

Local, State, and Federal Policies and Funding in the Food System

- **Multiple levels of policy influence food access and the food system in Somerville.**



FEDERAL: Funds and creates foundational rules for SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch Program, among others.



STATE: Administers many federal programs, often provides some administrative funding, and sometimes provides additional program funding (ex. Universal Free School Meals) or added programming (ex. HIP).



LOCAL: Funds local efforts and incorporates food access needs and food system policies into City planning, zoning, and ordinances.

- **The City has expanded financial support for food access and nutrition-related programs in the past five years.**
 - » Flexible sources of municipal funding have increased in the past five years through Community Benefit funds from rapid local development, newly allocated participatory budgeting (PB) funds, and federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.
 - » The City of Somerville has prioritized using some of these funds for food access and nutrition-related programs.



Photo credit: Becca Miller, Mass Food System Collaborative.

The City of Somerville uses a variety of funding sources to support programs like pantries, distributions, community fridges, meals, local benefits, and garden education. This chart shows what types of funding have gone to each type of program in the past several years.

Program or Group of Programs	Type of Funding			KEY:
	Flexible Funds (PB, ARPA, or Community Benefit)	CDBG	Direct City Funding	
Food Pantries and Community Fridges	✓	✓		CDBG = Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG), consistent funds that the City awards annually to grant applicants Direct City Funding = Money allocated in the annual City Budget
Free School Food Markets	✓		✓	
Community Meals and Prepared Meals	✓		✓	Color Key: Darkest = >\$100K; Med-Dark – \$50-100K; Med-Light = \$10-50; Light = <\$10K
Winter Season Grocery Gift Cards	✓			
Carrot Card Program	✓			
Somerville Mobile Farmers Market (SMFM)		✓	✓	
SNAP Match at Somerville Farmers Markets			✓	
Garden Education			✓	

- **City-led neighborhood planning efforts all include goals and objectives related to food access.**
Some feature these goals more prominently than others.
- The federal government provides the majority of funding for food access benefits, including funding SNAP, SunBucks, WIC, Farmers Market Coupons, and Medicaid funds used for Health-Related Social Needs.
 - » **Federal policy changes since 2025 have threatened, reduced, or eliminated many food benefit programs and grants.**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE FOOD SYSTEM POLICIES:

- **Support advocacy for public assistance benefits and emergency food programs,** such as SNAP, HIP, and MEFAP as well as, key issues affecting food access such as immigration status.
- Coordinate with the Strategy and Development Department to **keep food access innovations prominent in neighborhood development goals.**
- Assess and plan for long-term allocation of the City's **community benefit** funds to support **consistent and longer-term application** for community partner food access programs.

Want to learn about ongoing policy campaigns and advocacy?

Find more on the Food Coalition Website:



Want to learn more?

Find the full assessment here:

