



Office of Food Access & Healthy Communities 2024 Year in Review HIGHLIGHTS



Lisa Robinson, Alissa Ebel, and Sean O'Brien





About OFAHC:

WHAT WE DO:



The OFAHC team working in the office. Alissa, Ric and Sean are all helping people on the phone and Guerschom and Annabel are organizing Farmers Market coupons collected at the Mobile Farmers Market.

PARAMETERS:



In these slides we share highlights of our work including:



Our programs

- Mobile market
- Taxi to health
- Partnerships to expand food access across Somerville
- Participatory budgeting project with the High School Culinary team and community fridges
- Outreach and Engagement
- Somerville Community Food Assessment
- Goals for 2025



OFAHC and Community Health Workers work closely together on food security outreach.

14th Season of the Mobile Farmers Market



- **WHAT IT IS:** 2-hour, weekly markets at Clarendon Hill Towers, Council on Aging/SCALE, East Somerville Public Library, Mystic Housing. **Low Cost, farm fresh food**
- **IMPACT:** Served over 3,000 market customers
- 16 weeks July through October = 64 markets
- 6 local farm partners



SHOPPER QUOTES:

- *"it's a farmers' market, direct, localized way of shopping. I just walk into the courtyard and there's friendly people all around"* Shopper at Clarendon Hill Towers
- *"cheaper, fresh, nice people, products I like".* From Mystic shopper:

