, primarily Latinx growers, and at the same time increasing availability of culturally relevant produce for food-insecure community members. \$10,000.00.

FY23 Budget Summary

For FY23, the Food Policy Council had an available budget of \$174,034.00 which reflected an accumulation of funds from several years of unspent allocation. The Council is now on a path to spend down the remaining accumulation in FY24.

The Food Policy Council receives an annual allocation of \$25,000 disbursed in quarterly payments of \$6,250.

FY23 Expenses

Expense Category	Encumbered Funds	Expenditures
Food System Capacity Building Grantees, eight (8) awards	\$79,812.88 (the remainder will be reimbursed upon project completion)	\$20,000.00 (in requested grant advances)
Food Policy Council Website Hosting	\$553.38	\$305.14
Table Fee for 2023 Ag Day at the Capitol- Ag Information Council	\$75.00	\$75.00
Total FY23 Funds	\$80,441.26	\$20,380.14

The Food Policy Council plans to release a second round of Food System Capacity Building Grants in early 2024 and will then evaluate the ability to continue the grant program going forward.

Grantee Success Story

Daily Bread Food Pantry, Danbury

Submitted by Peter Kent, Executive Director

The purpose of this grant was to allow us to purchase additional commercial refrigeration equipment to enable us to purchase and store more perishable food.

During the growing season, we have access to far more fresh food than we can store under optimal conditions. Outside of the growing season, expanded refrigerated storage allows us to store more perishable food such as eggs and milk until it is distributed. This improves our logistics (larger order and pickup quantities) and ensures all our guests receive as much healthy food as possible. Before we purchased the equipment, we did not have enough storage to serve the massive increase in client numbers we have seen in recent years (in 2023, approximately 700 families per week).



We purchased the equipment on July 21, 2023, and the equipment has been used at capacity ever since.

As anticipated, the additional refrigeration allowed us to source more fresh food from our main food bank partner, Connecticut Foodshare – increasing the amount of fresh food included in each order by approximately 20%. We are currently receiving more than 20,000 pounds of food per week from Connecticut Foodshare alone, over half of which is fresh produce, dairy products, and frozen meat. During the growing season, we also received fresh-picked, twice weekly deliveries from the UCONN Extension Master Gardener Program. We typically purchase 300 to 400 dozen eggs from local suppliers every week up over 20% from 2022. Finally, we

“rescue” fresh food from local retailers that, with proper refrigeration, can be stored in our new refrigeration until distribution.

Currently, we are distributing this fresh food to around 700 families per week – representing approximately 2,520 individuals – a 29% increase over 2022. In total, we received over 32,000 guest visits in 2023 and distributed over 1.3 million pounds of food. The new refrigeration capacity played an important role in that achievement.