



# Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Feb 24, 2022 | [Distribution & Access Subcommittee Meeting](#)

Attendees: [Megan Bluthardt Holmes](#), [Ayesha Annmarie Hart-Bookbinder](#), [Diana Taylor Dodo Farms](#), [Vanessa Calaban -MDEM-](#), [Nancy K Nunn](#), [Cleo Braver](#)

## Action items

- Subcommittee members should choose which of the identified 'parking lot' items they want to work on:
  - Assessing availability of food items versus need, demand, and feasibility through focus groups and surveys
  - Incorporating food assistance mechanisms into new and existing resiliency hub models

10:00 am: Welcome

1. Began the meeting with a discussion about black land access and potential speakers for a Lunch&Learn on this topic

10:05 am: Review of ["Parking Lot Resources"](#) shared document

1. Item 1 - can we make sure everyone is receiving food across Maryland equally?
  - a. Call on organizations to share knowledge - Dreaming Out Loud, which works on issues in DC, could be a good model
2. Item 4: Low-income/food desert areas
  - a. Fair Housing Action - working on fair/affordable housing issues, but also providing wraparound services and information for clients
  - b. Baltimore County recently launched a pilot program to target food desert areas with shuttle services to grocery stores - can we expand on this idea?



- i. Shuttle to not just grocery stores but farmers markets as well, paying attention to locations that offer fresh produce and culturally appropriate food choices
3. Other topics of discussion:
  - a. Speak up about race issues - because this is an election year, what is the plan of candidates for issues around environmental justice, racism in the food system, etc.
  - b. Need for a grants specialist or individual to help advise farmers in applying for grants, financing, etc.
    - i. Racial bias in grant application process
    - ii. Language (grammar, vocabulary) used in application, zip code, etc. can be used against certain applicants, perceived as “less educated” despite having all the requisite knowledge to successfully run agricultural operations (ie. grant reviewers are looking for a certain language, not required knowledge)
  - c. How do we tackle this?
    - i. Call it out - create the discomfort, make people understand the issue and the pain it causes - hold people accountable for their actions or inactions
    - ii. State level - is there an office or ombudsperson to talk to about discrepancies in grant funding to farmers of color?
  - d. Food assistance providers - how can we make it easier to get assistance to people, and how can we lift the barriers to accessing programs?



## #2 Focus groups

1. When clients go to food pantries/food banks, are they seeing food they want to eat? If not, what are those items and how can we provide them?
2. Identify organizations, groups - get a good cross-section of MD - adjust for language, race, rural, city, age, etc
  - a. Include seniors, people with intellectual disabilities
  - b. Warm Line - AA Co, during COVID, people could call with problems accessing services - capturing that data/information
3. Fears about documentation/immigration status - does this impact use of services/benefits?
  - a. Partner with immigrant service/assistance organizations to help new arrivals
- 4. Determine outcomes/objectives to help guide discussions and planning**
5. See if there are other orgs that are already working on focus groups
6. Identify funding sources to give incentives for participants

## #6 Resilience Hubs

1. Montgomery County model: COVID Service Consolidation Hubs - to connect with other services (food, diapers, formula, wraparound services to connect people with benefits and services they need)
2. Baltimore City model: traditional resilience hub program: known community locations that provide access to critical



lifeline services (electricity, food, communications, etc) on gray- or black-sky days

**3. Create a model/stand/best practice or evaluation tool for a food-inclusive resiliency hub**

4. How do we consolidate efforts/focus our intentions?
5. Areas without official hub - provide assistance to identify potential hub location
6. Identify stakeholders in the community who can contribute to the Resilience Hubs... wrap around services + food.
7. Identify funding available to the stakeholders for commodities and trainings.
  - a. Training and education for the community to ensure ALL community members have access to the services and commodities (regardless of immigration status).
8. Can we tie #2 into #6?
  - a. The hubs can be the main location and the orgs in the community can be a network. But without the main place to start from, we have a fractured network.



## Subcommittee Members

<b>Distribution and Access</b>	
<i>Every other Thursday at 1pm (beginning 1/13)</i>	
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## Subcommittee Assigned Areas of Focus

<b>Distribution and Access</b>
Addressing and eliminating racial inequalities in the food system
Addressing and eliminating diet-related public health disparities
Addressing and eliminating food deserts
Creating additional market opportunities for Maryland food businesses