

# Montgomery County Food Security Plan

## Listening Session Guidelines

### ***Food Security Plan Overview***

In July 2016, Montgomery County Council unanimously passed [Bill 19-16](#), *Strategic Plan to Achieve Food Security in Montgomery County*, directing the County's Office of Innovation to lead a collaborative initiative to create a strategic plan to bring food security to all County residents.

The Innovation Program of Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Food Council, in collaboration with a wide variety of County and regional stakeholders, are creating the Food Security Plan in the pursuit of this shared vision: *Our community is a place where all people at all times have access to safe, sufficient, nutritious food in order to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to making Montgomery County, Maryland a place where all live in dignity*. In addition, the completed Food Security Plan will link County dollars spent on food assistance to the metrics defined in the plan, and it will guide nonprofits seeking food assistance grant funding from the County.

The Food Security Plan will include recommended actions for a five year period and extensive demographic and geographic information on poverty, food assistance program participation, and information on the relationship of transportation and food literacy to food insecurity. This plan is essential to the development of a better understanding of current food security initiatives, identification of existing gaps and overlaps, and maximization of the impact of the funding invested in food system work. Montgomery County is uniquely positioned to be a regional and national leader in alleviating hunger and creating a truly sustainable local food system. Through the creation of this Food Security Plan, we can move forward with a more efficient strategy to address food insecurity and the related issues affecting our residents.

### ***Listening Sessions Goals and Guidelines***

Engaging and incorporating the valuable perspectives of a wide range of strategic partners is essential to the success of this County-wide effort. In order to solicit direct feedback from as many residents and communities as possible, County nonprofits, government agencies, and other partners are asked to host listening sessions with their clients and within their communities before October 15th. Office of Innovation and Food Council staff will plan to attend sessions and provide support as requested.

### ***Before the Session***

- Notify Brandon Bedford ([brandon.bedford@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:brandon.bedford@montgomerycountymd.gov)) with the details of the session (date, time, location, expected attendance).
- Let us know of any support needed. Support available includes: facilitation and/or translation services; reimbursement for documented purchases of participation

incentives (such as gift cards) up to \$300; and administrative support (such as advance registration).

- A representative of the Food Security Plan team will attend the meeting to provide facilitation and note-taking support as needed.
- Scheduled listening sessions will be advertised publicly unless requested otherwise.

### ***After the Session***

Our staff will incorporate summarized input and feedback collected during your session into the plan's development. We also encourage you to submit any additional input for the plan from your organization via email or our online survey.

### ***Suggested Listening Session Introduction***

"We and others in the County are hosting a series of these listening sessions to talk with Montgomery County residents to hear from you what is working well and what is not working so well in terms of your ability to find and use the types of foods you want to eat. The information that you provide will be kept confidential, and we will never identify participants by name when we summarize all the comments.

Additionally, the survey that you were given when you arrived will help us gather general information about who is in the room. We do not want participants to put your name on the form in order to protect privacy. All information that participants are willing to provide will be kept confidential.

The information shared in the discussion will be put together with comments from participants in other listening sessions. We will use the information participants provide to identify the reasons why residents cannot always get healthy food in our County's communities, and to develop a plan with the goal of making it easier for residents to find affordable, healthy food items in their communities. Once we have completed all the listening sessions and gathered all of the comments, we will hold a public meeting to report the findings and ask for feedback on our recommendations."

### ***Suggested Potential Questions***

- Where do you shop for your food?
- Are there places other than stores where you get your food?
- How do you travel to where you get your food? How long does it take you to get there?
- How often do you buy food from stores or get food from other sources?
- How often do you prepare your food at home? Are there barriers that prevent you from cooking at home?
- What influences your decisions on what types of food you buy and where you buy it?
- Who in your household buys or obtains food for your household?
- Have you ever shopped at a farmer's market? Why/why not?

- Is it important to you that food is grown in the local area? Why/why not?
- If you knew someone was in need of food what suggestions would you give them?
- What do you believe are the most important strategies in addressing hunger in our County? Examples:
  - Creating jobs and raising wages
  - Improve access to reasonably priced, healthy food
  - Target support to vulnerable populations
- How could food assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, Child Nutrition) be strengthened? Increased funding, participation, retail options, etc.?