



# Food Security

# FOOD SECURITY



## Why is this initiative important?

Food insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. Ending food insecurity in Weld County is essential for community members to thrive.

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## What are we doing in this initiative?

The Weld Trust will convene the partners that are providing food security to determine priorities countywide and fund collaborative programs and resources that put nutritious food into the hands of people in need across Weld County.

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## What are the priorities in this initiative?

### **Nutritious Food Programs**

Provide or ensure Weld County individuals and families access healthy food programs.

### **Food Resource Management**

Promote the utilization of available nutritious foods through efficient storage, management and recovery efforts.

### **Food Access and Distribution**

Maximize access to nutritionally prepared meals for all Weld County residents in need especially vulnerable populations (older adults, people with disabilities, low-to-middle income, and communities in food deserts).

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## What are our goals for this initiative?

- Decrease by 5% the number of food insecure individuals in Weld County long-term.
- Increase the convenient access to nutritious foods for residents in need by 5%.
- Increase the enrollment in food programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) by 8% for qualifying individuals.
- Increase the access to food assistance and nutritious foods for children and families, seniors, and homebound residents by 2%.
- Increase food storage capacity for community food banks across Weld County.
- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption by Weld County residents by 5%.

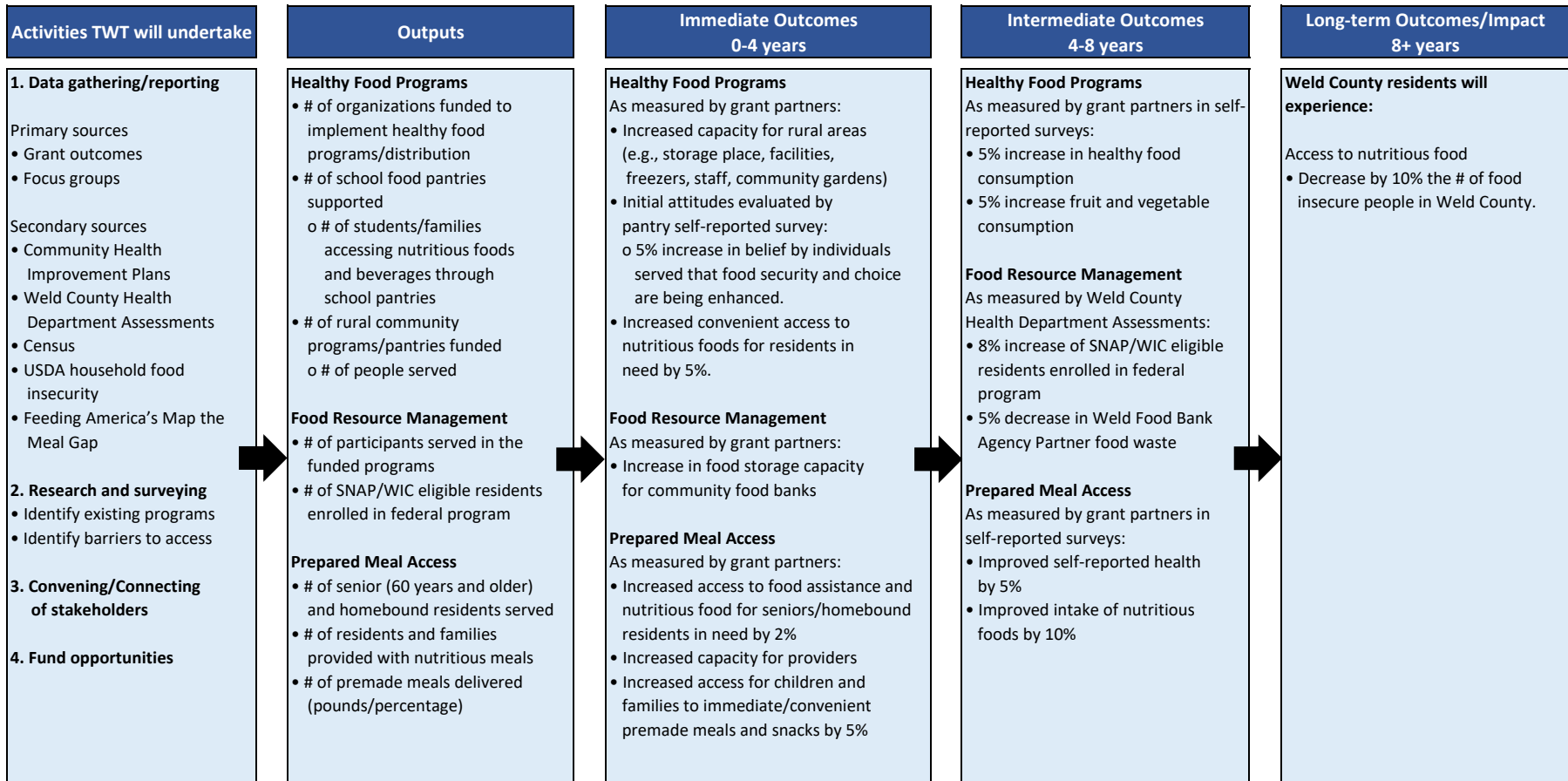
# Food Security Logic Model

**Mission Statement:** To promote excellence in health and education in Weld County.

The Weld Trust will convene the collaborative partners that are providing food security to determine priorities countywide and fund collaborative programs and resources that put nutritious food into the hands of people in need across Weld County.

<b>Our approach to addressing the strategic issues will be:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fund and assist organizations that aim to increase easy access (physical and affordable) to nutritious foods for families in need, especially in rural communities.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discover and fund organizations in need of increased food storage and capacity.</li> <li>• Fund programs targeting rural areas to maximize access and capacity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Fund and convene food resource management                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene referral networks for local agencies to maximize Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) enrollment for those who qualify.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Fund programs that maximize access to nutritionally prepared meals                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subpopulations of older adults, people with disabilities, low-to-middle income, and communities in food deserts.</li> <li>• Fund programs increasing access to healthy premade meals for grab and go convenience.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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<b>Partner Organizations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educational Entities (school districts, charter schools, BOCES, UNC, Aims Community College)</li> <li>2. Nonprofit Partners (Weld Food Bank and Agency Partners, community food pantries, nonprofits)</li> <li>3. Government Agencies (Weld County Human Services, Weld County Health Department)</li> </ol>
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## ASSUMPTIONS and ECOSYSTEM

\*\*\* Consider needs assessment at food banks/pantries for culturally relevant foods distributed and needs for community members.

\*\*\* Emphasis on rural areas.

The USDA defines food insecurity as limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods for an active and healthy life.<sup>(6)</sup>

Food insecurity rates are highest for single mothers and households with incomes below the poverty line.<sup>(6)</sup> A vital component to combat food insecurity in low-income households is increasing their food literacy, encompassing their knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential to achieving a healthy diet.<sup>(2)</sup>

Low-income adults are at higher risk for food insecurity, obesity, certain chronic diseases, and poor dietary intake compared to higher-income counterparts.<sup>(5)</sup> This is due to not meeting the recommended guidelines for healthy eating and exceeding the recommended limits for nutritionally inadequate foods, resulting in the hunger-obesity paradox.<sup>(3)</sup>

Inequitable obesity risk among women, racial-ethnic minorities, individuals with low income, and other historically marginalized populations is well-documented. People burdened by food insecurity—especially women and older adults—are at an increased risk of overweight and obesity.

This phenomenon, in which obesity and food insecurity coexist within the same person or household, is frequently referred to as the hunger-obesity paradox or the food insecurity paradox.<sup>(8)</sup>

- Normally, 1 in 5 people and 1 in 4 children in Weld County struggle with hunger. During the pandemic, 1 in 3 people are struggling with hunger.
- 12.8% of Weld County children are food insecure.
- 66% of Greeley District 6 students are qualify for free-and-reduced lunch, which is an indicator of poverty and food insecurity in the district. This is 65% in Fort Lupton District 8, 53% in Weld District 1.
- Compared to pre-pandemic, almost all Weld Food Bank programs saw an increase in people served ranging from 24% to 167%.
- Residents at or below the 100% FPL reported they were worried about having enough money to buy nutritious meals nearly 4 times as often as residents who were not below the 100% FPL (43% compared to 12%).
- Residents who were Hispanic/Latino more frequently reported that they needed and used food or meal assistance compared to residents who are not Hispanic/Latino (WCDPHE, 2019).
- Colorado currently ranks 44th lowest in the United States for enrolling eligible citizens in SNAP (2015 data) and 48th lowest for enrollment in WIC (2013 data). 64% of eligible Weld County residents are enrolled in SNAP; 50% of eligible Weld County residents are enrolled in the WIC Program below the goal of 60%
- Countywide, 15% of residents needed food or meal assistance, and 10% of residents used it. Among residents aged 18 to 34 years, and 55 years and older, approximately 1 in 5 needed food or meal assistance and 1 in 8 used it. Residents aged 35-54 years reported needing and using food or meal assistance less: 1 in 10 needed food or meal assistance and 1 in 15 used it (WCDPHE, 2019).
- Weld County families need income more than two and a half times the federal poverty level to make ends meet (Colorado Center on Law and Policy and the University of Washington, 2018).

