



OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon

PLAN TO END HUNGER 2019-2022





VISION

We envision an Oregon where everyone is healthy and thriving, with access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

While Oregon has several times been ranked as the state with the highest rate of hunger, we are also known for leading with innovative ideas, bipartisan commitment to the issue, and a willingness to tackle the deep, thorny root causes of hunger while mobilizing to meet the immediate need.

Oregon shouldn't settle for anything less than achieving the lowest rate of hunger in the US.



THE PLAN

The Oregon Hunger Task Force was created by the State Legislature in 1989 to act as a resource within government and as a statewide advocate for Oregonians who are at risk of hunger. When the Task Force was created, the Oregon Legislature declared that “All persons have the right to be free from hunger.”

This cross-sector group has worked over the past 30 years to hold the state accountable to this bold statement, setting a clear roadmap for the changes and investments that need to be made to make progress. The Task Force works collaboratively among its 28 members and with stakeholders throughout Oregon to compile research on the status of hunger and develop proposals for government action. Through the linked non-profit, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon, a staff of eleven works statewide to promote community awareness, connect people to nutrition programs, and advocate for systemic changes to prevent hunger.

The Oregon Hunger Task Force has developed the following plan with recommendations to Oregon's leaders that - if enacted - will bring us closer to our vision of an Oregon that is hunger-free and thriving.

In this plan we have set three goals for the state:

- 1. Oregonians have equitable access to the resources and opportunity we need to afford life's essentials.**
- 2. Nutritious food is accessible to everyone and nutrition support programs are adequate, effective and equitable when we need them.**
- 3. People most impacted by hunger are leaders in designing and enacting solutions.**

For each goal we offer public policy solutions, long term recommendations, and ways to measure progress.

THE NEED

Hunger is decreasing in Oregon. Yet it is still persistently and unacceptably high. We are worse-off than the national average and have the highest hunger rate in the northwest.

One in five kids in Oregon lives in a household that struggles to afford food, as do one in six seniors. Despite low unemployment, Oregon's food insecurity rate has yet to return to pre-recession levels. Disparities remain: renters are seven times more likely to experience hunger. People in rural areas, and households led by people of color, Black and African-Americans, Native Americans, and Latinx people, and single mothers experience hunger at disproportionately high rates.

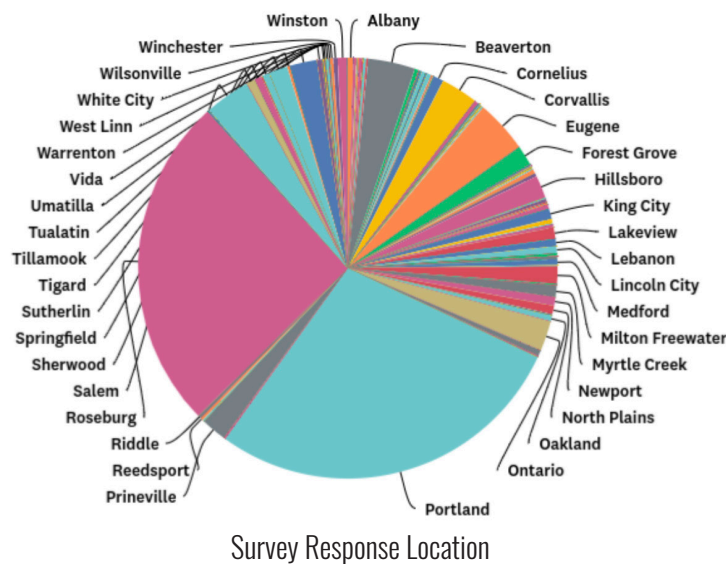
A full-time job is often not enough to get out of poverty. Too many Oregonians are forced to make impossible choices between basics like rent, child care, and food. Even at near "full-employment" in our state, the high costs of living means workers with low wages and people on fixed incomes have difficulty making ends meet.

SOLUTIONS

The Oregon Hunger Task Force has developed a series of comprehensive multi-year plans since 2005 to address hunger. The recommendations are long-term and address the root causes of the issue, while also pointing to concrete policy changes. Every few years the strategies are updated to reflect the changing realities people face--the economy, shifts in policies, new research.