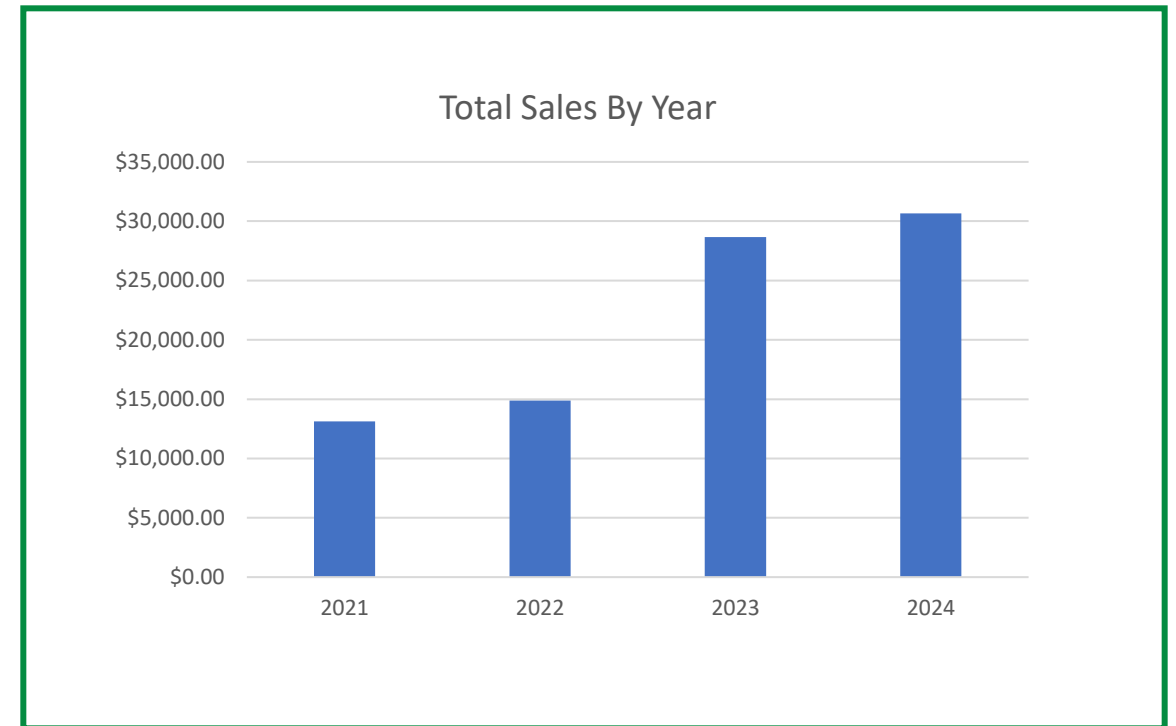
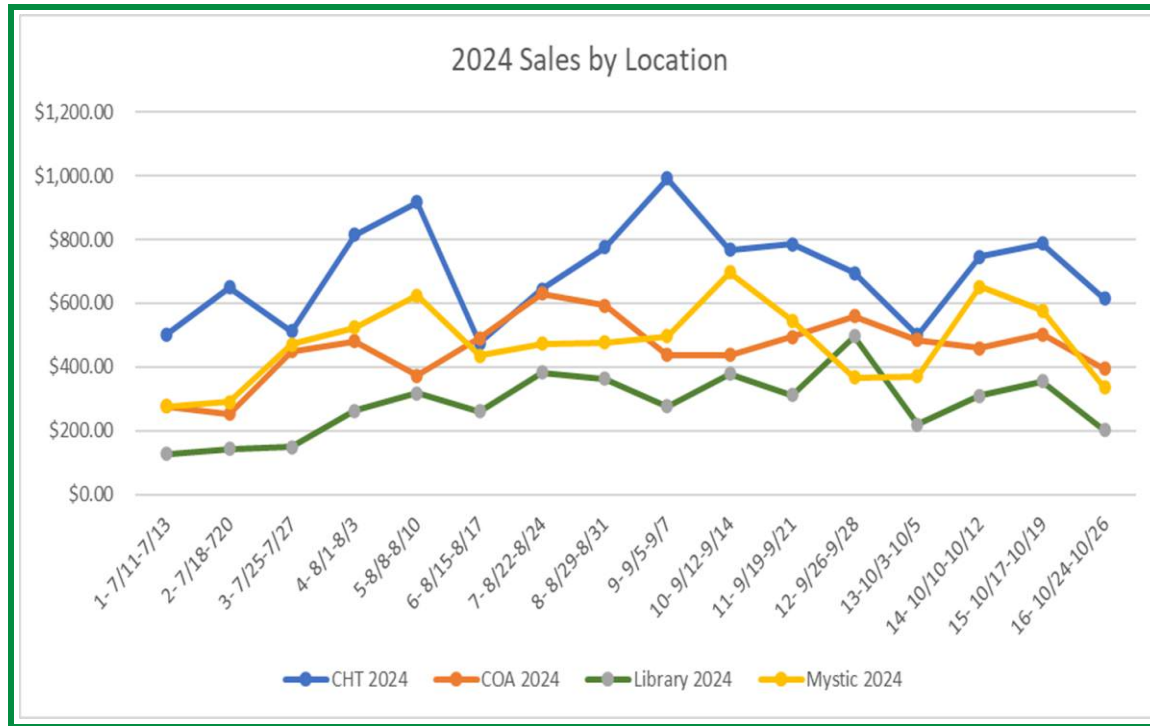


The 2024 Somerville Mobile Farmers Market Team, kicking off the 14th season.

