



6th Annual Convening on Healthy Food Access



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HFFI Messaging and Talking Points

The core messages provided here are designed to assist you when speaking about the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) to partners, the media, or congressional staffers. We have included the legislative status of the program as background, as well as economic and health messages. In all communication, we encourage you to share impacts of your work, including job numbers, capital leveraged, or other data that you have related to your projects and efforts.

Core Messages

- According to a recent USDA Economic Research Service study in 2016, an estimated **40 million Americans** live in rural areas, small towns, and urban communities where a healthy diet is out of reach.ⁱ
- These same communities are often struggling with high rates of unemployment and economic depression.
- **HFFI provides one-time grants and loans** to projects like grocery stores, farmers markets, food hubs, co-ops and other food access businesses in urban or rural areas of need, many of which barriers in accessing traditional loans and resources.
- Since 2011, **over \$197 million has been distributed through HFFI**, bringing jobs, economic development and healthy food access to lower-income communities across the country.
- HFFI's public-private partnership model has **leveraged an estimated \$1 billion** in additional resources, loans and federal tax incentives, including investments from financial, healthcare and philanthropic institutions.
- One-time financing targeting underserved urban and rural communities have been distributed in **35 different states**.
- Healthy food financing works for communities by:
 - 🥕 Making the healthy choice the easy choice by bringing fresh, affordable food to underserved communities
 - 🥕 Creating and retaining jobs, generating tax revenues and capturing local spending
 - 🥕 Expanding market opportunities for local farmers, grocers and healthy food entrepreneurs
 - 🥕 Serving as an economic anchor to support other retail development

Messages: Economic Vitality and Jobs

- Improving access to healthy food is an opportunity to create jobs and attract investment in low-income communities.
- Grocery stores and healthy food access businesses bring many economic benefits to communities, including:
 - 🥕 Serving as an economic anchor for additional retail and service-sector businesses
 - 🥕 Creating new opportunities for local employment and commerce
 - 🥕 Increasing the value of local property, as well as property and business tax revenues
 - 🥕 Creating market opportunities for our nation's farmers
- A large, full-service supermarket employs 150 to 200 full- and part-time employees and can bring in weekly sales of \$200,000 to \$300,000.ⁱⁱ



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Messages: Health and Geography

- An estimated 40 million Americans live in urban neighborhoods or rural towns where they cannot readily purchase affordable, nutritious food. Without a comprehensive approach to obesity prevention where healthy food access is centerpiece, obesity rates and health care costs will continue to rise.
 - *IN URBAN COMMUNITIES:* Many people who live in low-income, urban communities and communities of color walk out their front doors and see fast food and convenience stores selling high-fat, high-sugar, processed foods, like soda, chips and other junk food.
 - *IN SMALL TOWN & RURAL COMMUNITIES:* Those living in rural areas often must drive miles to reach a farmers market or full-service grocery store that offer a variety of affordable nutritious and fresh food.
- Improving the availability of healthy food in underserved communities and communities of color is an important and proven component of a comprehensive strategy to combat America's obesity crisis, rising healthcare costs and strengthen the health of our communities.
 - Currently, about two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese and an estimated 31 percent of children ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - A recent study by the Milken Institute calculated the direct medical costs for diet-related disease in 2014 at \$427.8 billion.^{iv}
 - Studies have found major disparities in food access by race and income and for low-density, rural areas.
 - A national cross-sectional study found that low-income, urban neighborhoods of color have the least availability of grocery stores and supermarkets compared with both low- and high-income white communities.^v
- HFFI gives people the opportunity to make healthier choices when it comes to feeding themselves and their families.

Messages: State and Local Partnerships

- The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative launched in 2004 – the HFFI program model – created or retained over 5,000 jobs, helped develop over 88 supermarkets and other fresh food retail, and resulted in projects totaling \$190 million, all with just \$30 million in state seed money.
- Several states and metropolitan areas have also launched financing programs dedicated to bringing fresh and healthy food to communities, including **California, Colorado, Houston, Illinois, New Orleans, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, New York**, and the mid-South states of **Louisiana, Mississippi** and western **Tennessee**.
- The federal HFFI has been critical in launching many of these programs, providing seed capital and the credibility of secure resources from a competitive federal program.
- HFFI is widely supported— it has garnered bipartisan support across rural and urban communities from grocers, public health advocates, economic development practitioners, civil rights organizations, children's organizations, faith-based organizations and others.



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Background on Federal Legislation and Budget

- Congress passed The Agricultural Act of 2014 (also known as the Farm Bill) on February 4, 2014, which for the first time officially established a national Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) at the United States Department of Agriculture. Funding for HFFI is authorized at \$125 million in the Farm Bill.
- In fiscal year 2016, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Treasury's CDFI Fund made \$7.4 million and \$22 million in HFFI investments, respectively.
- In January 2017, USDA announced the selection of Reinvestment Fund to serve as the agency's HFFI National Fund Manager. As the HFFI National Fund Manager, Reinvestment Fund will raise private capital, provide financial and technical assistance to regional, state and local partnerships, and channel capital to fund eligible projects that will improve access to healthy foods in hard-to-reach, underserved communities.
- On May 1, 2017, Congress released an agreement for fiscal year 2017— \$1 million was included for HFFI at USDA and \$22 million for HFFI at the CDFI Fund. The agreement needs to be voted on by both House and Senate ahead of the current Continuing Resolution deadline of Friday, May 5.
- The current Farm Bill will expire in September 30, 2018, and Congress has already begun committee and field hearings.

ⁱ Rhone, A, Ver Ploeg, M, Dicken, C, Williams, R, Brenneman, V. *Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tracts, 2010-2015*. USDA. Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-165) 21 pp, January 2017.

ⁱⁱ Reinvestment Fund. *Healthy Food Retail Financing at Work: Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative*. CDFI Fund. September 2011 (accessed April 2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Flegal KM. *Prevalence of Childhood and Adult Obesity in the United States, 2011-2012*. JAMA. 2014;311(8):806-814. doi:10.1001/jama.2014.732.

^{iv} Waters, H., & DeVol, R. (2016). *Weighing Down America: The Health and Economic Impact of Obesity*. Retrieved from Milken Institute: <http://assets1c.milkeninstitute.org/assets/Publication/ResearchReport/PDF/Weighing-Down-America-WEB.pdf>

^v Richardson, A.S. et al. *Are Neighborhood Food Resources Distributed Inequitably by Income and Race in the USA?* BMJ Open, 2012, Vol. 2(2).