Our first step in updating this plan was to ask Oregonians what they thought. We posed the question, "Out of all of the people in Oregon, 560,000 of us don't always have the food we need. **Thinking about your own community, what are 3 things that would make it easier for more neighbors to make ends meet?**"

We heard back from over 900 people, from 39 towns and cities in every corner of the state. The majority of people who shared their ideas--67% - had faced hunger themselves in the past twelve months. We heard from a large number of seniors, as well as families raising young children.



Demographically, respondents roughly resemble Oregon's population: 77% of respondents identified as white, 9% as Latinx, 7% Native American, 2.5% Black or African American, 2.5% Asian and 2% as Pacific Islander. People of color, however, disproportionately experience hunger at rates two to three times that of white Oregonians, and more work needs to be done to highlight specific solutions from communities who feel the burden of hunger most acutely.

“Greater job availability and pay anywhere nearby...it has been unreasonably difficult to get a decent job and continue to support a family in ‘Hometown’, Oregon.”

Survey Respondent

The issues raised make it plain that the affordability of food is linked to the availability of work that pays well, a home that doesn't break your budget, childcare you trust, transportation within your community, education you can afford and that connects you to a career, accommodations for your disability, choices in where you buy groceries, and food assistance options that meet your needs. We also heard clearly and repeatedly that people who are facing hunger crave respect, dignity and to be heard with understanding and empathy.

The responses made it clear that to care deeply about hunger requires us also to care deeply about poverty, identity, agriculture, education, immigration, economics, race, geography, family, public health, justice and community.

“Better pay for jobs (equal pay would be nice) and benefits for those needing to cobble together multiple jobs. Fixing the broken and racist systems that keep Black and Brown folks in poverty.”

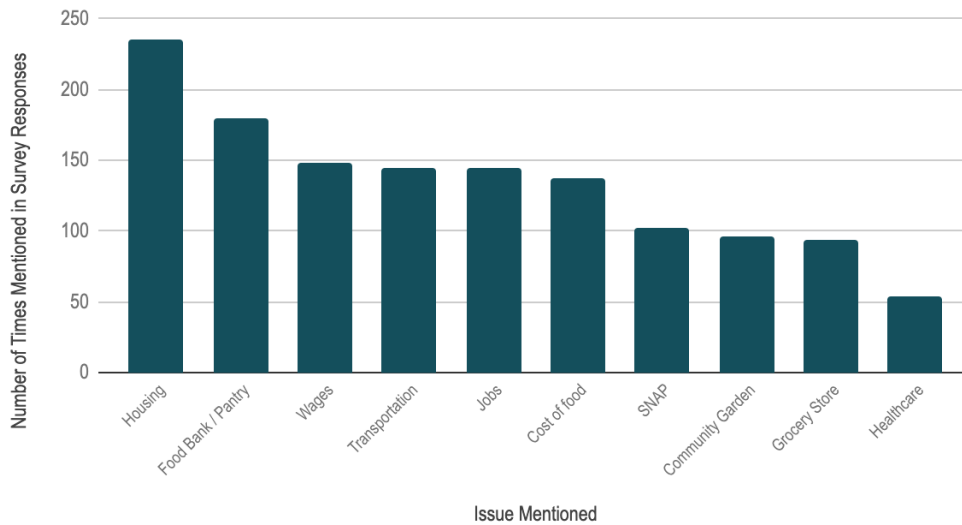
Survey Respondent

We also traveled to several communities to hear from local partners working to address hunger and asked **“What do you want the state to know about hunger in your community? What do you want lawmakers to do?”**

The responses mapped to the wide variety of situations people face that lead to hunger, and also surfaced many common ideas for solutions. They teased out the levels of change needed, from the individual, to the local community, to state and federal policy changes.

***“Access to education.
Accessibility to stores/transportation.
More/enough stores in all neighborhoods.
More food stamps or something similar but different, better eligibility requirements.
Remove the stigma around being poor”***

Survey Respondent



Top Issues Mentioned by Survey Respondents

WHY IT MATTERS FOR OREGON

We're all at our best when we have enough to eat, but there are times in many people's lives when it's hard to afford healthy food and to make ends meet.

Nutritious food helps babies hit milestones, fuels kids as they learn and grow, reduces the chances of chronic disease in adults and makes it more likely seniors are healthy and independent.