14th Season of the Mobile Farmers Market



Market Sales Data



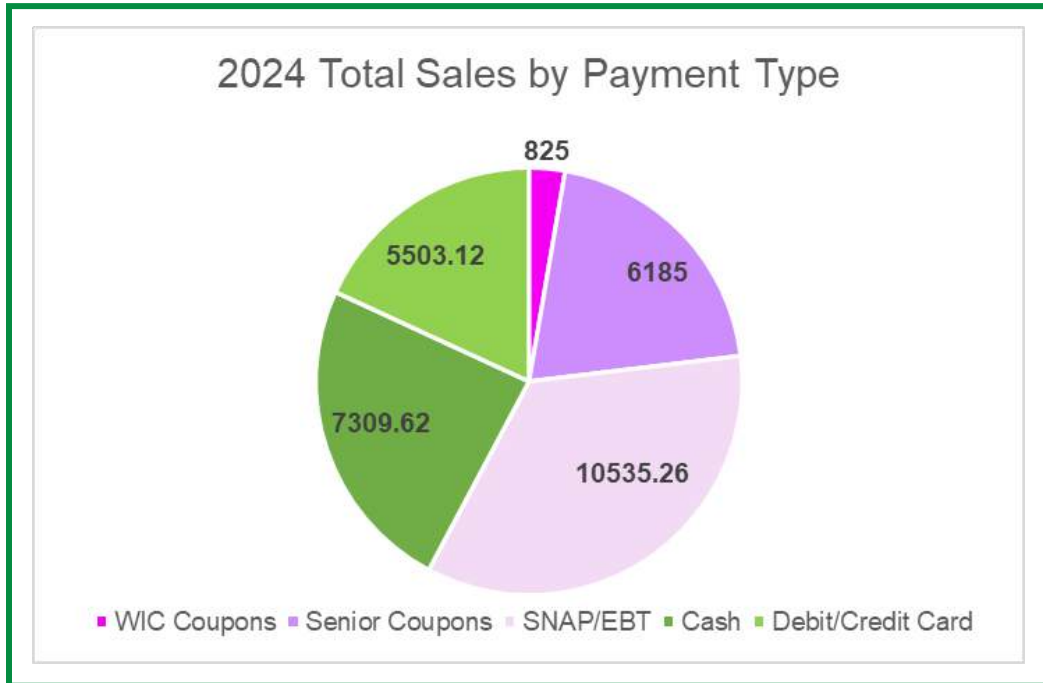
1. The 2024 SMFM had four market locations over 16 weeks with Clarendon Hill Towers having the greatest number in sales, at \$11,179.63

1. The 2024 SMFM season sales totaled \$30,672.85 in sales, approximately a 7% increase in sales from 2023. This continues a steep trend of continued interest in the market

14th Season of the Mobile Farmers Market



Market Payment Data



- The 2024 SMFM accepted 6 types of payment: cash, credit/debit, EBT (SNAP or Food Stamps), Fresh Connect, Senior Farmers Market Coupons, and WIC Farmers Market Coupons
- EBT was the most used type of payment and cash is the next most used type of payment

Top Sellers:

Cantaloupe, Peaches, Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Scallions



The Somerville Times spotlight the mobile farmers market

The Taxi to Health Program



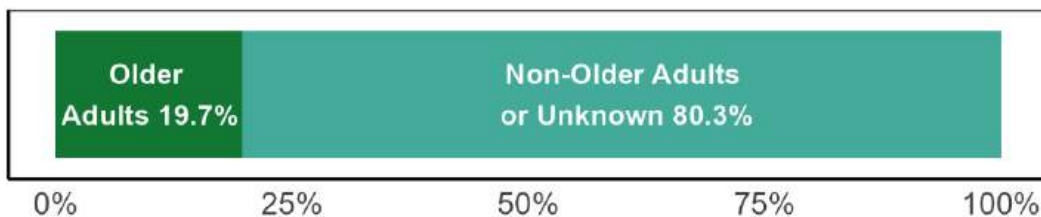
From **April 2022 to October 2024**, the Taxi to Health Program provided free rides for Somerville residents to get to food, medical, and other health needs.

The program provided **more than 1000 unique residents** with **21,187 rides** to support their health.

