



# Partners for Good Conference

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Co-Sponsored by Montclair State University  
College of Humanities and Social Services

April 29, 2026

# Current State of SNAP: What You Need to Know





## Updated SNAP Eligibility Requirements

What to Know, What to Share, and Where to Get Help

### Overview

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) provides food assistance to low-income families to help them buy groceries through a benefits card accepted at most grocery stores and some farmers' markets. Eligibility is set by several factors, such as income and resources. **Starting February 1, 2026, SNAP policy changes took effect. This toolkit includes two types of reshareable, visual assets explaining the changes.**

### Materials

📁 SNAP Eligibility Updates , In this folder you will find:

- A carousel post version of the updates
  - Post the carousel to educate your audience on social media.
  - Our [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) posts for ease of resharing
- A one-pager that houses resources and information
  - Add the [one-pager link](#) to your bio so followers can access it anytime
  - Share the one-pager directly via email to reach community members who may not be on social media

#### **Sample Social Media Caption:**

##### **The Carousel Post**

“SNAP policy changes recently took effect. Here's what you should know: If you are a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipient between the ages of 18 and 64, you may be subject to Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work rules and time limits under federal rules. Swipe to learn more”.

#### **Sample Email Language:**

##### **The One Pager**

“SNAP policy changes recently took effect. Here's what you should know: If you are a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipient between the ages of 18 and 64, you may be subject to Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work rules and time limits under federal rules. Check out this one-pager to learn more”.

# SNAP POLICY CHANGES & WHAT TO DO

▲ IN EFFECT: FEBRUARY 1, 2026

■ WORK REQUIREMENTS NOW IN EFFECT — YOUR BENEFITS MAY BE AFFECTED — CHECK YOUR ELIGIBILITY ■

## WHAT HAS CHANGED

- **Work requirements expanded to new groups**  
Adults ages 55-64, AND parents of children 14 or older must now work at least 20 hours/week – or face a 3-month benefit limit every 3 years.

AGES 55-64

PARENTS OF TEENS 14+

- **Exceptions eliminated for 3 key groups**  
These groups previously held exceptions and are NO Longer protected from work requirements:

VETERANS

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

- **Immigrant eligibility largely eliminated**  
Asylees, refugees, and immigrants who are not Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) are mostly no longer eligible for SNAP benefits.

- **WIC now requires a separate income check**  
Families enrolled in SNAP, Medicaid, or TANF are NO LONGER automatically income-eligible for WIC. A new, separate income verification is now required for all WIC applicants.

- **Fewer children auto-certified for school meals**  
As families lose SNAP or cycle on and off due to work requirements and time limits, fewer children will be automatically certified for free or reduced-price school meals.

### ✓ VOLUNTEER & TRAINING COUNT!

Approved volunteer activities and job training can satisfy the 20-hr/week work requirement.

*\*Note: Adults 60–64 are still subject to the new work requirements even though they are exempt from some basic SNAP work rules. Exemptions to ALL work requirements apply for: pregnant individuals, Native Americans/Tribal Members, and those under 18 or 65+.*

### VARIES BY CASE

How these rules apply depends on your situation. An exemption may still apply. Contact a SNAP Navigator.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1 **Check your status & exemptions**  
Use Essex County's WeCareCustomer Service Portal to review your application status and see if a work requirement exemption applies to you.
- 2 **Find a free SNAP Navigator**  
A local SNAP Navigator will assess your eligibility and current benefit status — confidentially and for free. Use the QR code below to find one.
- 3 **Get employment or volunteer support**  
Find jobs, job-seeking support, and volunteer opportunities through NJ's One Stop Career Centers in East Orange and Newark.
- 4 **Enroll in SNAP Employment & Training**  
The SNAP E&T Program offers approved training that counts toward your work requirement. Learn more via QR code below.
- 5 **Access food & nutrition resources**  
Find food resources through Essex County's Food & Health Equity Coalition (FHEC). School Meals and Summer EBT applications are also here.
- 6 **Re-verify WIC eligibility**  
Being on SNAP no longer automatically qualifies you for WIC. Contact your WIC office to complete a new income verification.

## WIC OFFICE CONTACTS — ESSEX COUNTY

East Orange WIC

wic@eastorange-nj.gov

Rutgers NJMS WIC

rutgerswic@njms.rutgers.edu

Newark WIC

newarkwic@ci.newark.nj.us

- 7 **School Meals & Summer EBT**  
Complete applications for students through the FHEC portal — see QR code below.

1

Essex County's WeCare Customer Service Portal



2

Find a SNAP Navigator in Essex County



3

Find employment and job-seeking support



4

Learn more about the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Program



5

Access food and nutrition resources



6

WIC Participant Portal



7

Complete School Meals and Summer EBT Applications for students



# POLÍTICA DE SNAP CAMBIOS Y QUÉ HACER

▲ EN VIGOR: 1 DE FEBRERO DE 2026

■ REQUISITOS LABORALES AHORA EN VIGOR: SUS BENEFICIOS PUEDEN VERSE AFECTADOS; VERIFIQUE SI CUMPLE LOS REQUISITOS ■

## ¿QUÉ HA CAMBIADO?

### Los requisitos laborales se ampliaron a nuevos grupos.

Los adultos de entre 55 y 64 años, Y los padres de niños de 14 años o más, ahora deben trabajar al menos 20 horas a la semana, o se enfrentarán a un límite de beneficios de 3 meses cada 3 años.

EDADES DE 55 A 64 AÑOS

PADRES DE ADOLESCENTES MAYORES DE 14 AÑOS.

### Se eliminaron las excepciones para 3 grupos clave.

Estos grupos tenían anteriormente excepciones y YA NO las tienen. protegidos de los requisitos laborales:

VETERANOS

PERSONAS SIN HOGAR

JÓVENES QUE DEJAN EL SISTEMA DE ACOGIMIENTO FAMILIAR AL ALCANZAR LA MAYORÍA DE EDAD

### Se eliminó en gran medida la elegibilidad de los inmigrantes.

Solicitantes de asilo, refugiados e inmigrantes que no son residentes permanentes legales  
La mayoría de los residentes permanentes legales ya no cumplen los requisitos para recibir los beneficios del programa SNAP.

### El programa WIC ahora requiere una verificación de ingresos por separado.

Las familias inscritas en SNAP, Medicaid o TANF YA NO ESTÁN

Requisito automático de ingresos para WIC. Ahora se requiere una nueva verificación de ingresos por separado para todos los solicitantes de WIC.

### Menos niños se inscribieron automáticamente para recibir comidas escolares.

A medida que las familias pierden los beneficios de SNAP o entran y salen de ellos debido al trabajo

Debido a los requisitos y los plazos establecidos, menos niños serán certificados automáticamente para recibir comidas escolares gratuitas o a precio reducido.

### ✓ ¡EL VOLUNTARIADO Y LA FORMACIÓN CUENTAN!

Las actividades de voluntariado y la formación laboral aprobadas pueden satisfacer la necesidad de...  
Requisito de trabajo de 20 horas semanales.

*\*Nota: Los adultos de 60 a 64 años siguen sujetos a los nuevos requisitos laborales, aunque estén exentos de algunas normas básicas del programa SNAP. Se aplican exenciones a TODOS los requisitos laborales para: mujeres embarazadas, nativos americanos/miembros de tribus y menores de 18 años o mayores de 65.*

### VARÍA SEGÚN EL CASO

La forma en que se aplican estas reglas depende de su situación.  
Aún podría aplicarse una exención. Comuníquese con un asesor de SNAP.

## QUÉ PUEDES HACER

- 1 Consulta tu estado y exenciones.**  
Utilice el portal de servicio al cliente WeCare del condado de Essex para revisar  
Consulte el estado de su solicitud y compruebe si le corresponde alguna exención del requisito laboral.
- 2 Encuentra un SNAP Navigator gratuito**  
Un asesor local de SNAP evaluará su elegibilidad y situación actual. Consulta tu situación de beneficiario de forma confidencial y gratuita. Usa el código QR a continuación para averiguarlo.
- 3 Obtén empleo o apoyo para voluntarios.**  
Encuentra empleos, apoyo para la búsqueda de empleo y oportunidades de voluntariado.  
a través de los Centros de Empleo Integral de Nueva Jersey en East Orange y Newark.
- 4 Inscríbese en el programa de Empleo y Capacitación SNAP.**  
El programa SNAP E&T ofrece capacitación aprobada que cuenta. para cumplir con los requisitos de tu trabajo. Obtén más información mediante el código QR a continuación.
- 5 Acceso a recursos sobre alimentación y nutrición**  
Encuentre recursos alimentarios a través del Departamento de Alimentos y Salud del Condado de Essex.  
Coalición por la Equidad (FHEC). Aquí también encontrará las solicitudes para el programa de comidas escolares y el programa EBT de verano.
- 6 Vuelva a verificar su elegibilidad para WIC.**  
Estar inscrito en el programa SNAP ya no te da derecho automáticamente a recibir el programa WIC.  
Comuníquese con su oficina de WIC para completar una nueva verificación de ingresos.

