



House Committee on  
Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and  
Forestry

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2025 Briefing





## Mission

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## Vision

Hunger Free Vermont's mission is to end the injustice of hunger for everyone. We prioritize the people most affected by hunger to make permanent systemic change.

We envision a vibrant community-centered future for our state, where every one of us has the nourishing food we need and want.



**For 32 years, Hunger Free Vermont has been advancing permanent & structural solutions to hunger.**

**We are the only statewide organization in Vermont dedicated to expanding equitable access to all of the Federal Nutrition Programs for everyone who needs them.**

- **SNAP / 3SquaresVT** (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- **School Meals** (National School Lunch Program - NSLP / School Breakfast Program - SBP)
- **Summer Meals** for Kids (Summer Food Service Program - SFSP)
- **Childcare Meals & Afterschool Meals** (Child and Adult Care Food Program - CACFP)
- **WIC** (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children)
- **Meals on Wheels & Congregate Meals** for older people and people with disabilities
- **Summer-EBT**



# Hunger Free Vermont provides:

- **Customized free technical assistance and training** for schools, community service organizations, childcare providers to establish and expand food programs
- **Public education and outreach** on federal and state nutrition programs
- **Accurate food security data collection and analysis**
- **Coalition building and backbone support**
- **Governmental advocacy for administrative and legislative change**
- **Emergency food response coordination support** during the pandemic and the 2023 floods



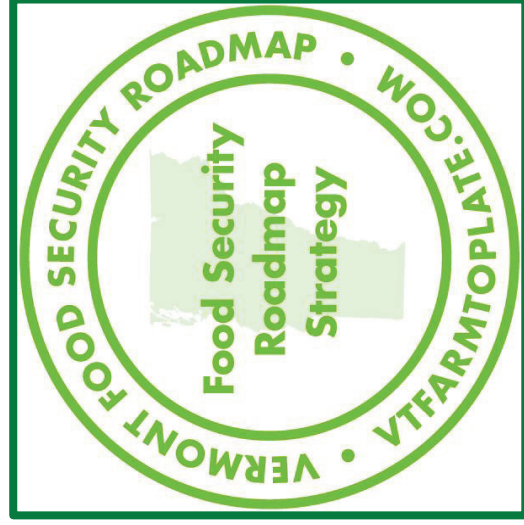


# Hunger Free Vermont funding:

- 80% from private charitable foundations, individual donors, and business support
- 13% government funding for outreach, technical assistance, and training on 3SquaresVT, school breakfast, school lunch, summer meals, afterschool meals, and childcare meals
- 7% program revenue, in-kind support, interest income