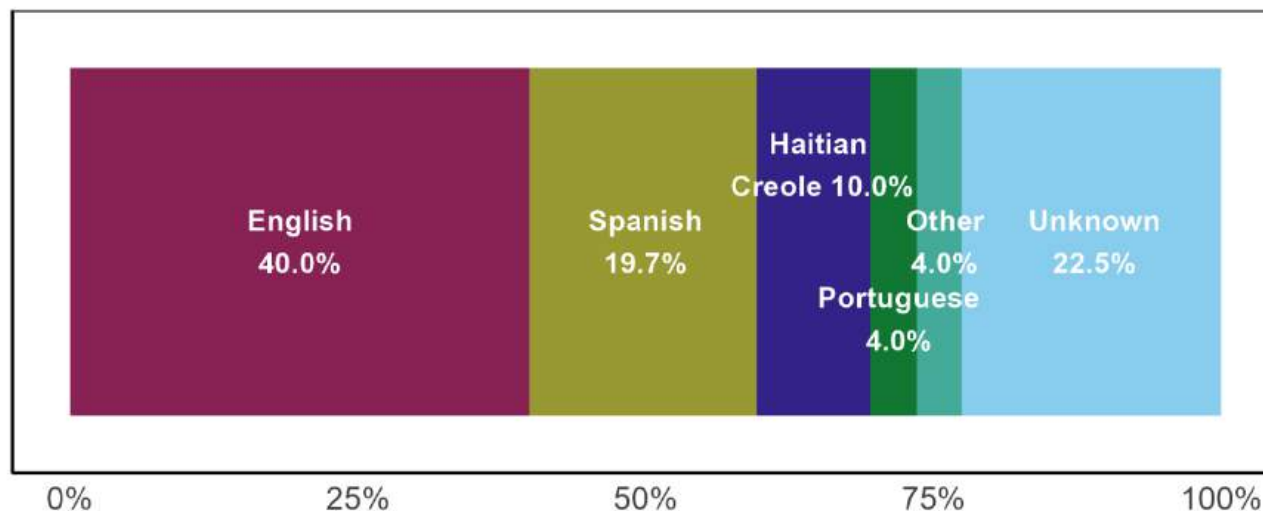
Who used the Taxi to Health Program?

The program intended to support limited-income residents under the age of 60, but about **1 in 5 users were older adults**. Many of these older adults access the program through partners like Project SOUP and Clarendon Hill Towers.

With support from program staff and other service providers, people from **many language backgrounds** could use the program.



What were participants' primary languages?



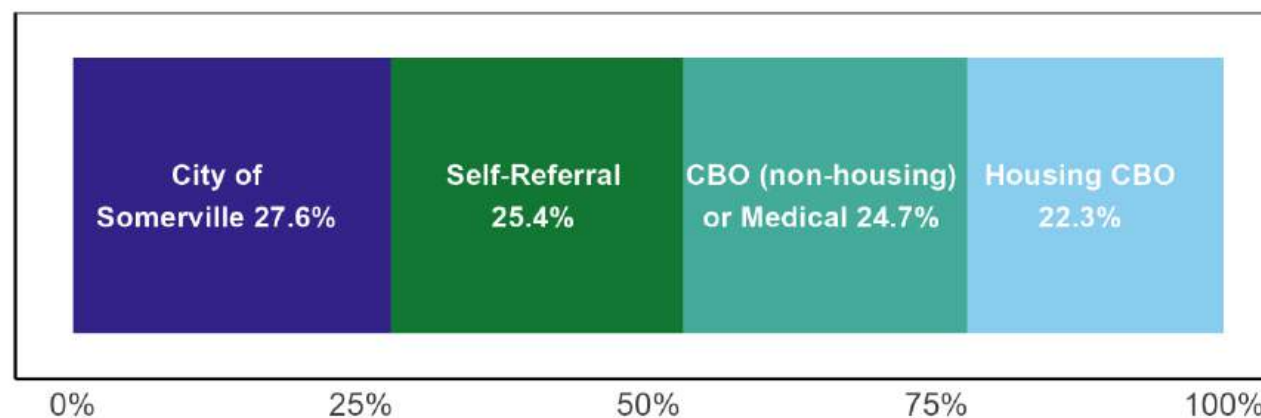
The Taxi to Health Program



The program **supplemented the work of service providers** in housing, social work, case management, food access, domestic violence response, jail diversion, public health nursing, and patient resource coordination at medical institutions, among others.

Direct referrals to the program came from:

- City of Somerville service providers (ex: Health and Human Services, Somerville Police Dept's CoHR team, Somerville Public Schools, Veteran's Services)
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs) focused on Housing (ex: Clarendon Hill Towers, Catholic Charities, Respond Inc, Somerville Housing Authority)
- Other CBOs and medical institutions (ex: Project SOUP, Riverside Early Head Start, ROCA, Cambridge Health Alliance)
- Self-Referral: Participants heard about the program through OFHAC's outreach, from friends and neighbors, or indirectly through a service provider



The Taxi to Health Program



How did participants use the program?