Our state has set ambitious goals to respond to the most pressing issues facing Oregonians. The affordability of housing. Achieving success in education. Access to healthcare. Economic vitality and a strong workforce. Closing disparities so that everyone in our state has equitable opportunities and outcomes regardless of race or gender, disability or zip code.

Each of these priorities are interconnected with hunger. **The state will be in the best position to achieve its goals, and individuals are most likely to succeed, when the issues of poverty and hunger are tackled holistically and are included in discussions about housing, healthcare, employment and education.**

“Most people are one paycheck away from homelessness if something major happens. I’m homeless! Things need to change!! We aren’t free when it comes to making a living!”

Survey Respondent

GOALS, RECOMMENDATIONS & MEASUREMENTS

GOAL 1: Oregonians have equitable access to the resources and opportunities we need to afford life's essentials.

Rationale

Economic stability is the most effective permanent solution to food insecurity. Hunger is a symptom of poverty. If all working families and individuals earned enough to meet basic expenses, the need for food assistance and other social services would be dramatically reduced. For those with barriers to work or not of employment age, effective supports should ensure their wellbeing. Oregonians also need savings to carry them through difficult times.

“Drivers Licenses for everyone regardless of legal status.”

Survey Respondent

Economic security, measured both by income and assets, must be more equitably experienced across Oregon's population. Some communities have been historically excluded from opportunities to build prosperity by a legacy of discrimination. Both economic opportunities and social structures need to be improved to counter the resulting income inequality in our state.

When the state, families and individuals are financially stable, we can rebound more quickly when faced with an economic crisis.

Public Policy Recommendations to Strengthen Economic Stability for Families and Communities

- Renew and Raise Oregon's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Enact a Paid Family Leave Insurance Program
- Boldly address Oregon's affordable housing crisis
- Boost access to Employment-Related Day Care (ERDC)
- Strengthen services for families with highest barriers in the TANF program
- Address gaps in services related to Federal rule and policy changes

“Easier access to housing services, if you don't have a safe home, it's near impossible to do the work necessary to survive.”

Survey Respondent

Long term recommendations

1. Support accessibility of **living wage jobs for all Oregonians** through effective pathways for work readiness like higher education and vocational training, and practical supports for workers.
2. Ensure reforms to Oregon’s tax and revenue policy that result in **a system that is stable, non-regressive, and sustainable.**

“Universal Health Care - Truly affordable health care would help people make “ends meet”, since so many of us are under water paying medical bills.”

Survey Respondent

“Jobs that pay a little more than just enough to barely make bills. Then we would be able to provide better for our family.”

Survey Respondent

3. Strengthen policies and programs that **help families afford basics** like housing, child care and transportation.
4. Ensure state policies and practices **address disparities caused by discrimination** in settings like education, healthcare, housing, employment and wages, and criminal justice.
5. Support a **healthcare system that provides excellent, affordable care to all Oregonians** and creates connections between health and access to nutrition.

Long term measures

- Food insecurity is reduced
- Poverty rates are reduced
- Close disparities in poverty and hunger by race, gender and geography
- Increase in state investments in anti-poverty programs and increase the percent of people in poverty benefitting from them
- Increase number of healthcare providers utilizing food security screenings and providing patients with interventions such as outreach materials or on-site food distribution

GOAL 2: Nutritious food is accessible to everyone and nutrition support programs are adequate, effective and equitable when we need them.

Rationale

Everyone deserves to be free from hunger. People in every community in Oregon need affordable places to buy or grow nutritious food and our food system is healthiest when it's accessible to everyone.

“Being able to do the food pantry at least 2x a month (single moms); open more days a week or twice a day; single moms get more food and kid section with more kid foods.”

Survey Respondent

Those of us who fall on hard times face the challenge of making ends meet until our circumstances turn around. Food budgets are usually the first thing we cut. Some Oregonians, such as single parents, seniors on a fixed income and people living with a disability may face this challenge each month. For others, like immigrants and people with barriers to work, access to food assistance is being curtailed by federal policies.

Addressing hunger means ensuring all Oregonians can access food assistance when we need it. Yet too many of us are being left out. Strong nutrition support programs that address both short term and prolonged conditions of hunger, and fully maximizing state and local resources, can ensure no one goes a day without food.