**The State of Vermont can make policy choices to ensure food security for everyone who lives here.**



**Hunger Free Vermont is a founding member of the Vermont Food Security Roadmap to 2035 Coalition.**

**All of our programs, projects, and policy goals work toward the fulfillment of Food Security Roadmap objectives.**



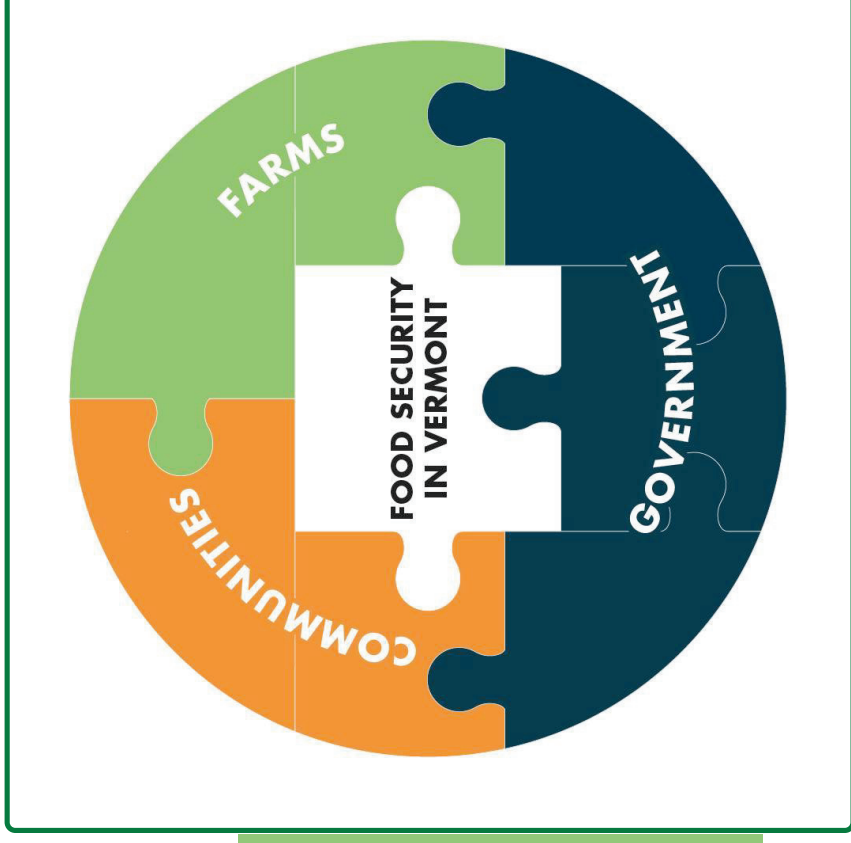
# Vermont Food Security Roadmap

## GOALS

**COMMUNITIES** have the tools to support food security.

**VERMONT FARMS** have the resources to be resilient.

**GOVERNMENT** ensures food security for all in Vermont.



# WE ARE ALREADY ON THE ROAD

## RECENTLY, THE LEGISLATURE:

- **Appropriated funds for:**
  - Crop Cash & Farm Share
  - Vermont Foodbank and its network of food shelves & meal sites
  - Meals on Wheels
  - Land Access & Opportunity Board
  - Universal School Meals
  - Farm to School & Early Childhood Grants & the Local Purchasing Incentive
  - Recovery for flooded farms & businesses
  - VT-211 to return to 24/7 service
- **Act 143/S.310** added critical food security language to emergency planning & commissioned a SNAP Restaurant Meals Program report





# More Vermonters are facing hunger now than in the last 5 years.

- According to the most recent Joint Fiscal Office Basic Needs Budget report (2022), fewer than half of single-adult households in Vermont (with or without children) could meet their basic needs\*
- Since the end of pandemic-era government supports, the rate of people at risk of hunger has risen both nationally and in Vermont
- Exacerbated by pressures such as flooding, lack of affordable housing, and high cost of living/inflation



\*2022 Vermont Basic Needs Budgets And Livable Wage Report (new data expected in 2025)



## FOOD ACCESS PRIORITIES

- Pass legislation to implement the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program in VT, including funding for administration and restaurant equipment costs.
- Fund Vermont Foodbank's request for \$1.75M in base funding to support responsive readiness & \$3.25M for food purchase and distribution.
- Increase public investment in NOFA-VT's Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs to \$500k in base funding.

# **3SquaresVT is the largest, most effective & dignified anti-hunger program for food security at home.**



## **3SquaresVT could be creating food security for more Vermonters.**



- **Twice as many people are likely eligible for food benefits as are currently enrolled.**
- **More flexible ways to use 3SquaresVT would help increase participation and reduce stigma.**



## Vermont can opt into and customize the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)



**RMP is specifically for households where everyone has low incomes and is:**

- **over age 60, or**
- **unhoused, or**
- **has disabilities**

**People in these groups are under-enrolled in 3SquaresVT and/or struggle to use their food benefits.**

## The RMP could serve low-income Vermonters with many different needs

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- People without a safe place to store or prepare food
- People who have the hardest time shopping for food or preparing meals
- People experiencing social isolation
- People looking to participate in their community through sharing a meal

## The RMP could serve many low-income Vermonters with a new and valuable service through 3SquaresVT



- **Over 13,000** people in Vermont have incomes below 185% FPL and are between 60-65, and are eligible for RMP, but not for EBT cash.
- **Over 42,000** people in Vermont have incomes below 185% FPL and have a self-reported vision, hearing, cognitive, and/or mobility disability.
- **3,300 people** in Vermont are estimated to be experiencing homelessness.
- By opting into the federal Restaurant Meals Program, the State can help its community partners to ensure that the most vulnerable people know that they can access ready-made or hot meals with their EBT cards.

Data from the 2022 American Communities Survey (U.S. Census), 5 year average; and 2023 HUD findings



## Many kinds of VT restaurants could participate in RMP



- Local diners and cafes
- Food trucks
- Vermont “chains” like American Flatbread and Skinny Pancake
- Chains like Subway and Panera

**The state has wide latitude to design restaurant participation criteria.**



## Restaurants will need support to participate in a Vermont RMP

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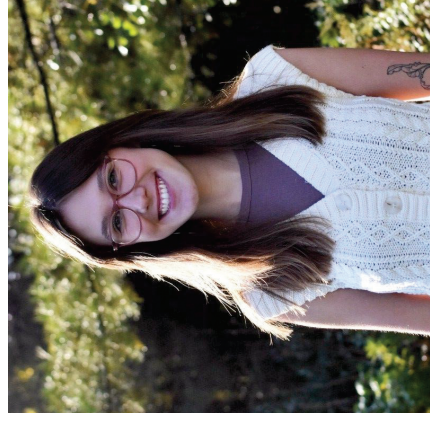
- The proposed bill would create and fund a Restaurant Meals Program Navigator position in DCF to support restaurants through the USDA application process.
- Also includes funding to cover the start-up costs of POS systems that can process EBT cards so local and family-owned restaurants and food trucks have an equal opportunity to participate.
- **Must be included in FY 2026 budget** so that this program can get up and running

## Our State House Team:



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## **Thank You!**

**This Committee has been a strong and committed partner in creating effective and permanent food security supports for thousands of Vermonters.**

**Hunger Free Vermont looks forward to partnering with you in the 2025-2026 session.**