## CONTACTOS DE LA OFICINA DE WIC — CONDADO DE ESSEX

Programa WIC de East Orange

wic@eastorange-nj.gov

Rutgers NJMS WIC

rutgerswic@njms.rutgers.edu

Programa WIC de Newark

newarkwic@ci.newark.nj.us

- 7 Comidas escolares y EBT de verano**  
Las solicitudes de los estudiantes deben completarse a través del portal de FHEC; consulte el código QR a continuación.

1

Portal de atención al cliente WeCare del condado de Essex



2

Encuentra un asesor de SNAP en el condado de Essex.



3

Encuentra empleo y recibe apoyo para la búsqueda de trabajo.



4

Obtenga más información sobre el Programa de Empleo y Capacitación (E&T) de SNAP.



5

Acceso a recursos sobre alimentación y nutrición



6

Portal para participantes de WIC



7

Completar las solicitudes de comidas escolares y EBT de verano para estudiantes



# POLITIK SNAP CHANJMAN AK SA POU FÈ

▲ AN VIGÈ: 1 FEVRIYE 2026

■ EGZIJANS TRAVAY KI AN VIGÈ KOUNYE A — BENEFIS OU YO KA AFEKTE — VERIFYE KALIFYASYON OU ■

## SA KI CHANJE

- Kondisyon travay yo elaji pou nouvo gwoup yo**  
Adilt ki gen laj 55-64 an, AK paran timoun 14 an oswa plis dwe kounye a travay omwen 20 èdtan/semèn – oswa fè fas a yon limit benefis 3 mwa chak 3 zan.  
**LAJ 55-64** **PARAN ADOLESAN 14+**
- Eksepsyon elimine pou 3 gwoup kle**  
Gwoup sa yo te genyen eksepsyon anvan e yo PA genyen yo ankò. pwoteje kont egzijans travay yo:  
**VETERAN** **MOUN KI PA GEN KAY**  
**JÈN KI KITE SISTÈM ADOPSYON AN**
- Elijibilite imigran elimine an gran pati**  
Moun ki resevwa azil, refijye, ak imigran ki pa rezidan pèmanan legal (LPR) yo pa kalifye pou benefis SNAP ankò, sitou.
- WIC kounye a mande yon chèk revni apa.**  
Fanmi ki enskri nan SNAP, Medicaid, oubyen TANF PA otomatikman kalifye pou WIC selon revni yo ANKÒ. Kounye a, tout aplikan WIC yo bezwen yon nouvo verifikasyon revni apa.
- Mwens timoun ki sètifye otomatikman pou manje lekòl**  
Tank fanmi yo ap pèdi SNAP oubyen yo ap monte desann akòz egzijans travay ak limit tan, mwens timoun ap sètifye otomatikman pou manje lekòl gratis oubyen a pri redwi.

### ✓ VOLONTÈ AK FÒMASYON KONTE!

Aktivite volontè ak fòmasyon pwofesyonèl ki apwouve yo ka satisfè Egzijans travay 20 èdtan/semèn.

\*Nòt: Adilt ki gen ant 60 ak 64 an toujou sijè a nouvo egzijans travay yo menm si yo egzante de kèk règ travay debaz SNAP. Egzanpsyon pou TOUT egzijans travay yo aplike pou: moun ansent, Endyen Ameriken/Manm Tribi, ak moun ki poko gen 18 an oswa 65 an oswa plis.

### VARYE SELON KA A

Fason règ sa yo aplike a depann de sityasyon ou.  
Yon egzanpsyon ka toujou aplike. Kontakte yon Navigatè SNAP.

## SA OU KA FÈ

- Tcheke sityasyon w ak egzanpsyon w yo**  
Sèvi ak Portal Sèvis Kliyan WeCare Konte Essex la pou w verifye sityasyon aplikasyon w lan epi wè si yon egzanpsyon egzijans travay aplike pou ou.
- Jwenn yon Navigatè SNAP gratis**  
Yon Navigatè SNAP lokal pral evalye kalifikasyon ou ak sityasyon benefis aktyèl ou a — yon fason konfidansyèl e gratis. Sèvi ak kòd QR ki anba a pou jwenn youn.
- Jwenn travay oswa sipò volontè**  
Jwenn travay, sipò pou chèche travay, ak opòtinite volontarya atravè Sant Karyè One Stop NJ yo nan East Orange ak Newark.
- Enskri nan SNAP Employment & Training**  
Pwogram SNAP E&T a ofri fòmasyon apwouve ki konte pou egzijans travay ou. Aprann plis atravè kòd QR ki anba a.
- Jwenn aksè a resous manje ak nitrisyon**  
Jwenn resous alimantè atravè Kowalisyon pou Ekite nan Manje ak Sante (FHEC) Konte Essex la. Ou ka jwenn aplikasyon pou Manje Lekòl ak EBT pandan ete a tou.
- Verifye kalifikasyon pou WIC ankò**  
Lefèt ke ou sou SNAP pa kalifye ou otomatikman pou WIC ankò. Kontakte biwo WIC ou a pou konplete yon nouvo verifikasyon revni.

## KONTAK BIWO WIC LA — KONTE ESSEX

WIC Oranj Lès [wic@eastorange-nj.gov](mailto:wic@eastorange-nj.gov)

WIC Rutgers NJMS la [rutgerswic@njms.rutgers.edu](mailto:rutgerswic@njms.rutgers.edu)

WIC Newark la [newarkwic@ci.newark.nj.us](mailto:newarkwic@ci.newark.nj.us)

- Manje Lekòl ak EBT pou Ete a**  
Ranpli aplikasyon pou elèv yo atravè pòtal FHEC la — gade kòd QR ki anba a.

1  
Pòtal Sèvis Kliyan  
WeCare Konte Essex  
la



2  
Jwenn yon  
Navigatè SNAP  
nan Konte Essex



3  
Jwenn travay ak  
sipò pou chèche  
travay



4  
Aprann plis bagay sou  
Pwogram Anplwa ak  
Fòmasyon (E&T) SNAP la



5  
Jwenn aksè a  
resous manje ak  
nitrisyon



6  
Pòtal  
Patisipan  
WIC la



7  
Manje konplè lekòl  
ak aplikasyon EBT  
pandan ete pou  
elèv yo





## NJ SNAP Updates

# Essex County DFAB

Date: April 29th, 2026  
Division of Family Assistance and Benefits  
Department of Citizen Services  
County of Essex

# NJ SNAP HR-1 Impact

## Table of Contents

- 1** Policy Updates & Definitions
- 2** Key Programmatic Changes | SNAP Basic Exemptions | Able-Bodied Exceptions
- 3** Self Attestation
- 4** DFAB's Plan of Action | What to Expect from Us | Frequently Asked Questions
- 5** Data and Our Community

# NJ SNAP HR-1 Impact

## Policy Update:

On October 3, 2025, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) issued a memorandum to all SNAP State Agencies advising that changes to the ABAWD work rules, including the elimination of insufficient job-related waivers.



## High level Definition:

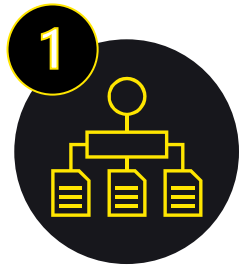
Able-bodied Adult without Dependents (**ABAWD**)

ABAWD work rules require certain SNAP recipients to work (paid or in-kind), volunteer, or participate in an Employment and Training (E&T) activity or work program for **80 hours per month**.

Recipients who do not meet this requirement may only receive SNAP benefits for three (3) months in a 36-month period which runs from February 1, 2024, to January 30, 2027.

# NJ SNAP HR-1 Impact

## Key Takeaways:



1

### Age Adjustments

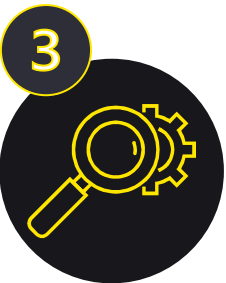
Individuals aged 18 to 64 are subject to the ABAWD work rules unless they meet an **exception**.



2

### Roll Back of Biden Era Special Populations

Individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals who are age 24 or under with a foster care history, and veterans **are subject** to the ABAWD work rules, unless they meet another exception.



3

### Expansion for Households with Dependent Children

Individuals in a SNAP household with dependent children age 14 or older (even if they are an ineligible household member) **are subject** to the ABAWD work rules.



