



# HUNGER FREE VERMONT

## 2025 Briefing

Senate Committee on Agriculture

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**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.**

# **Mission & Vision**

**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

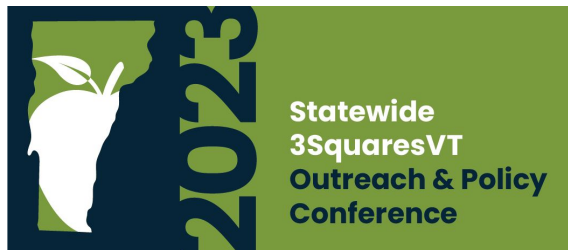


Older  
Vermonters  
Nutrition  
Coalition



# 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 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.
- UVM researchers estimate that households at risk of hunger need an average of \$288 per month in additional money for food.\*\*



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

\*\*Dr. Meredith Niles, [2025 Report to House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry](#)





## FOOD ACCESS PRIORITIES

- Pass legislation to implement the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program in Vermont, 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.



\$13 million in benefits stay in our VT economy each month

19,000+ Children

65,000+ individuals

17,000+ Seniors

39,000+ Households

# Average 3SquaresVT Benefits

- Average benefit amount for total households: \$320
- Average benefit amount for a household with children: \$559
- Average benefit amount for a household with disabled people: \$270
- Average benefit amount for a household with older adults: \$224

Income Requirements for current Federal Fiscal Year:

- A family of 4 has to make less than \$4,810 a month or \$57,720 in gross income to qualify.
- **Out of all likely income-eligible people, only 40% are participating in 3SquaresVT** (based on ACS 5-year average and ESD Participation Data)

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income Limit (185% FPL)	Maximum Benefit Amount
1	\$2,322	\$292
2	\$3,152	\$536
3	\$3,981	\$768
4	\$4,810	\$975
5	\$5,640	\$1,158
6	\$6,469	\$1,390
7	\$7,299	\$1,536
Each Add'l Person	+\$793	+\$220

# 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



- 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.**