



The Power of Local Food Systems

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OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY

CITY OF AUSTIN

City of Austin Food Systems

- Overview of COA Food Team
- Why are we creating a Food Plan and a Food Access Appendix
 - **COVID, Winter Storms, and Climate Change**
- Food Planning process
- Lessons Learned





AUSTIN STRATEGIC DIRECTION | 2023

City of Austin Food Activities



HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

Enjoying a sustainable environment and a healthy life, physically and mentally.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Food policy and planning
- Farmland preservation
- Healthy food access
- Community gardens
- Healthy meal programs
- Food recovery and food waste

LEAD DEPARTMENTS:

Office of Sustainability
Austin Public Health
Parks and Recreation
Austin Resource Recovery

SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTS:

Watershed Protection
Austin Water Utility
Neighborhood Housing
Real Estate Services
Austin Energy Green Building
Purchasing
Human Resources



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & AFFORDABILITY

Having economic opportunities and resources that enable us to thrive in our community.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Support for food businesses and workforce
- Food retail location analysis
- Food industry economic impact
- Food and farming related Codes & Ordinances

LEAD DEPARTMENTS:

Economic Development
Planning & Zoning
Austin Convention Center

SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTS:

Office of Sustainability
Purchasing
Development Services



SAFETY

Being safe in our home, at work, and in our community.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Food safety
- Code enforcement

LEAD DEPARTMENTS:

Austin Public Health
Austin Resource Recovery

SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTS:

Austin Code
Office of Sustainability



MOBILITY

Getting us where we want to go, when we want to get there, safely and cost-effectively.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Safe routes and transportation options to markets

LEAD DEPARTMENT:

Austin Transportation

SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTS:

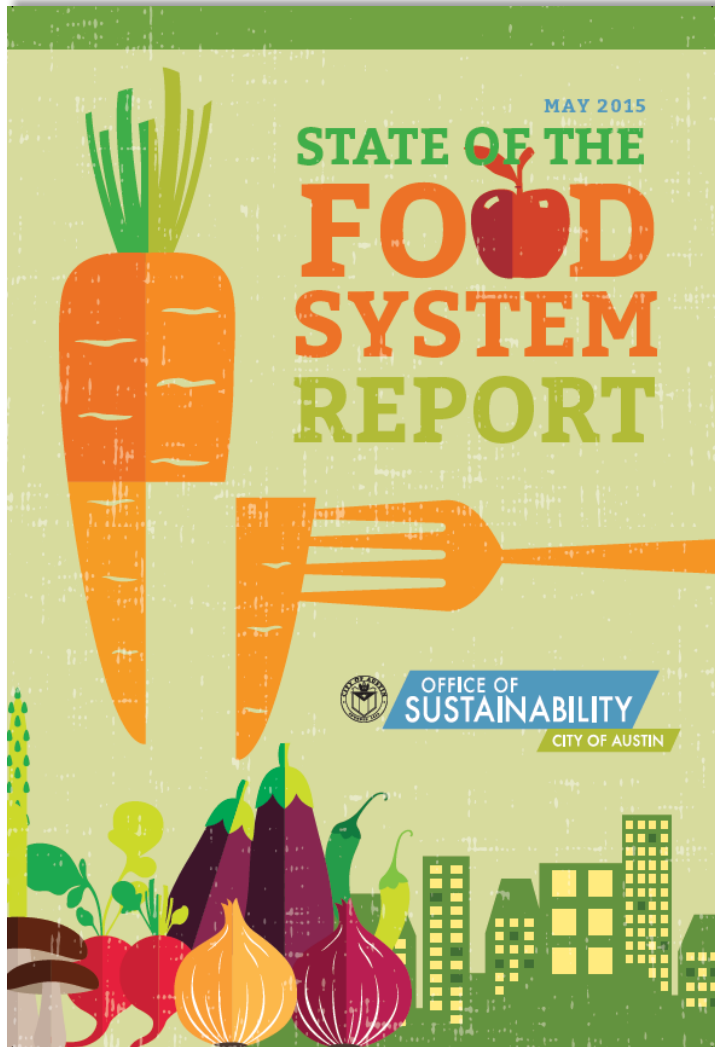
Public Works
Corridor Program Office
Office of Sustainability

COA Departments:

- Office of Sustainability
- Austin Public Health
- Parks and Rec
- Austin Resource Recovery
- Economic Development
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Austin Travis County Food Policy Board:

- Providing City Council and County Commissioners advice



Released May 2015



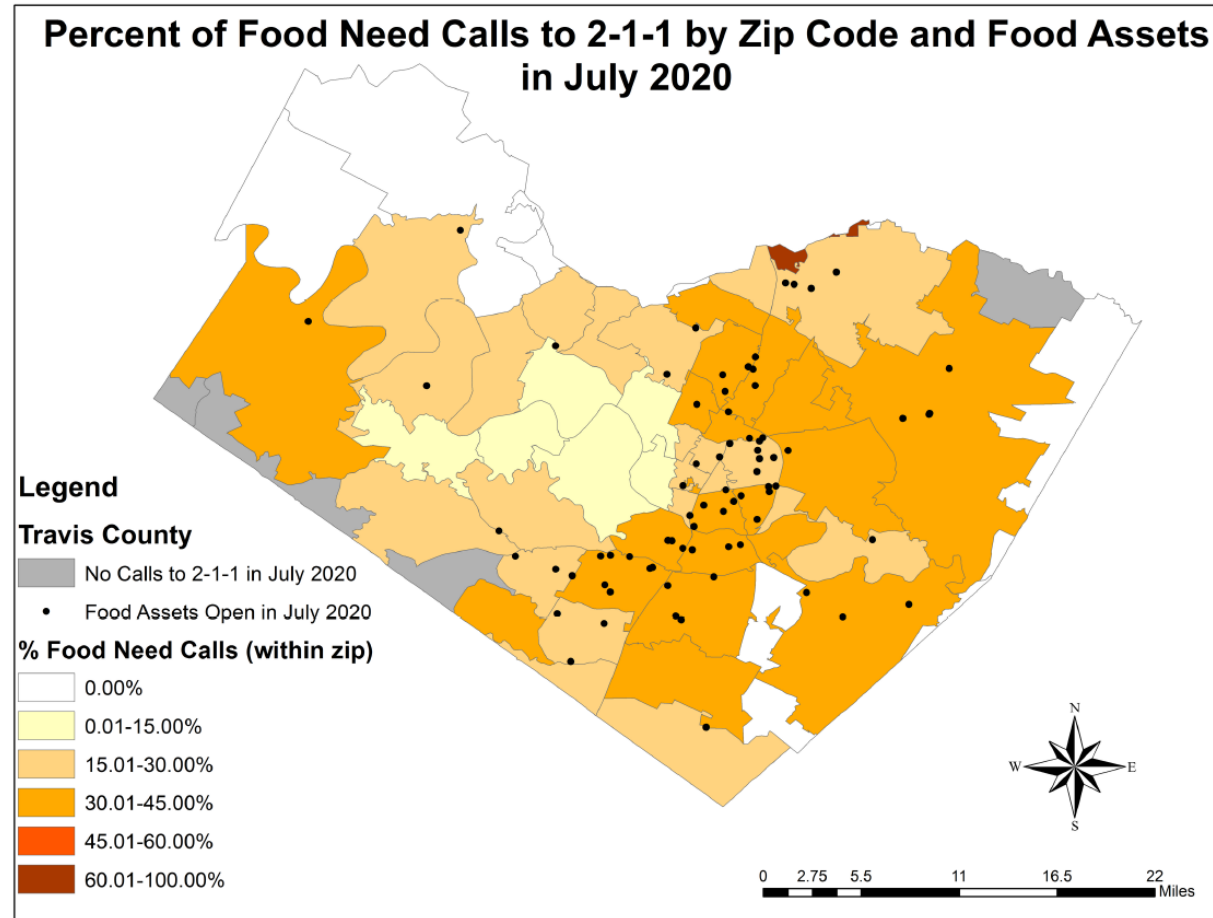
Released October 2018

COVID-19 Response

- Emergency Operations Center – Social Services Branch
- The Office of Sustainability Food Team led the food access response to the Pandemic
- Utilized existing relationships
 - Food Access Coordination group → Food Access Task Force
- Primary functions:
 - Convening
 - Coordination
 - Communications
 - Funding and Policy