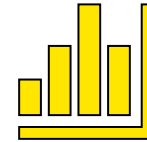
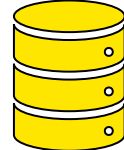
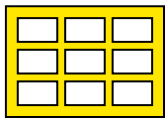
4

### SNAP Basic Vs. ABAWD Work Rules

Individuals between the ages of **60 and 64**, although exempt from **Basic SNAP Work Registration** requirements, are subject to ABAWD work rules unless they meet another ABAWD exception.

# Self Attestation

**A household's statement that it meets an ABAWD exception, and is documented in the case notes, shall be accepted unless it is questionable, and if it is questionable, it must be verified.**



**“CSSAs must attempt to verify exception status using all information available to the CSSA, including data sharing with other programs, before requiring individuals to provide verification of exception status.”**

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## **CSSA's Notifications:**

**NJ SNAP-27:** NJ SNAP Work Rules Screening Flowchart | **NJ SNAP-28:** NJ SNAP Work Rules Screening Tool

**NJ SNAP-29:** NJ SNAP Important Screening Notice for Exemptions from ABAWD Time Limits

# DFAB's Action Plan



**Exception Screening:** Outreach recipients to determine if any ABAWD work rules exceptions apply, including good cause; **11,923** recipients selected from for screening; on-going partnership from NJ DFD;

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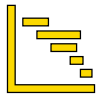
**Certification and Recertification Review:** Screen SNAP household members at time of certification and recertification to determine if they are subject to the ABAWD work rules under the new standards;

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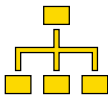
**Case Coding:** Ensure that proper case coding to designate household members accordingly is utilized;

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**Data Management:** Track household members who do not have exceptions from the ABAWD work rules;

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**Work Referrals:** Refer individuals who do not meet ABAWDs exceptions to Essex County Division of Training and Employment (DTE) for a qualified work activity. (50 S. Clinton Street, East Orange, NJ, 07018)

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# NJ SNAP – Work Rules FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions

Comments from County Social Service Agency



**Q: Is ABAWD voluntary?**

**A:** Compliance with ABAWD Work Rules is not voluntary, meaning that individuals subject to the ABAWD Work Rules must work for an average of 80 hours a month.



**Q: What about the people who work for Uber, are self-employed, etc...**

**A:** Individuals only need to complete 20 hours/week to meet the ABAWD Work Rules. The ABAWD Work Rules state that an individual can comply with the work requirements through a combination of any of the acceptable activities.



**Q: Is self-attestation allowable for Uber and Lyft income?**

**A:** Self-attestation for any verification is allowable under SNAP rules unless questionable.



**Q: If someone is employed, does their income have to equal 30 hours to be exempt from SNAP Basic Work Rules?**

**A:** To meet the employment exemption from the SNAP Basic Work Rules, an individual must either work 30 hours/week or earn a wage equal to or more than the federal minimum wage times 30 hours/week.

# NJ SNAP – Work Rules FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions

Comments from County Social Service Agency



**Q: What happens during recertification when a CSSA finds out that a recipient lost their job months ago and didn't tell us?**

**A: You must assign countable months beginning the first full month in which they were non-compliant.**



**Q: For an ABAWD exemption does a customer need a doctor's note if they are claiming they are disabled? Is their statement or a note from the case worker enough or do we need it in writing?**

**A: A caseworker observation of the individual being unfit for work or disabled is acceptable; medical documentation is also sufficient.**



**Q: Treatment of households with SNAP non-household members who are the head of household/payee?**

**A: Individuals who are head of the household, who are SNAP non-household members, can still attest to all other household members' situations, and that includes screening for work activities.**

# NJ SNAP Totals By Municipality

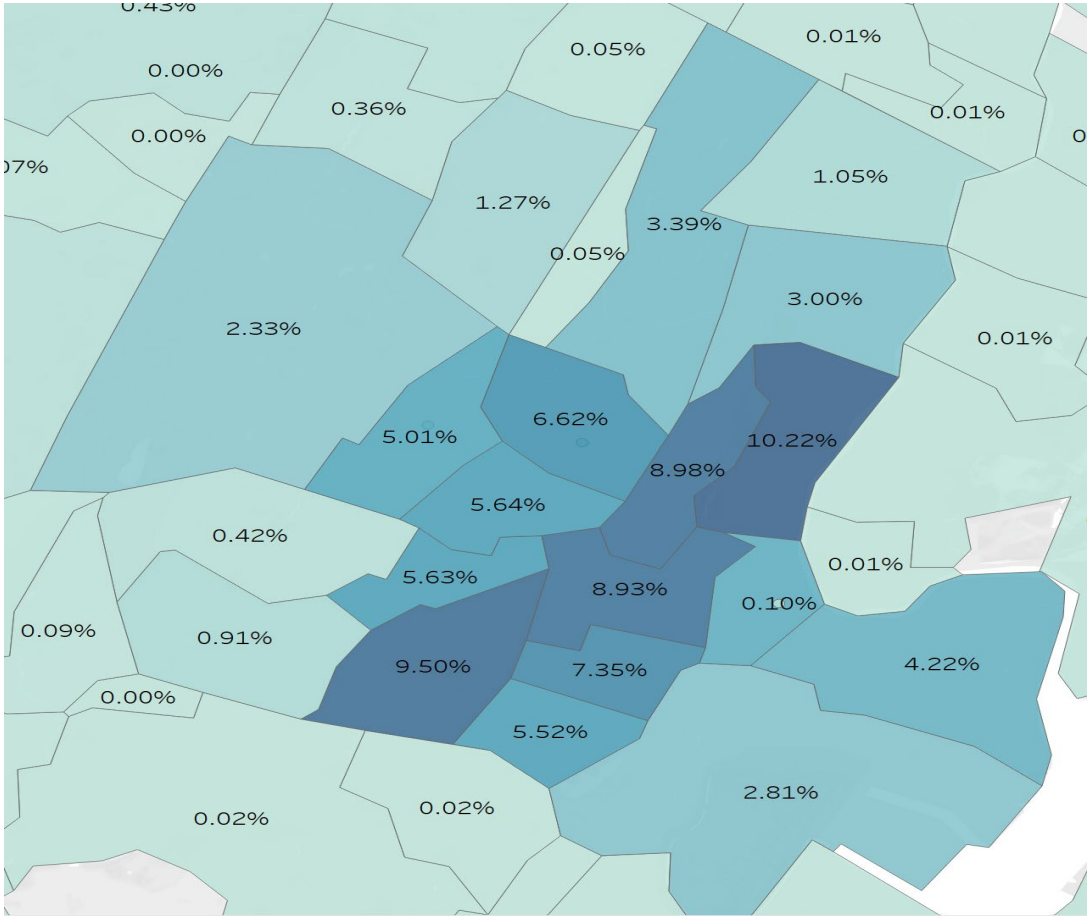
ESSEX FOOD STAMP TOTALS BY MUNICIPALITY						
NPA AS OF 3/31/2026						
MUNC NUMBER	MUNICIPALITY NAME	NUMBER OF ATPS ISSUED	NUMBER OF ADULTS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	TOTAL ACTIVE FS RECIPIENTS	TOTAL COUPON ALLOTMENTS
01	BELLEVILLE (TWP)	1,255	1,385	992	2,377	459,436.00
02	BLOOMFIELD (TWP)	1,507	1,686	1,073	2,759	527,427.00
03	CALDWELL BORO (TWP)	136	145	73	218	39,791.00
04	CEDAR GROVE (TWP)	116	139	38	177	31,883.00
05	EAST ORANGE (CTY)	4,950	5,246	3,559	8,805	1,746,873.00
06	ESSEX FIELDS (TWP)	17	21	6	27	4,798.00
07	FAIRFIELD (TWP)	254	275	209	484	93,749.00
08	GLEN RIDGE BORO (TWP)	111	108	102	210	39,159.00
09	IRVINGTON (TWP)	3,976	3,935	3,462	7,397	1,486,239.00
10	LIVINGSTON (TWP)	170	216	77	293	57,623.00
11	MAPLEWOOD (TWP)	352	390	233	623	120,134.00
12	MILLBURN (TWP)	97	112	41	153	33,399.00
13	MONTCLAIR (TWP)	563	601	275	876	173,248.00
14	NEWARK (CTY)	24,275	24,720	21,389	46,109	9,424,170.00
15	NORTH CALDWELL (TWP)	53	55	43	98	18,256.00
16	NUTLEY (TWP)	419	488	245	733	137,335.00
17	ORANGE CITY (TWP)	2,040	1,913	1,688	3,601	709,269.00
18	ROSELAND (BORO)	37	41	18	59	10,472.00
19	SOUTH ORANGE VILL (TWP)	149	160	42	202	39,049.00
20	VERONA (TWP)	132	141	31	172	30,913.00
21	WEST CALDWELL (TWP)	72	80	53	133	25,325.00
22	WEST ORANGE (TWP)	949	1,018	674	1,692	325,507.00
99	TRANSFER OUT-OF-COUNTY	18	20	8	28	6,500.00