Participants took **3 rides per month on average**.

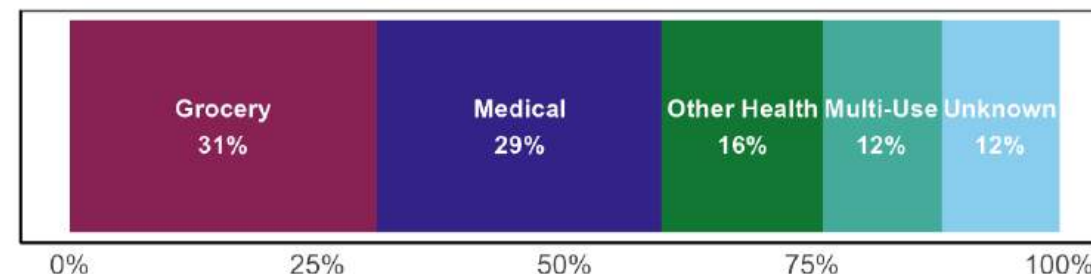
80% of participants used **4 vouchers or fewer per month**.

Participants described using vouchers to:

- carry **heavy bags of food** home from the grocery or food pantry
- go to a **cheaper grocery store** or one that had more **culturally comfortable products**
- get to appointments that were far away or in areas **poorly served by public transit**
- to take a **family member with a disability to appointments**

among other reasons.

What kinds of needs did participants meet with the program?



What were the most common destinations (Apr 2022-Oct 2024)?

Name	City	Type	Rides
Market Basket Somerville	Somerville	Food Access	1191
Project SOUP	Somerville	Food Access	1144
Stop & Shop McGrath	Somerville	Food Access	516
Star Market Twin City	Somerville	Food Access	239
Trader Joe's Assembly	Somerville	Food Access	146
CHA Cambridge Hospital	Cambridge	Medical	701
Mass General Hospital	Boston	Medical	205
CHA Somerville Hospital	Somerville	Medical	185
CHA Assembly Square Care Center	Somerville	Medical	182
CHA Broadway Care Center	Somerville	Medical	135
On The Rise	Cambridge	Social Services	275
City Hall Annex	Somerville	Social Services	202
CVS Davis Square/SHC Engagement	Somerville	Social Services	172

The Taxi to Health Program



- Some quotes from our end of program survey evaluation:
- *"I have a child with autism - it was really helpful to be able to get to appointments. I didn't have to wait or worry about transport. "*
- *"Getting to BMC was hassle free; the cab ride enabled me to have the option of not having to worry about paying to go to the doctors. the cost and thought of having to pay worried me"*
- *"When I've fallen at home, getting to the hospital to receive care with the vouchers was simple and easy; I can't even describe how much it has been helpful and great for my life."*
- *"Not having to worry about carrying too many bags, groceries on the bus; feeling happy to be able to get to places on time and not late"*

Expanding Food Access Across Somerville Participatory Budgeting Projects



Somerville High School Culinary Arts Prepared Meals

As part of the City Of Somerville's first **Participatory Budgeting initiative, \$55,000** was designated to increase free food access for residents in need.

OFAHC has partnered with the Culinary Arts program at Somerville High School, providing farm fresh produce and other foods, packaging materials and equipment to help in the **creation of prepared meals**, which are now being distributed to residents experiencing food insecurity through community fridges and other ways.



Expanding Food Access Across Somerville Prepared Meals for Residents in Need



In partnership with Food For Free's Heat and Eats program and the SHS Culinary Arts program, facilitated the distribution of over **3,200 nutritious, high quality prepared meals to Somerville residents**. Regular recipients included clients of our Human Services Case Managers, visitors to the Community Fridges, and residents of the Mass Bay Veteran's Center on North Street.