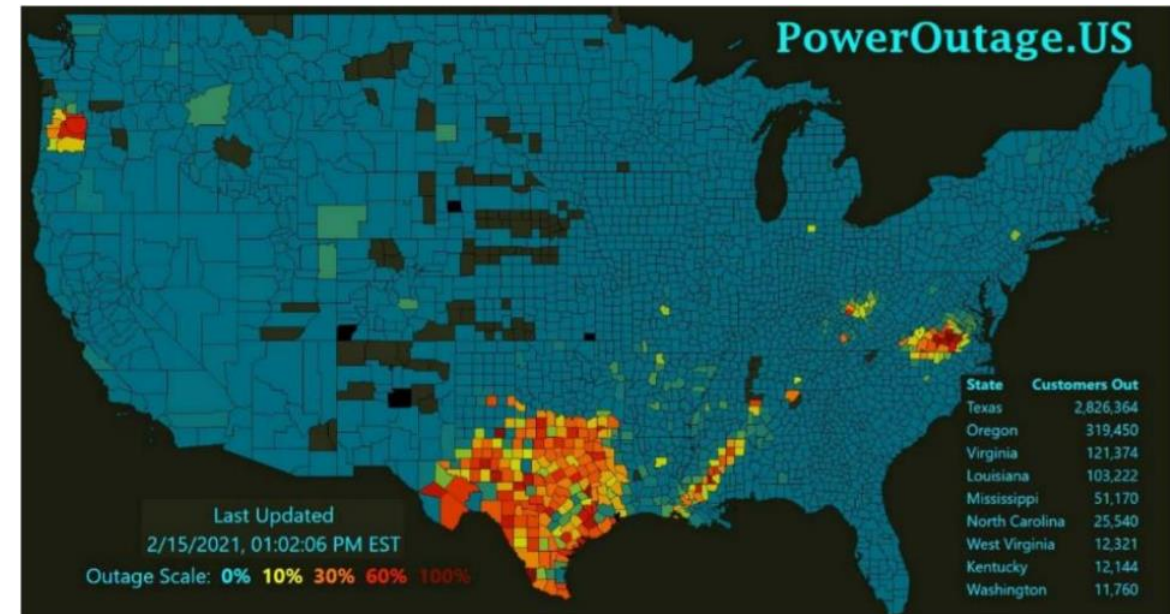


Percent of Food Need Calls to 2-1-1 by Zip Code and COVID-19 Food Needs Assets in Travis County in June 2020



Winter Storm Uri Response

- Unprecedented winter storm hit Austin in February 2021. City-wide power and water loss
- The Office of Sustainability Food Team led the food access response to storm
- Utilized existing relationships
 - Food Access Coordination group → Food Access Task Force
- Primary functions:
 - Coordination of Government and private sector mass food distribution
 - Communications



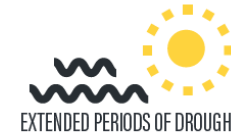
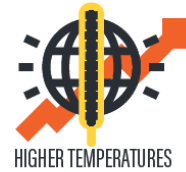
Trifecta of Challenges creates an Opportunity

- COVID
- Winter Storm Uri
- Austin Climate Equity Plan

- The combination of these three issues lead directly to a City Council direction to create a comprehensive Food Plan



CURRENT SIGNS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN AUSTIN:



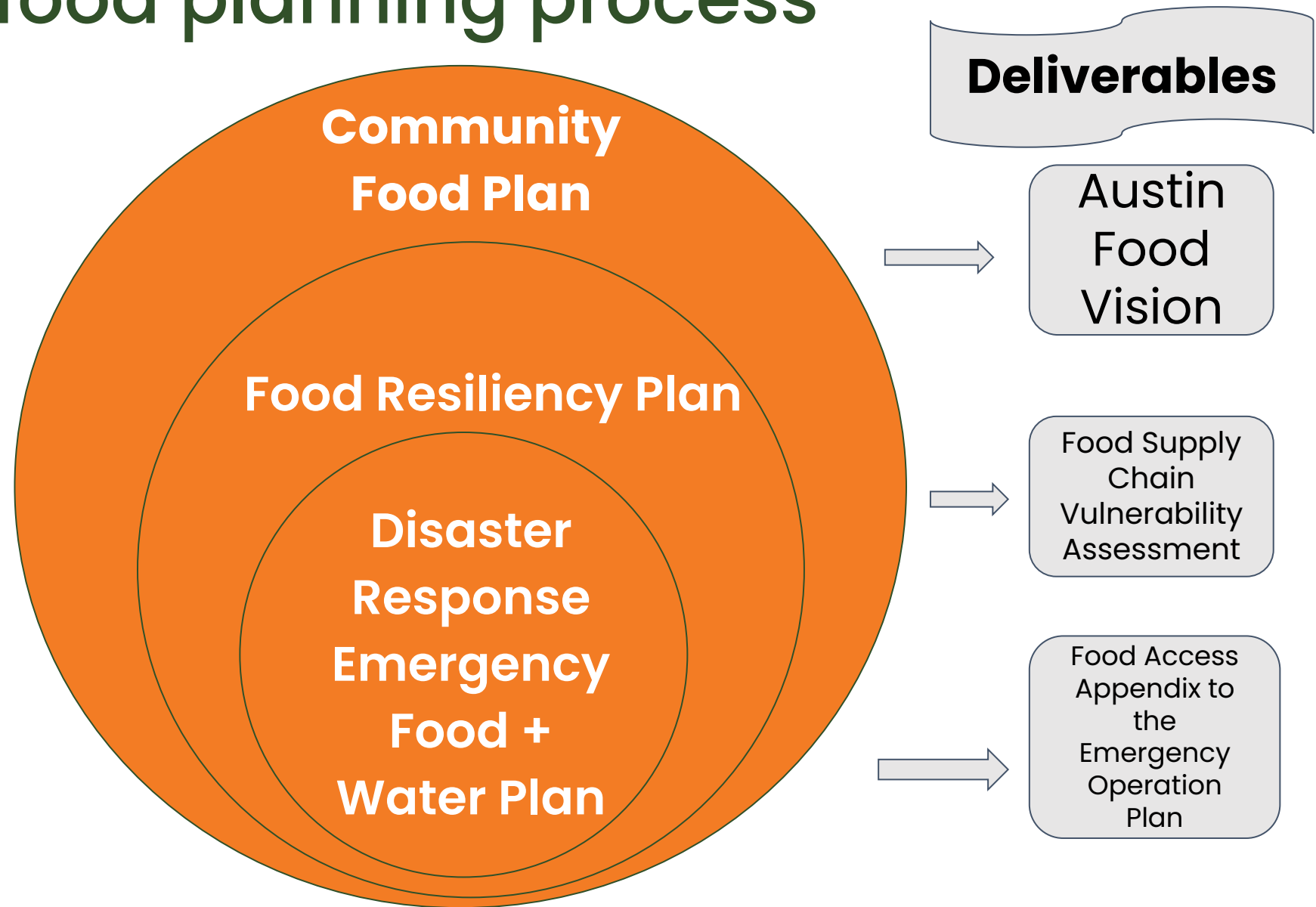
Climate projections for Central Texas for the next 25 years indicate that there will be more days with rainfall over 2 inches, summertime droughts, and days with extreme temperatures over 110°F.