# NJ SNAP Grand Totals

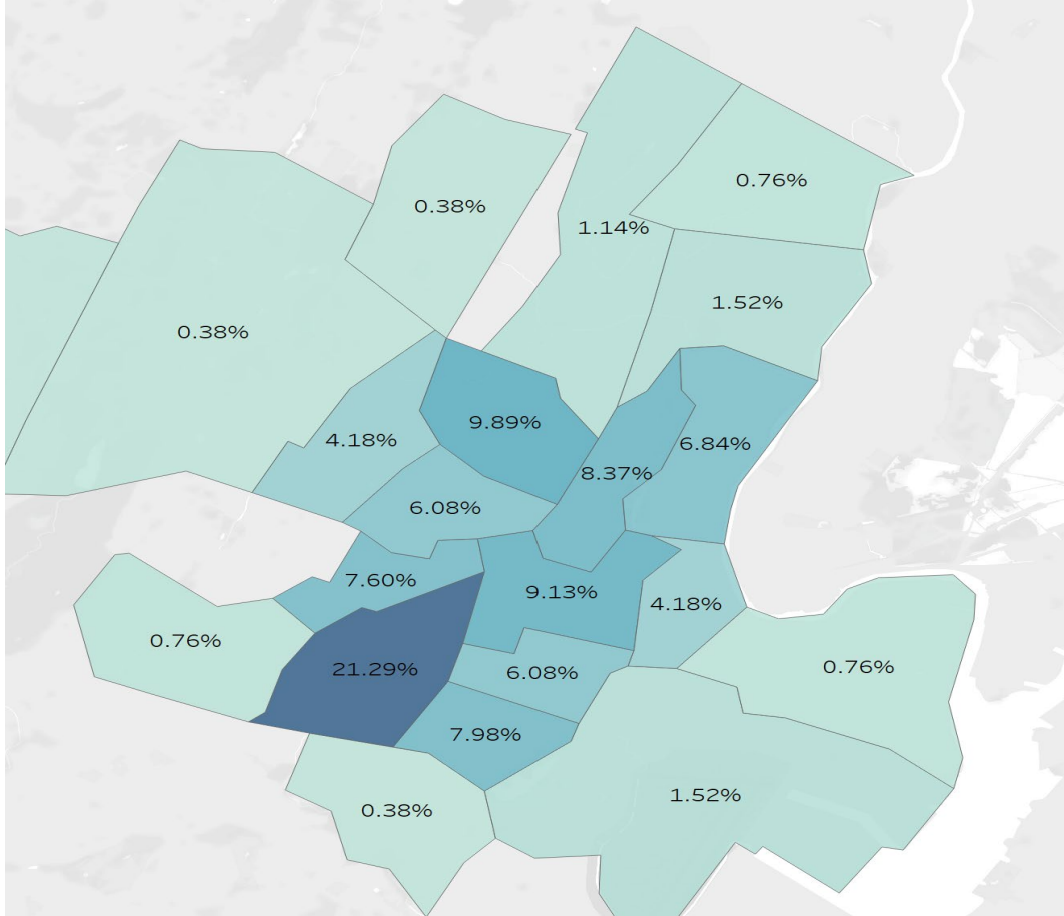
ESSEX FOOD STAMP TOTALS BY MUNICIPALITY						
TOTAL-P AS OF 3/31/2026						
	NUMBER OF ATPS ISSUED	NUMBER OF ADULTS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	TOTAL ACTIVE FS RECIPIENTS	TOTAL COUPON ALLOTMENTS	
CA-FS	1,154	1,250	2,059	3,309	776,846.00	
NP6	1,613	1,653	5	1,658	486,331.00	
NP7	13,696	15,438	5,808	21,246	4,830,820.00	
NP8	237	304	421	725	119,734.00	
NPA	41,648	42,895	34,331	77,226	15,540,555.00	
ALL-NPA	57,194	60,290	40,565	100,855	20,977,440.00	
GRAND TOTAL	58,348	61,540	42,624	104,164	21,754,286.00	