Financial Liaison to Non-Profits



- Food for Free
 - This calendar year, OFAHC supported getting ARPA funds to Food for Free to run **3 food access** programs including:
 - Just Eats Boxes
 - Carrot Cards
 - School Markets
- Inclusive Farmers Markets and Universal SNAP Match
 - Use your SNAP card at any Somerville Farmers Market (Winter, Davis or Union) to **get an additional \$15 per week to spend on SNAP eligible** products.

Other Partnerships



- Support **high school culinary students** in working with **Green City Growers** to learn about hydroponic **growing system** and **food prep**.
- Support **Groundwork Somerville** with activities at **Mystic Community Garden**.
- Help unload food and serve families at **monthly school markets** alongside school staff and led by Somerville Family Learning.



Above: boxes of food from Food For Free to be used for a school market.

Left – garden beds and hydroponic vertical system. Basil being harvested and used for pesto for a tasty pizza by culinary student.

Other Partnerships



- Presented at **three Tufts undergraduate and graduate classes** and partnered with Professor Cathy Stanton's class on a semester-long project examining growing spaces.



Tufts Professor Cathy Stanton in City Hall Chambers with her undergraduate fieldwork labs class after they presented their semester-long project on Growing Food in Somerville.

Completed our annual Pedestrian Safety Training for **all 2nd graders** in Somerville in partnership with the District Wellness Coordinator and Early Ed high school students the mobility division and Mass DOT –Safe Routes to School.



Early Ed high school students practice with students looking left-right-left before crossing the street.

Outreach & Engagement



Alissa and Sean from OFAHC at Carnival in June 2024

- We continue to use a variety of methods to connect with the Somerville community including:
 - **Tabling** at community events
 - Presenting at meetings to **share information** about resources, programs and policies.
 - Run seasonal community-wide **meetings**
 - **Host** Tufts interns
 - **Speaking** at Tufts and High school classes

Coordinate the Somerville Food Coalition



Two-way communication to ensure the priorities of constituents are known and addressed on a community and city level.

Partner to improve food access and nutrition security needs.



- Maintain [Somerville Food Coalition Website](#) and add capacity to Instagram and mailing list communications.
- Coordinate monthly Steering Committee meetings.
- Support quarterly SFC full meetings.
- Steering Committee Members: determine direction and goals of the group and topics for the quarterly meetings.
- Outreach & Engagement working group: boost SFC activities.
- Coalition members: engage through quarterly meetings and stay-up-to-date via group email list.

Produced and maintain multilingual materials that highlight community resources



Parks Map updated June 2024



PlaceMap updated and printed April 2024

Somerville Food Resources

Food Pantries

Food4All 59 Cross St. Tuesday 10:30am - 1:00pm Wednesday 9am-12pm (617) 776-7515 For Tuesday only, tickets for food pickup are distributed beginning at 8:30am for line control.	Project SOUP 165 Broadway Tuesday 12pm - 4pm Wednesday 10am - 3pm Thursday 2pm - 7pm Friday 10am - 3pm Saturday 9am - 12pm (617) 776-7587 Proof of Somerville address is needed	Elizabeth Peabody House 277 Broadway Wednesday 5pm - 7pm Thursday 10am - 12pm Sunday 10am - 3pm (617) 625-6510 www.100.org/food-bank No ID needed	Shepherd's Kitchen 130 Highland Ave First Saturday of the month, 10am - 12pm (857) 549-9161 Walk-up only. No ID or registration needed
Mystic Community Market 291 Mystic Ave, Medford Appointment and walk-in Make appointments at: https://www.mysticmarket.org/food-security/mystic-community-market No ID or residency documentation needed	East End House 105 Spring St, Cambridge Tuesday 12pm - 2pm Friday 12pm - 2pm (617) 876-4444 ID and income verification needed	Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House 71 Cherry St, Cambridge Wednesday 4pm - 6:30pm Thursday 4pm - 5pm Friday 9am - 12pm Saturday 10am - 1pm (617) 547-4680 Proof of Massachusetts address and registration needed	

Free Community Meals

Monday Night Meal
 89 College Ave
 (First) Congregational Church of Somerville
 Every Monday from 4:30pm - 6:00pm (except holidays)
 by Project SOUP/Somerville Homeless Coalition

Dormition Family Table
 29 Central Street
 First Wednesday of Each Month, 4pm - 6pm
 by Dormition of the Virgin Mary Church

Hearty Meals for All
 31 College Ave
 (Community Baptist Church)
 Second Friday of Each Month, 5pm - 7pm

Come To The Table
 149 Broadway (Coronet Church)
 Every Wednesday, 5pm - 7pm

Community Fridges

Open to all, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Take what you need.

