



2025 LOCAL FOOD Initiative



King County



**Food
Access**

(Access the full report)



Food Access goal:

Ensure equitable access to affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food

Food access means that people, families, and communities can acquire, afford, and prepare the food they want to eat. Food access depends on food security, which means that everyone, at all times, can obtain enough affordable, safe, healthy

food to meet their needs and preferences for an active,

healthy life. In many cases, lack of food access is linked to a history of unfair and discriminatory treatment, resulting in low incomes, limited job opportunities, unequal education, unstable housing, limited transportation, and racial inequity. Achieving food access for all will take focused community outreach, strategic advocacy, and institutional development guided by the people most affected, creating a future where everyone can enjoy more local and nutritious food.

The 2024–2025 King County Community Health Needs Assessment found that “growing numbers of community members do not have enough resources to meet their basic needs,” including food. The biggest barriers are the high cost of food, the cost of transportation, limited land availability for growing food, and lack of access to supportive services and resources. From 2018 to 2022, about 9.5% of adults in King County experienced food insecurity, meaning they did not always know where their next meal would come from. However, food insecurity is not experienced equally by all, and many social factors contribute to who is hungry and who is not. Food insecurity in King County is experienced by 30.3% of Native and Indigenous adults, 27.7% of Hispanic/Latino adults,

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Stocking up the Tukwila Pantry

Food Access goals continued

25.6% of Black/African American adults, and 19% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander adults. Feeding America estimates that to close this gap, King County would need more than \$216 million per year to ensure everyone has enough to eat.

Federal food assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC support residents in meeting their food needs. As of August 2025, 125,000 households in King County (or 11% of all households) are receiving SNAP benefits. South King County has areas nearly three times this rate with some ZIP codes having around 30% receiving SNAP benefits. Community members also seek food assistance through a range of food access programs. A 2023 study identified 50 food banks, 97 meal delivery programs, and 65 community organizations providing food sources for food insecure individuals and families.

Food access emerged as the top priority for residents across King County. Feedback from surveys and listening sessions pointed to significant barriers that prevent people from accessing affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food. Participants stressed the importance of making healthy food more available and affordable, strengthening food assistance programs, and increasing nutrition education in places where families regularly access food and other resources. They also called for more spaces and resources for people to grow their own food. Over half (52%) of survey respondents said food is too expensive. This is compounded by rising living costs that make healthy, local, and culturally relevant foods even harder to access. *Ensuring everyone has access to affordable, healthy food emerged as the top overall priority in community input findings.*

The food access goal focuses on ensuring equitable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food. The goal's objectives are to strengthen community-guided food access programs, expand affordable and culturally relevant food with nutrition education, improve equitable distribution, and support community-based production, including foraging, fishing, and hunting.



Food Access actions



= Top 10 priority actions

Goal: Ensure equitable access to affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food

Objective 1: Strengthened local food access programs, outreach, and advocacy, informed by the communities that they serve

- 1.1 Increase funding for food access programs and organizations, including support for operations, service coordination, resource sharing, and infrastructure.
- 1.2 Increase coordination across the system by providing food assistance application support by linking food access organizations with Public Health's Access and Outreach Team.
- 1.3 Increase use of food assistance programs, such as SNAP, WIC, by:
 - broadening education and outreach by local agencies and partners for residents; and
 - growing the number of physical and online local food retailers who accept food assistance benefits by providing technical assistance, training, and resources.
- 1.4 Raise government and elected official awareness of the scale and causes of food insecurity, including identifying local investment opportunities to improve food security.
- 1.5 Increase the access to and use of local food in schools, through technical and resource assistance (such as grants).
- 1.6 Increase the use of food-as-medicine interventions (e.g., produce prescriptions, medically tailored groceries) by developing pilot projects and providing funding to scale existing programs.
- 1.7 Increase programs to recover food, including gleaning.

Objective 2: Strengthened access to locally grown, culturally relevant food and increased nutrition education that promotes healthy eating and self-sufficiency

- 2.1 Expand school-based nutrition and food system education for youth and their families, including school gardens, field trips, youth ag education programs like Future Farmers of America, and family programs.
- 2.2 Expand community-led nutrition, gardening, and cooking programs.
- 2.3  Develop long-term, sustainable funding for farm-to-community and food access programs, helping them purchase food from local producers, including forward contracting agreements.
- 2.4  Increase voucher and incentive programs for community members to purchase local foods at farmers markets, CSAs, farm stands, local stores, mobile markets, and community organizations.

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*Food Access actions continued***Objective 3: Increased access to and equitable distribution of affordable food**

- 3.1 Increase community-informed food distribution, including centralized and decentralized sites, grocery-style pantries, delivery services, and co-location with trusted institutions.
- 3.2 Expand public transit solutions that link residents in underserved areas to food access and other basic needs locations.
- 3.3 Enlarge the farmers markets network and support existing farmers markets, including technical and financial assistance for their operational capacity, outreach, and food assistance programs.
- 3.4  **Develop more community-driven food retail models such as mobile markets, pantries, stores, or locker systems prioritizing free and discounted nutritious, locally sourced food.**

Objective 4: Strengthened community-based food production, including subsistence foraging, fishing, and hunting

- 4.1 Increase integration of community gardens, food forests, and orchards into public and private land by supporting community partnerships with technical and financial assistance.
- 4.2 Promote home food production, including backyard, balcony, indoor gardening and other small-scale cultivation by providing education and resources.
- 4.3 Address regulatory barriers that restrict safe, sustainable urban food production and foraging such as urban farms, food forests, gardens, and backyard livestock.
- 4.4 Increase education about food safety, liability protections, and legal allowances related to growing, fishing, foraging, hunting, and donating or sharing food.
- 4.5 Collaborate with Native and Indigenous communities and organizations to set priorities for restoring culturally significant foods and landscapes and integrate traditional ecological knowledge into planning.
- 4.6 Support the restoration of Indigenous-led food landscapes to grow and process traditional crops.

Food access programs are delivered by a wide range of community partners, including food banks and meal programs, grassroots and mutual aid groups, schools and educational programs, businesses, cultural and Indigenous communities, and local governments.