# HEAT MAP – Active SNAP Recipients

### All Recipients

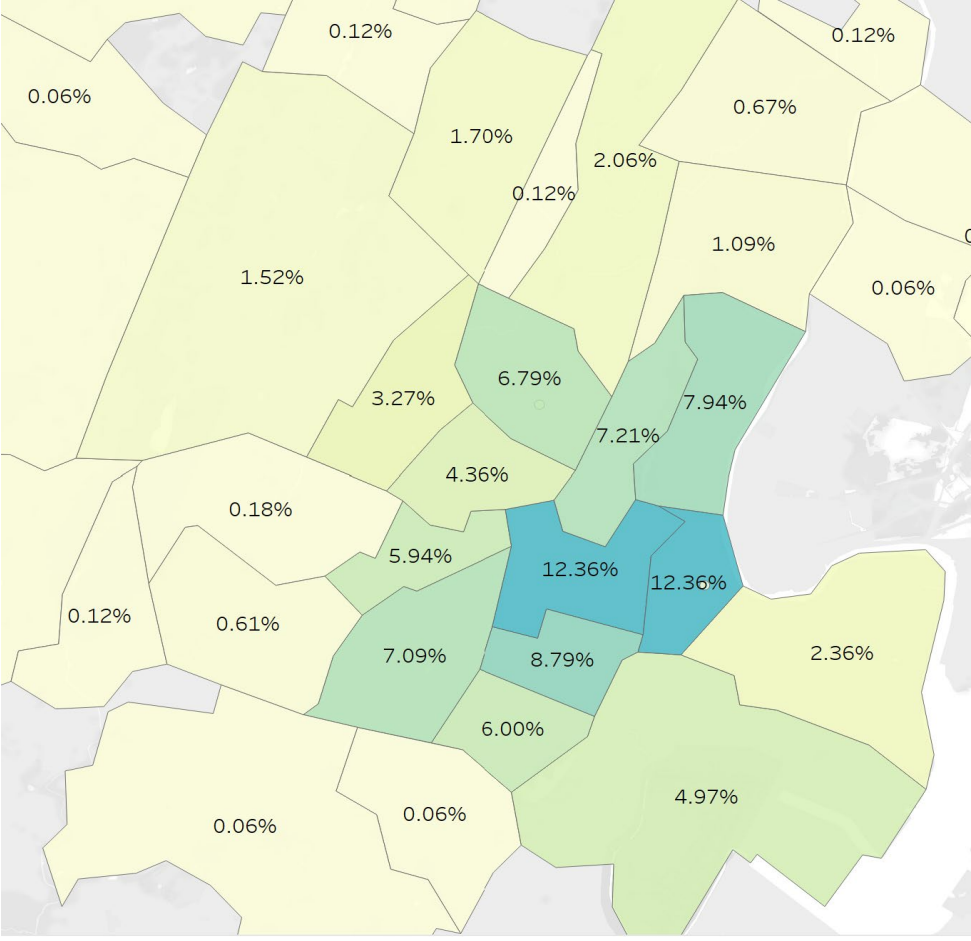


### Post - TANF

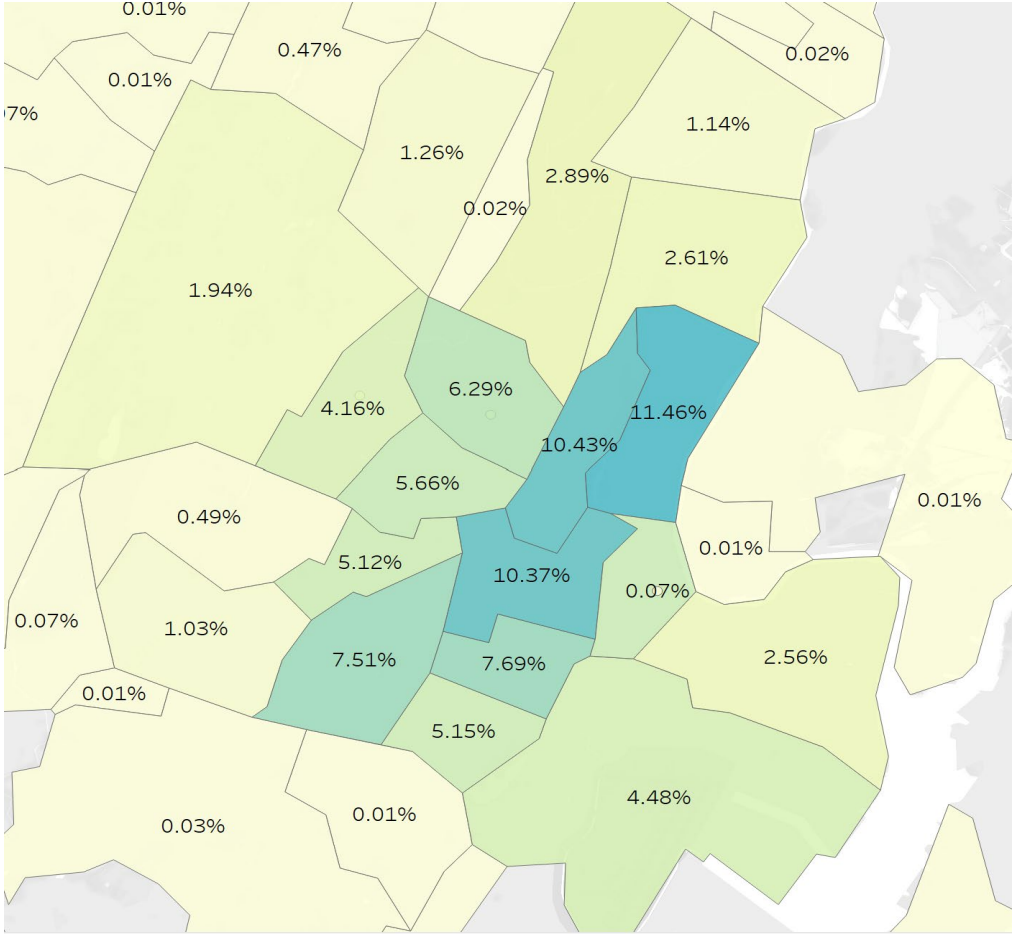


# HEAT MAP – Active SNAP Recipients

### SNAP/GA

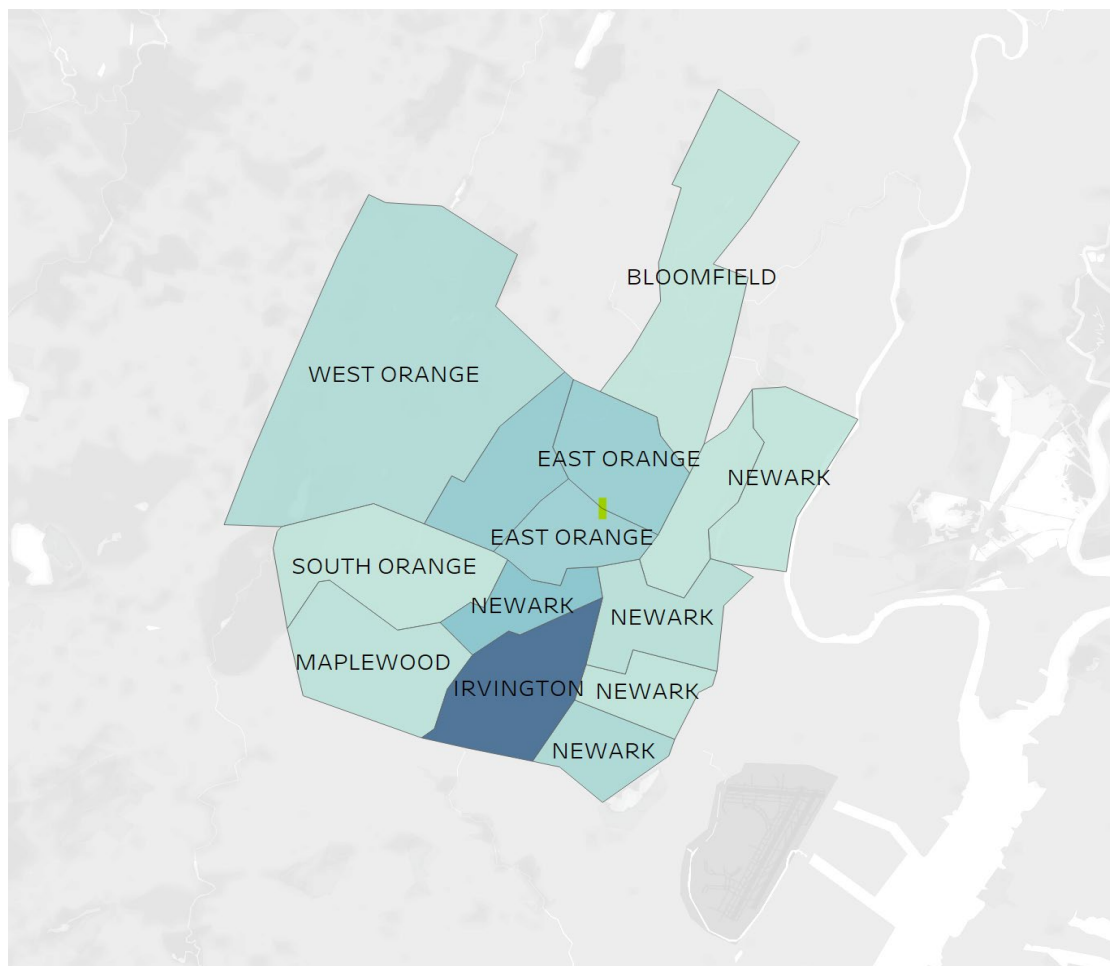


### SNAP/SSI

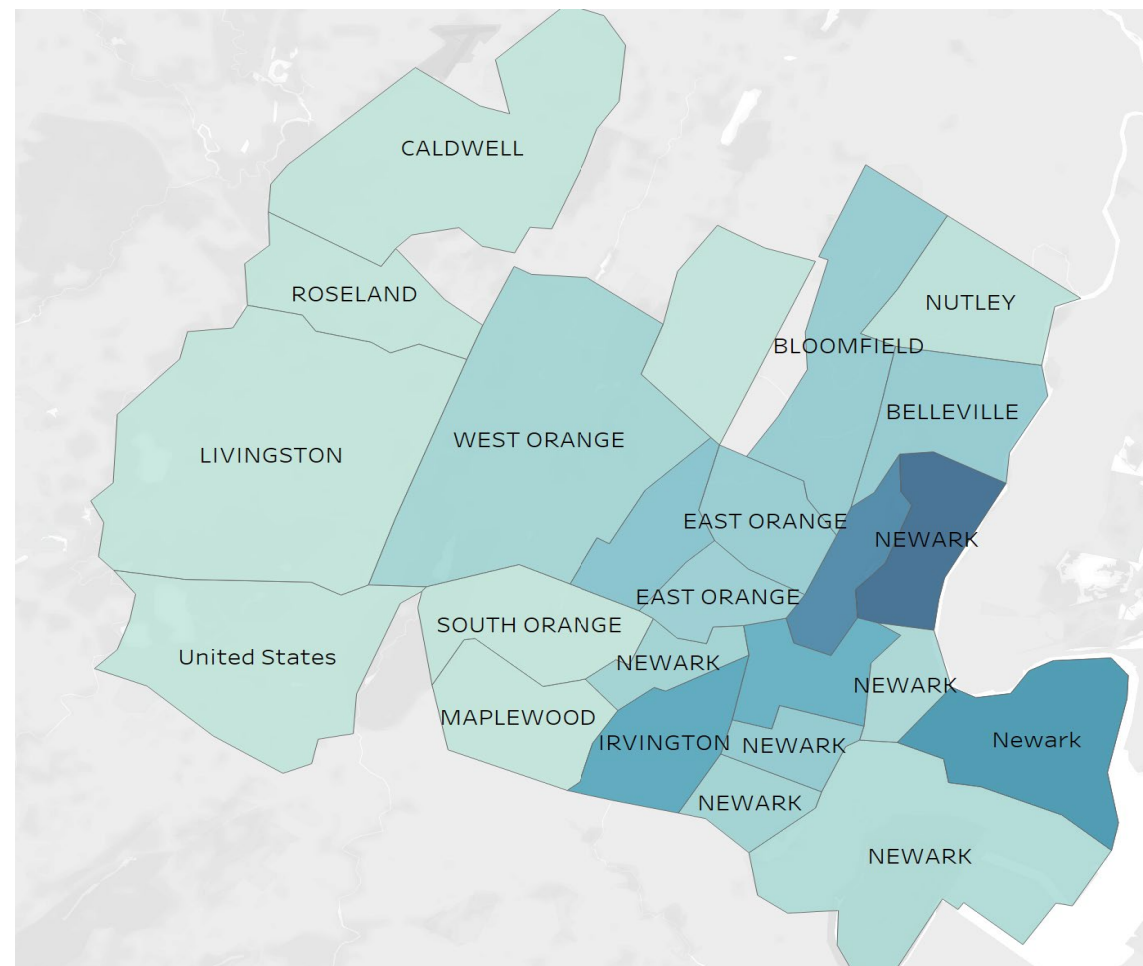


# HEAT MAP – SNAP Languages Served

## Haitian Creole



## Spanish



# Contact Information

## How to Reach Us!

**Anibal Ramos Jr., Director, Essex County - Department of Citizen Services**

[aramos@dedte.essexcountynj.org](mailto:aramos@dedte.essexcountynj.org)

**Richard Shannon, Administrative Supervisor, Essex County - Division of Family Assistance and Benefits**

[Rshannon@dfab.essexcountynj.org](mailto:Rshannon@dfab.essexcountynj.org)

**Christian J. Porter, Administrative Analyst, Essex County - Division of Family Assistance and Benefits**

[cporter@dfab.essexcountynj.org](mailto:cporter@dfab.essexcountynj.org) | Direct – 862-327-1660 | Work Cell – 973-524-3053

**Medicaid Info:** [Federal Changes to NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid](#) | [Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services](#)

# New Jersey's Food Security Strategic Plan





# New Jersey Food Security 3-Year Strategic Plan:

Plan and Implementation Planning Toolkit  
Overview

# New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA)

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The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) is currently the only food security advocacy office in the United States that is placed in the highest level of state government, the Governor's Office. Under the leadership of Governor Murphy and Speaker Coughlin, legislation was drafted to create OFSA in 2021 and the office began its work in September 2022.