Winter Hill
 275 Broadway, on Grant Street side

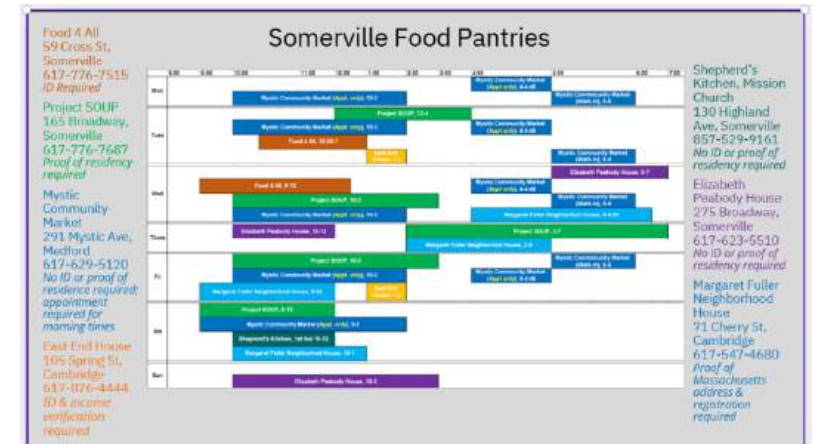
Union Square
 35 Prospect Street

St. Clement Parish
 33 St. Clement Road (Medford)

Need transportation assistance?
Senior Transit Program (50+ or adults with documented disabilities)
 2 food rides per month. Must be scheduled 2 business days in advance. Contact the Council on Aging - 617-625-6600 x 2335.

For more information and resources, call Soon at (617) 625-6600 x 4325 or visit somervillefoodcoalition.org

Our widely circulated Food Resource flyer



Food Pantry schedule

How can I use benefits to shop at a farmers market in Somerville?

Have SNAP? Get the most from your benefits through the Massachusetts Healthy Incentive Program (HIP) and the Somerville SNAP match.

What is HIP?
 MA gives every SNAP household extra money to buy fruits and vegetables at any farmers market.

How much do you get? Families of 1-2 get \$40, 3-5 get \$60, and 6+ get \$80 per month.

What can you buy? You can use HIP for fruits and vegetables or fruit and vegetable seeds or seedlings. You cannot buy fruits and vegetables with added ingredients like jam or salsa.

How do you use it? You must have SNAP money on your EBT card to use HIP, but you do not spend any of your SNAP money. Swipe your EBT card to purchase HIP-eligible items. The money will immediately be refunded to your SNAP balance, and you can see this on your receipt.

Want to learn more? Scan the QR code below or check our mass.gov/hip.

What is the SNAP Match?
 Somerville supports a SNAP match for SNAP households to get twice as much value for every dollar of SNAP they spend at farmers markets.

Where? You can use the Somerville SNAP Match at the Davis Union, and Winter Farmers markets!

How much do you get? These markets offer a \$1-\$1 match up to \$15 per week.

What can you buy? You can purchase any food that is eligible for SNAP at the market.

How do you use it? Stop by the market managers booth to swipe your EBT card for up to \$15. They will give you up to \$30 of tokens to spend at the market.

Have more questions about HIP? Scan the QR code for a video explainer!

How to use SNAP and HIP at Farmers markets



SNAP support – convene & advocate

Coordinate the SNAP Provider's Practice Group

The monthly SNAP Practice Group brings together 8-12 City and Community Based Organization (CBO) service providers to share updates and advice on SNAP and other DTA program applications.