“Stigma free access to nutritious food, many choices of economical food to fit preferences, allergies and cultural differences”

Survey Respondent

Public Policy Recommendations to Address Hunger in Oregon

- Create Hunger-Free Schools by expanding Universal Meals and Breakfast after the Bell
- Extend nutrition assistance to five-year olds for kindergarten readiness (WIC-to-6)
- Continue investing in the Oregon Hunger Response Fund
- Continue investing in the Farm Direct Nutrition Program for seniors and families with kids
- Renew the Crop Donation Tax Credit
- Increase access to nutrition programs for college students
- Support “SNAP Match” at Farmers’ Markets through Double-Up Food Bucks

Long term recommendations

1. Advance a federal policy agenda to **adjust the income eligibility for nutrition assistance**, so a higher percentage of people benefit, or establish policies for state-level programs to fill the gap. Oppose federal policies that are creating barriers to access for immigrant communities.
2. Use state resources to broaden the eligibility guidelines and **improve the benefit level of SNAP for persistently underserved groups** such as college students, immigrants and people with barriers to work.
3. Address childhood hunger by increasing the capacity of child nutrition programs to **ensure year-round access to nutritious food at no charge** and increase participation in WIC.
4. **Overcome barriers for seniors and people with disabilities** by increasing the capacity of congregate feeding sites, home delivered grocery and meal services, and mobile pantries.
5. Support the Oregon Food Bank Statewide Network and partner agencies in **building resilient, client-focused, healthy programs**.
6. **Expand geographic access to affordable and nutritious food**. Ensure investment in public transportation is targeted within communities with high food insecurity, particularly those with limited locations of grocery stores, farmers markets, community gardens and food pantries.
7. **Build the health of the food system** through public policies targeted to benefit those at risk of hunger, for example incentivising farmers to donate crops to food banks, supporting farm to school, and boosting people's purchasing power to buy local produce through SNAP Match and WIC Farm Direct programs.

“DHS could up the allotment on the SNAP program. Give them more food - food is expensive.”

Survey Respondent

Long term measures

- Get to 0% Very Low Food Insecurity (also known as Hunger)
- Ensure all those who are food insecure are eligible for public nutrition assistance
- Close gaps between those who are eligible and the % participating
- Increase food services in underserved communities geographically and demographically

GOAL 3: People most impacted by hunger are leaders in designing and enacting solutions.

Rationale

Those of us who have personally experienced poverty and faced hunger are in the best position to develop solutions. From identifying causes, pointing out hurdles to program access and designing improvements, people with lived experience are vital leaders in ending hunger in our state. There is also a growing understanding of what supports are needed in order for participation on an advisory body, advocating for change or even voting truly accessible for those facing hunger and poverty.

“Ask those most in need. Support them. Give them what they need.”

Survey Respondent

Lawmakers, state agencies, social services and advocates can do more to ensure there are opportunities for constituents to share their insight and lead decision making. The Oregon Hunger Task Force can help share best practices and track the level of community engagement.

Long term recommendations

1. Build accountability mechanisms into anti-poverty and nutrition programs, like client advisory bodies, surveys and participant feedback, to ensure regular review and input by those experiencing hunger and poverty.
2. Increase civic engagement of people in poverty by removing barriers to registering to vote and participating in elections.

Long Term Measures

- Voter registration rates improve for people in poverty
- Every key statewide anti-hunger program, whether run by public entities or non-profits, has an accountability mechanism for people with personal experience of hunger, or utilizing their program, to provide input and program review

“If neighbors who need help know they’re not alone, they’re more likely to reach out. Even when I was hungry and having all sorts of issues I knew about services but was stubborn/shy/worried. I wouldn’t be now after several life lessons...Taking away the shame--telling people we all have problems...makes people more likely to say they need help.”

Survey Respondent



Thank you to the members of the Oregon Hunger Task Force for committing time and and thoughtfulness to developing recommendations and policy solutions to the root causes of hunger.

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Our utmost thanks goes out to the hundreds of Oregonians who invested their time, wisdom and heart into sharing what changes need to be made so more people in their community can make ends meet, especially those who have faced hunger in their own lives. We are honored you trusted us with your experiences and truths, and hope this plan helps move our state to take bold actions worthy of your hopes—one that is more just and equitable, and free from hunger.



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