# OFSA's Mandate

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“There is created in the Executive Branch of the State Government the Office of the Food Security Advocate... The office shall have the duty to collaborate with the appropriate State agency to:...

(f) cooperate with research organizations and universities to monitor ongoing **gap analysis** that identifies areas that are underserved by current food insecurity programs;

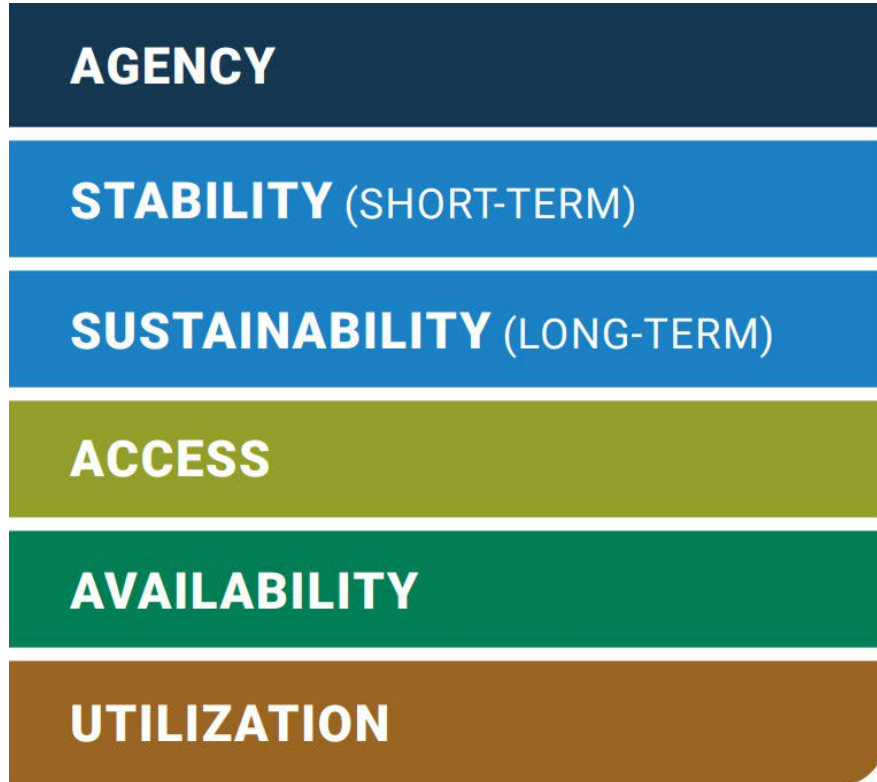
(g) work with State and community partners to develop a **strategic plan** to address identified gaps in areas that are underserved by current food insecurity program

”

# Community Building to Inform the Strategic Plan



# The Six Dimensions of Food Security



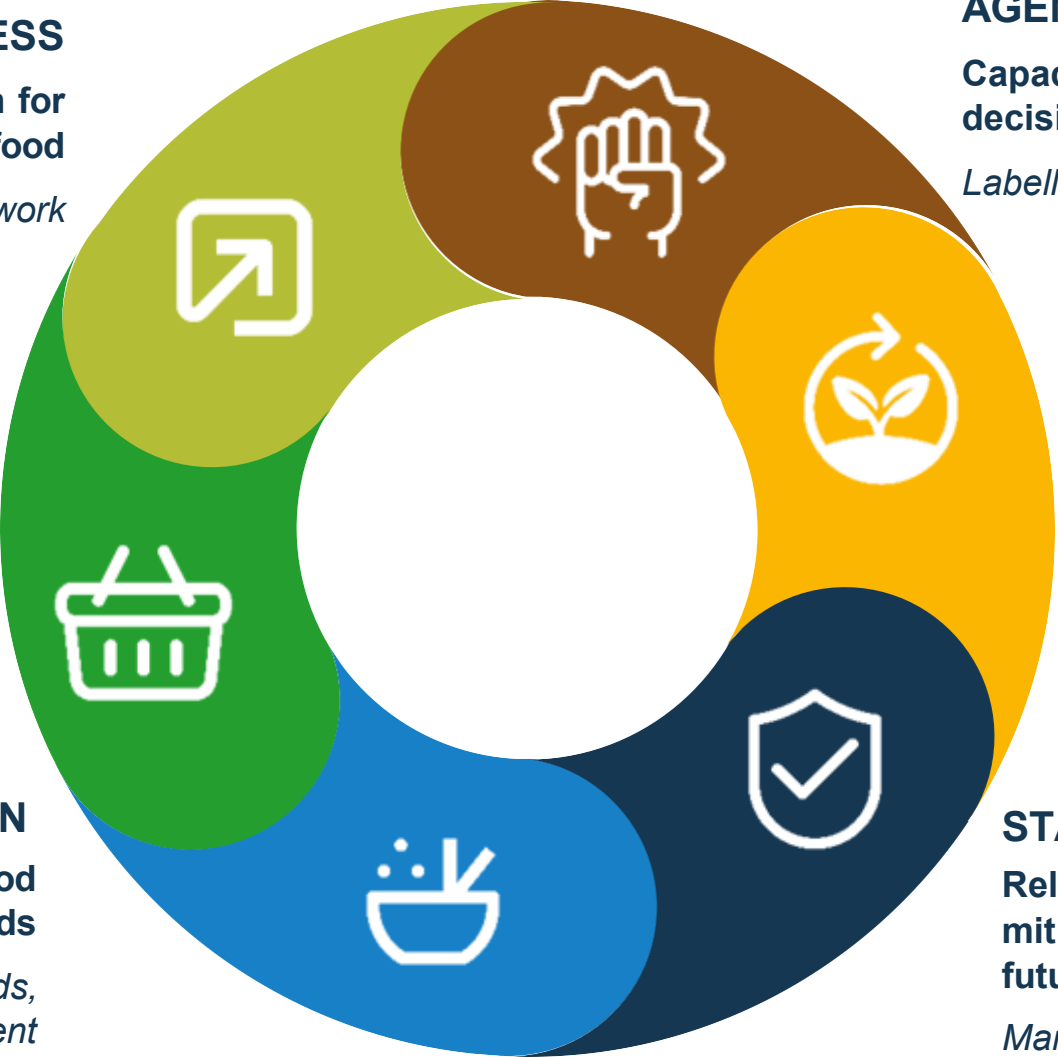
*"Food security exists when **all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.**"*

# Dimensions of Food Security

**ACCESS**  
Resources a household must obtain for appropriate and nutritious food  
*Finances, transportation, social network*

**AVAILABILITY**  
Sufficient and nutritious food physically present  
*Food deserts, store proximity*

**UTILIZATION**  
Intake of sufficient and safe food to meet nutritional needs  
*Food storage, dietary needs, cooking equipment*



**AGENCY**  
Capacity of individuals and groups to make decisions about, and participate in, food systems  
*Labelling and nutritional info, participatory research*

**SUSTAINABILITY**  
Food system practices that ensure food needs of the present are met without compromising the future  
*Diet sustainability, ecosystem sustainability, food waste*

**STABILITY**  
Reliable supply of foods over time to mitigate shocks in the near or immediate future  
*Market fluctuation, conflict, natural disaster*

# Strategic Plan

**NEW JERSEY**

## Food Security 3-Year Strategic Plan 2026

A COLLECTIVE, FOCUSED DIRECTION FOR ADVANCING MULTI-DIMENSIONAL FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL

Office of the Food Security Advocate

**Strategic Plan Development Process**

Model examples provided in the Focus Areas below provide the level of detail and information type that will be included for each specific tactic that will be included in the supplemental resources. The implementation Tactic will provide guidance and practice tools for organizations, coalitions, and sectors to implement relevant strategies through implementation tactics that take into account the assets, challenges, and priorities of their communities.