Divisions and CBOs represented:

- HHS Community Health Workers
- HHS Supportive Services
- HHS SomerPromise
- HHS Council on Aging
- Elizabeth Peabody House
- Project SOUP
- Cambridge Health Alliance
- Community Action Agency of Somerville

Collaboration Highlights

- Shared feedback on DTA systems to inform Mass Law Reform's state level advocacy efforts
- Supported HHS-wide collaboration to become a SNAP Outreach Partner with the DTA
- Engaged experts from GBLS, Mass Law Reform Institute, and SomerViva to inform local providers' work

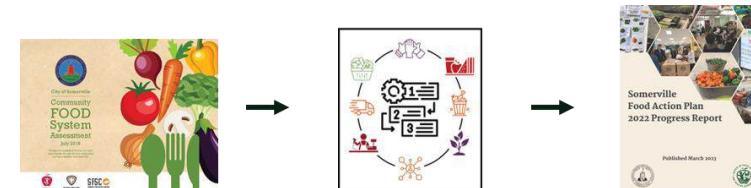
On November 13, 2024 OFAHC staff joined the Mass Food Systems Collaborative, along with Farmers, and Farmers Market Operators Across Massachusetts at the State House to advocate for the restoration of full state funding to the Healthy Incentives Program



We're updating our community food assessment



- OFAHC is organizing a **Community Food System Assessment** to better understand **strengths and gaps** in our local food system



Key Areas of Focus:



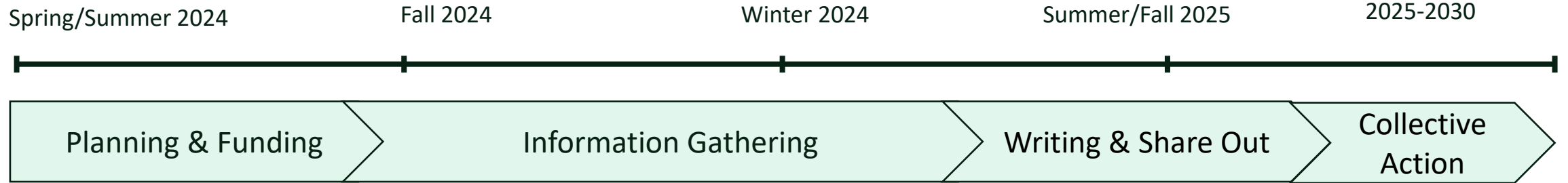
← Monthly Community Advisory Group →

Priority communities: Youth, Older Adults, People with disabilities, people using nutrition benefits or facing food hardship.



Community Food Assessment

Timeline



Goal of our CFA: *in collaboration with many partners and a community advisory group the report will:*

- Provide an **updated snapshot of the local food system**, with a focus on affordable food access.
- Review data from assessment and work with stakeholders to **develop a Food Action Plan**
- Plan will be **a roadmap for OFAHC and others** to improve food access/nutrition security.

Calendar Year 2025 Goals



- **Explore sustainable solutions** to continue some food security programs after ARPA ends in June 2025
- Complete and publicize a **community food assessment** and **food action plan** in partnership with the advisory group
- Continue to **backbone** and strengthen the **Somerville Food Coalition**
- Maintain accurate food resource information on a **variety of platforms** including **websites, social media and flyers**
- Run our **15th season** of the mobile market
- Continue existing partnerships
- Manage new **nutrition security projects** as a result of **community support** via Participatory Budgeting round 2
- Determine next steps for supporting **transit as a driver of health**.

Stay in touch



Reach out:

- Email: ofahc@somervillema.gov
- Office line: 617-625-6600 x4312

Follow us:

- Instagram: somervillefoodaccess
- Facebook: SomervilleOFAHC

Websites:

- Somerville Office of Food Access & Healthy Communities: <https://www.somervillema.gov/ofahc>
- Somerville Mobile Farmers Market: <https://somervillemobilefarmersmarket.wordpress.com/>
- Somerville Food Coalition: <https://somervillefoodcoalition.org/>