### School food pantries

- Food insecurity is one of the most prevalent nutrition-related problems that children and adolescents (i.e., youth) experience in the United States. The severity of household food insecurity is positively associated with mental disorders among both children and adolescents in the US.<sup>(7)</sup>
- Food insecurity significantly increases a child's risk for being overweight or obese, and it may also cause the child to experience more health problems such as stomach aches, frequent headaches, and colds. As a result, these children are more likely to be absent from school, miss school frequently, and fall behind in grade levels. School food pantries increase access to wholesome foods, which can improve school attendance.
- Food insecurity is of particular concern for school-aged children. Studies have found that food insecure children are more likely to have poor health, iron deficiency, anxiety, depression, behavioral issues, psychosocial issues, and impaired academic performance. Reducing or eliminating food insecurity is considered to be a key predecessor of allowing children to reach their full academic and social potential.
- Research has established that food insecurity contributes to persistent deficits in the physical and psychosocial development of children. A consistent lack of access to food not only influences physical size but also cognitive growth and fine and gross motor skills.<sup>(9)</sup>
- Food pantries present one potential access point for families struggling with consistent access to food.<sup>(9)</sup>

## ASSUMPTIONS and ECOSYSTEM (continued)

### Food resource management

- Without health and nutrition literacy skills, even when healthy options are available, food pantry clients may have difficulty accessing and understanding public health information, such as MyPlate dietary guidelines and recommendations, to help them better understand which options are better choices. <sup>(9)</sup>
- Targeting food insecure low-income households with tools to increase healthy food consumption, nutrition education, and food resource management (FRM) skills to increase food literacy is an effective method to extend food dollars and increase consumption of a healthy diet.
- Food resource management refers to the ability to stretch food dollars and make healthy choices despite limited budgets, and encompasses meal planning, smart shopping, and awareness of impulse buys (1). Nutrition education and FRM skills are essential for this population to make healthy food choices and extend resources for healthier foods. FRM involves techniques to promote selection of healthy foods and cost-effective shopping to improve the quality of food purchases while simultaneously stretching food dollars. <sup>(4)</sup>
- Low-income households are most at risk for food insecurity, regardless of their SNAP participation.

### Aging population

- Food insecure seniors were more likely to have depression (262%), asthma (78%), diabetes (74%), and congestive heart failure (71%).
- Reducing perceived threat of low food security may be crucial in changing energy intake behaviors.
- One-quarter of older adults experienced problems with having safe and affordable transportation available or having housing to suit their needs, 11% reported issues with having enough food to eat.
- By 2030, nearly one out of every five Coloradoans will be 65 years or older. In Weld County, 7.3% of those 65+ live below the poverty level—that's 2,228 seniors. In Fort Lupton, that number more than doubles to 20% of those 65+ living in poverty.

### Rural Community

- In rural areas, access to food may be limited by financial constraints or other factors, such as transportation challenges. Rural shoppers may rely on more expensive and less nutritious food, such as the types available at gas station convenience stores or face a long drive to a town with a supermarket or grocery store that stocks fresh produce, milk, eggs, and other staples.
- The USDA-ERS reports that households in rural areas accounted for 17.7% of all food-insecure households in 2016. In Colorado, a quarter of young adults in rural areas (25.4%) experienced food insecurity in 2019.
- People in rural Colorado were more likely to struggle with food access: 12.0% of Coloradans in rural areas reported experiencing food insecurity, compared with 9.3% of Coloradans in urban areas.
- The risk of food insecurity increases as counties become more rural.

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