Austin City Council has set the **goal of reaching net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**. The Austin Community Climate Plan identifies more than 130 actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy, transportation, and materials and waste sources.

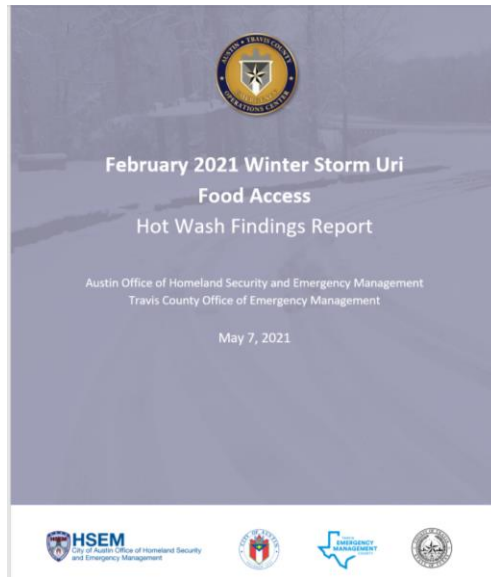
CURRENTLY, **13.7 MILLION** METRIC TONS OF GREENHOUSE GASES
ARE EMITTED COMMUNITY-WIDE FROM:

Nested food planning process



Where do we go from here?

Food Access Appendix to the Emergency Operations Plan



Resilience Planning

- Address Recommendations for Food and Climate
- Address decreasing impacts of future disasters on vulnerable communities
- Address food supply chain vulnerability

Comprehensive Food Plan

- Extensive Community Engagement
- Develop Vision and Targets
- Develop Metrics and Actions



Austin-Travis County Food Plan

Mandate:

On June 10, 2021, Austin City Council directed the City Manager to initiate a planning process and **multilingual** engagement strategy for the creation of a 5-year Austin Travis County Food System Plan. Once the Plan has been finalized, the City Manager shall create an online dashboard to monitor the progress made on the goals, recommendations, and action items within the Plan.