**FIGURE 9 | High-level timeline of the Strategic Plan development process activities**

ACTIVITIES	2024	2025	2026
Community Building	Jan	Feb	Mar
Research & Evidence Review	Jan	Feb	Mar
Executive Committee Expert Input	Jan	Feb	Mar
Executive Committee Meetings & Activities	Jan	Feb	Mar
Community Feedback and Resident Perspectives	Jan	Feb	Mar
Final Strategic Plan Launch	Jan	Feb	Mar
Implementation Tools	Jan	Feb	Mar

**Focus Areas and Strategies**

Having outlined the purpose, process, and Framework guiding this work, the following section represents the Strategic Plan Body that emerged from extensive community input, data analysis, and cross-sector collaboration. These are the core leverage points through which New Jersey can advance food security for everyone across the state.

This section describes the Strategic Plan's Focus Areas, details their accompanying Strategies, and provides model examples for select Strategies. The callouts at the end of this section summarize each strategy's ties to the Six Dimensions of Food Security Framework, the Exploring the Six Dimensions Report data, and implications for New Jersey.

**Each Focus Area's description contains:**

- Summary list of Strategies
- Overview of the Focus Area itself
- Gaps and needs justifying the Focus Area
- Anticipated impact by relevant food security dimension\*
- Sections likely involved in implementation
- Intended outcomes

**Introduction**

**The Six Dimensions of Food Security Framework**

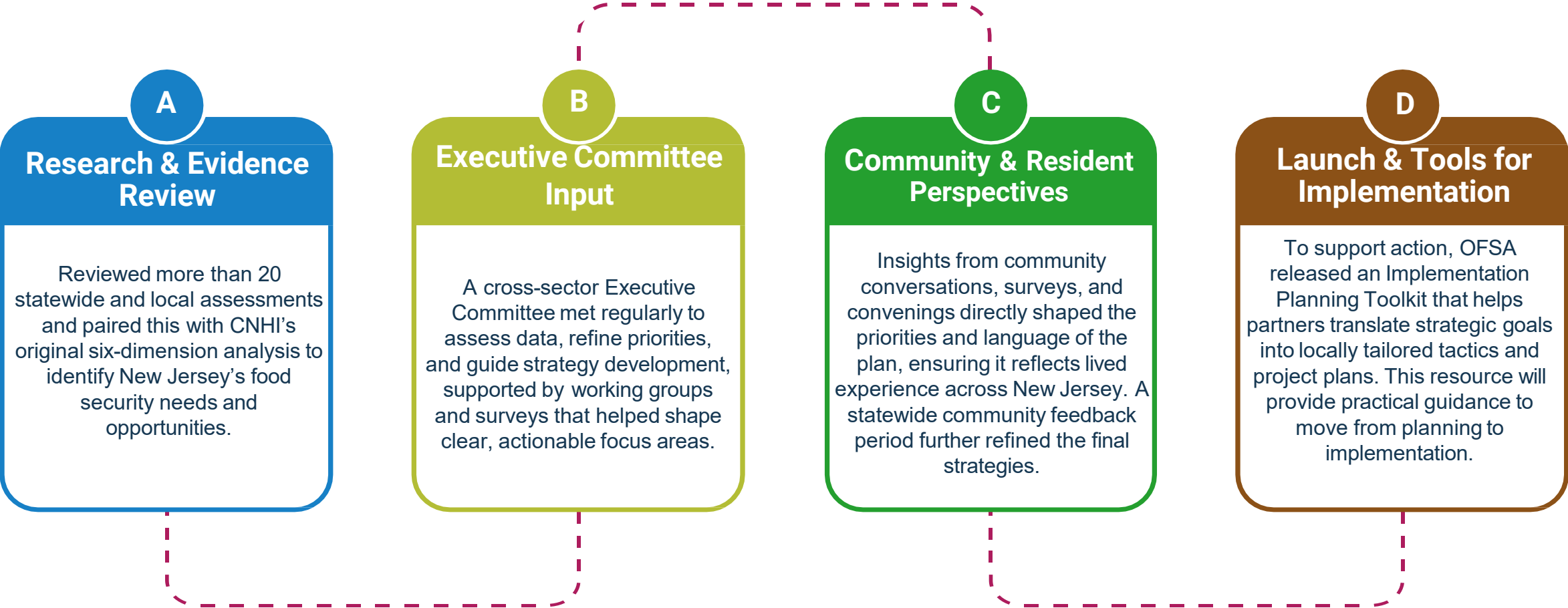
- ACCESSIBILITY**: Food security exists when all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, or income, have the resources, knowledge, and skills to obtain, prepare, and eat safe and nutritious food that meets their needs and preferences.
- AVAILABILITY**: Food security exists when all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, or income, have the resources, knowledge, and skills to obtain, prepare, and eat safe and nutritious food that meets their needs and preferences.
- DESIRABILITY**: Food security exists when all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, or income, have the resources, knowledge, and skills to obtain, prepare, and eat safe and nutritious food that meets their needs and preferences.
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# Strategic Plan Specificity and Audience

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# Strategic Plan Process



# Strategic Plan Focus Areas

1. Enhance Information Exchange and Access to Improve Public Awareness, Optimize Programs, and Support Data-Driven Decision-Making
2. Expand Community-Based Food Infrastructure and Market Channel Creation for Enhanced Ongoing Food Access and Availability
3. Build and Support Local Partnerships to Drive Community-led Food Security Approaches
4. Collaborate Across Sectors and Across State Agencies to Streamline and Strengthen Federal and State Food Security-Related Program Access and Delivery
5. Strengthen Food Systems Resiliency to Enhance Long-term Stability that Withstands Disruptions and Ensure Future Sustainability

View the Full  
Strategic Plan Here



# Implementation Toolkit

The image shows three devices displaying the Implementation Toolkit. The laptop screen shows a budget table, the tablet shows the title page, and the smartphone shows an introduction page.

Budget Category	Quantity	Rate / Cost per Unit	Total Cost	One-Time or Ongoing
<b>Personnel Expenses</b>				
Staffing			\$ -	
Fringe/Benefits			\$ -	
Consultants			\$ -	
<b>Program Expenses</b>				
Supplies				
Equipment				
Incentives				
Travel				
Space/Facilities				
Outreach				
<b>Communications</b>				
Translation/Interpretation				
Supplies				
Equipment				
<b>Data &amp; Evaluation</b>				
Incentives				
Transcription				
<b>Overhead/Admin</b>				
Technology				
Administrative/Indirect				
Rent/Lease				

**Office of the Food Security Advocate**

## NEW JERSEY FOOD SECURITY 3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

# Implementation Planning Toolkit

MARCH 2026

**INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW**

**Purpose of the Toolkit**

The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (NJ OFSA) and partners created the Data Access (DOA) Toolkit and the Strategic Plan (SP) to support food security efforts in New Jersey. The Strategic Plan established the overall direction for food security efforts in New Jersey.

There are five focus areas (FA) in the Strategic Plan. Each focus area has a set of strategies that support food security. <https://www.nj.gov/education/education-services/food-security/strategic-plan/> provides required actions. Further, an intent to be used as a flexible framework where communities can choose the strategies that best match their priorities and needs and then decide which tactics may be most impactful in meeting those priorities forward.

The New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan Implementation Planning Toolkit (this version) referred to as the Toolkit, provides you with the information you need to understand the Toolkit and how to use it. The Toolkit is designed to help you to implement the Toolkit in your community. If you are an individual or organization, you may want to refer to the Toolkit for more information. The Toolkit is designed to help you to understand the Toolkit and how to use it. The Toolkit is designed to help you to understand the Toolkit and how to use it.

**Moving from Strategies to Action: Focus of the Strategic Plan Framework**

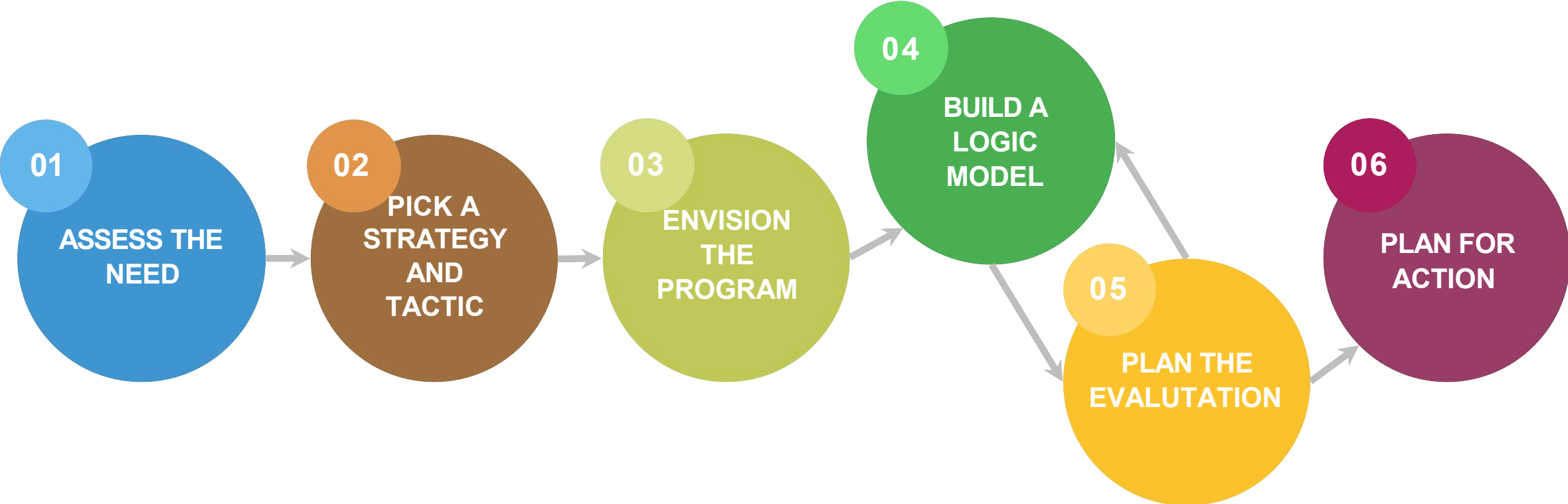
1 | <https://www.nj.gov/education/education-services/food-security/strategic-plan/>