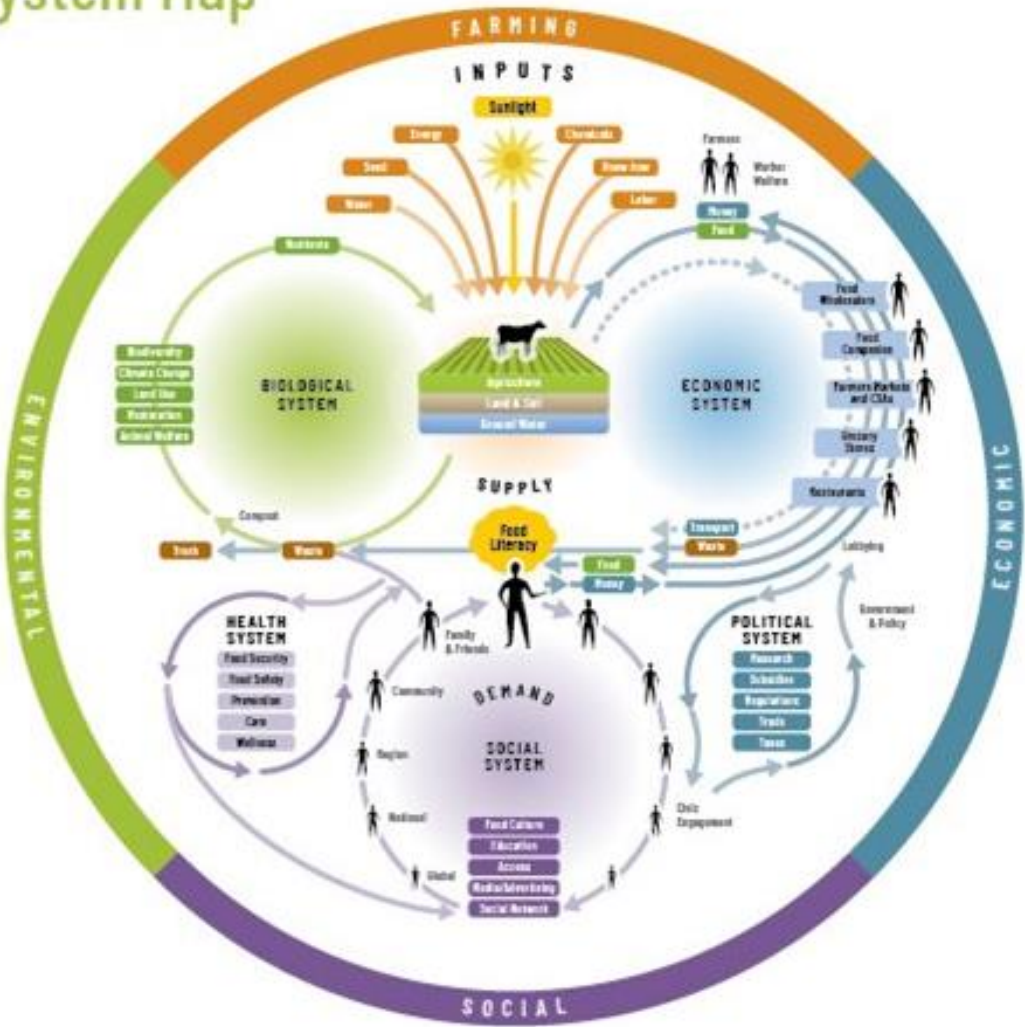
Key components of the food planning process and deliverables:

- Community Advisory Committee to direct process
- Robust community engagement; multilingual & compensated Community Food Ambassadors
- Baseline assessment → Community Vision → Goals and Strategies
- Equity toolkit for evaluating programs, policies, initiatives
- Indicators Dashboard to track progress

Estimated timeline & process:



Food System Map



Lessons Learned

- **What's the role of a City in addressing Emergency Food Access?**
 - Do we have a 'Right to Food'?
 - Roles of Red Cross/ Food Bank/ Private Sector role
- **What is 'Emergency Food Access' vs addressing chronic food insecurity?**
 - Response vs Recovery vs Chronic Issues
- **Why don't Food Plans include Emergency Food Access?**
 - 'Food' doesn't fit into a neat box
- **What's the food planning process look like?**
 - Who funds this work?
 - Who does the work?

Food

Overview

The storm exacerbated underlying food security challenges due to the breakdown in supply chains, shuttered grocery stores and restaurants due to loss of power, water, and access to transportation. Community-based organizations, the private sector, and non-profits filled significant gaps in food availability, providing more than 100,000 meals to residents in need. These efforts were supplemented by HSEM and TCOEM and the provision of emergency supplies, such as Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MREs) and prepared meals. However, the City and County were slow to stand up operations in the initial 120-hour response period, such as staffing for food operations. They lacked both planning and an adequate leadership structure to provide a comprehensive feeding operation. These and other gaps informed the recommendation to establish a comprehensive disaster feeding plan.



FEB 14

HSEM requests feeding support at the Palmer Event Center.



FEB 20-24

Local restaurants partner with non-profit and community groups to distribute 20,000 meals to the community.



MAR 12

A total of 120,000 shelf-stable meals have been distributed by the EOC.



Thank you!

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