# Using the Toolkit

## The Toolkit is:

- 01 Designed for all sectors and groups, anyone working to advance food security
- 02 Usable when planning new or documenting existing programs
- 03 Designed for planning one program at a time
- 06 Usable when completing the steps in order, or jumping to steps most relevant to your work
- 07 A resource for program planning, but not a requirement
- 08 A tool to connect local efforts to the broader statewide Food Security Strategic Plan movement

# Moving Strategy to Action: Toolkit 6-Step Process



# Structure of Each Step



Why the step is important and matters.



Collaborative tools and templates.



A checklist to complete the step.



Additional resources and support.



Key tips and questions to guide discussion and decisions.



A hypothetical model example of the step in practice.

# Step 2. Pick a Strategy & Tactic – Model Example

Tactics to Address Food Insecurity in New Jersey - Library of Examples							
Tactic Name	Tactic Description	Real-World Model Example(s)	Additional Information and Resources	This Tactic in the Scientific Literature	Focus Area(s)	Strategy(s)	Dimension(s)
Community and commercial kitchens	Community and commercial kitchens offer a licensed, fully equipped, shared-use space for small food business owners to produce their products at an affordable rental rate. Though most have the same core components, shared commercial kitchens can include a variety of programming and services, such as incubation services, business and food safety classes, co-packing services, food hubs, on-site retail, community supported agriculture programs, workforce training programs, and special events. To promote success, invest in partnerships with other community organizations and food businesses. A strong understanding of the local market is key when creating a shared kitchen and performing a feasibility study may be appropriate prior to starting the business. Commercial kitchens must comply with all applicable state and local codes and ordinances and maintain adequate food safety standards.	<a href="#">Cook Collective Kitchen</a> (Brooklyn, NY) <a href="#">Cherry Street Kitchen</a> (Mercer County, NJ) <a href="#">CommonWealth Kitchen</a> (Dorchester, MA)	<a href="#">Shared Kitchen Toolkit</a> <a href="#">Guidelines for Incubator Kitchens</a>	<p><a href="#">Thilmany D. et al. Economic opportunities in food entrepreneurship: survey of food businesses operating in shared-use commercial kitchens. Agricultural &amp; Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, 2022.</a>                      This study found that shared kitchens provide access to essential facilities, equipment, and professional services to start-up food businesses. Shared kitchens allow these businesses to 'prove' their business model and grow to a level where they can expand and hire employees.</p> <p><a href="#">Heine EM. Cooking together: form &amp; function of community kitchens as urban 'third places' promoting community wellbeing, 2024.</a>                      This study found that in addition to improving local food security, community kitchens can represent urban 'third spaces', serve as informal gathering spaces, and promote community well-being.</p>	2. Expand Community-...	2.4. Food Enter...	Availability
Community development financial institutions	Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) are banks, credit unions, loan/microloan funds, or venture capital providers that are designed to generate economic growth and opportunity for economically disadvantaged communities. They invest in local health centers, schools, or community centers and can help community members start businesses. CDFIs have several key components different from mainstream financial institutions, including, offering nonconforming mortgages or loans, making accounts available to customers with limited or poor credit history and having deep relationships with their customers and within the community, with a commitment to invest in economically disadvantaged communities. For example, New Jersey Community Capital is a CDFI in Middlesex County, New Jersey that offers a variety of services related to new market tax credits, affordable housing, small businesses and revitalizing communities within their jurisdiction. Like other financial institutions, CDFIs must follow the U.S. Department of the Treasury's regulations and best practices to ensure they meet financial and legal obligations.	<a href="#">Albany Community Together, Inc.</a> (Albany, GA) <a href="#">New Jersey Community Capital</a> (Middlesex County, NJ)	<a href="#">CDFI Searchable Awards Database</a>	<p><a href="#">Kolodinsky J. et al. Measuring economic and social impacts of membership in a community development financial institution. J Fam Econ Iss. 2006;27:27-47.</a>                      This study found that community development financial institutions (CDFIs) help members take control of their finances and have a sense of empowerment beyond their family's finances. The positive impacts of CDFIs were greater for lower income and less educated households, households with children, households that used more services, and households that recognized the importance of wealth and asset-building services.</p> <p><a href="#">Benjamin L. et al. Community Development Financial Institutions: Current Issues and Future Prospects. J Urban Aff. 2016;26(2):177-95.</a>                      This article describes the history of CDFIs and how CDFIs support basic financial services, affordable credit, and loan and equity capital for business development.</p>	2. Expand Community-...	2.4. Food Enter...	Access
Community gardens	Community gardens are spaces for local community members to grow food and flowers, and are powerful tools to support food access, environmental stewardship, and community health and well-being. Community gardens may be in urban or rural areas, at schools, daycares, senior centers, and public housing developments. When starting a community garden, it's important to consider location, zoning restrictions, and garden management. The garden plot should be sunny, have access to water, and have healthy soil (it can be helpful to conduct a soil test if you're unsure). Some municipalities have zoning districts that restrict agricultural activities, including urban agriculture and community gardens, so it is important to determine if your desired community garden site is zoned for agricultural activities. Determine a leadership and volunteer structure so that the community garden is effectively managed. A community garden best practice is to engage stakeholders in planning and coordination to ensure the garden meets the needs of the local community.	<a href="#">Grow NYC Community Gardens</a> (New York City, NY) <a href="#">Mindful Gardeners Program</a> (Los Angeles, CA)	<a href="#">Starting a Community Garden</a> <a href="#">Got Dirt? Garden Toolkit</a>	<p><a href="#">Butterfield KI, Daniels KP. Community gardens support stress coping and health - a comparison of rural and urban perceptions of benefits. Wellbeing, Space and Society. 2025; 9:100297.</a>                      This study found that urban community garden organizers feel that urban gardening promotes wellbeing through interactions with nature, and that rural organizers feel that rural community gardens promote social connectedness.</p> <p><a href="#">Hug FF, Deacon L. A systematic review of community gardens and their role in urban food security and resilience. Discov Sustain. 2025;6 (696).</a>                      This systematic review found that community gardens contribute to urban greening, food security, sustainability, and improved social and individual well-being. However, gaps remain with inequitable access, governance, and participation among marginalized communities.</p>	2. Expand Community-... 3. Build and Support L...	2.1. Food Acces... 3.1. Tailored Ed... 2.3. Market Cha...	Availability Access Utilization Agency Sustainability Stability

# Moving Strategy to Action: Example

01

## Assess the Need

- Need: Limited access to quality, fresh produce in pantries across the county
- Community Asset: Farmer network with excess, imperfect produce
- Focus Area 5: Strengthen Food System Resiliency

02

## Pick a Strategy & Tactic

- Strategy: Sustainable Food Procurement and Waste Diversion
- Tactic: Gleaning, gathering or harvesting leftover or imperfect foods from and farms

03

## Envision the Program

- Host producer trainings on gleaning; provide regular produce pick-up; train volunteer base and host events to support gleaning

04

## Build a Logic Model

- Inputs/Activities: Food expertise, pantry & producer partnerships, vehicle for pick-ups
- Outputs: # of producer trainings, # of volunteers, # of pickups, lbs of produce distributed
- Outcomes: Increase in produce availability

05

## Plan the Evaluation

- Process Question: Were the inputs sufficient?
- Outcome Question: What difference do these services make?

06

## Plan for Action

- Timeline: Gantt chart with activities and roles
- Budget: program expenses for key categories
- Action Plan: Pulling together key decisions made throughout the toolkit into a clear program plan

# Building a Brand & Creating Culture



**Connection**



**Collaboration**



**Consensus**