



City Council Working Session - OFA, MOIA, Age Strong
May 6th 10 AM

Office of Food Access

Councilor Bok

- What was OFA's budget in FY21 and FY22?
 - See below
- Please provide a breakdown by personnel and non-personnel FY2021 & FY222

FY21 BUDGET BREAKDOWN		
Account	Fund/100	Budget
51000	Permanent Employees	\$359,572.00
52100	Telecommunications	\$1,000.00
52800	Transportation/Travel	\$0.00
52900	Contracted Services	\$412,000.00
53200	Food	\$500.00
53600	Office Supplies	\$1,500.00
54900	Current Charges	\$150.00
Total		\$774,722.00

FY22 BUDGET BREAKDOWN		
Account	Fund/100	Budget
51000	Permanent Employees	\$339,735.00
52100	Telecommunications	\$1,000.00
52900	Contracted Services	\$762,000.00
53200	Food	\$500.00
53600	Office Supplies	\$1,500.00
54900	Current Charges	\$150.00
Total		\$1,104,885.00

- Please provide additional detail regarding how OFA'S budget (FY2021) was spent last year



- FY21 Contract Services Spending \$449,000:
 - BPD OT resubmission and previous funding implementation plan objectives \$ 255,000
 - GBFB Grant \$ 94,000
 - Boston Double Up \$100,000

- FY22 Contracted Services Projections:
 - Boston Double Up Food Bucks Program: \$239,000
 - Community Grants: \$216,000
 - Farmers Market Program:\$106,200
 - GBFB Grant : \$97,000
 - Communications and Outreach: \$50,000
 - BOSFoodLove Program: \$50,000
 - Miscellaneous: \$3,800

- Does Food Access have contracted services? Yes
- What is the nature of these services and how many contractors are local, minority, and/or women owned businesses?
 - The majority of contract services funds in OFA's budget are used to provide grants:
 - GBFB received \$ 94,000. These funds were used to support food pantries in the city.
 - Farmer's market mini-grants: This grant went to the non-profit organizations that run the Farmers Market. The mini-grants were used for farmers market coupons and the implementation of the COVID -19 security protocol implementation.
 - For additional services, we follow the equitable procurement protocol.
- What will your FY22 investments fund?
 - **Boston Double Up Program \$100,000:** If this new investment is approved for FY2022, the funds will be used for incentives for fresh food and vegetable purchases for SNAP at the stores participating in the program.
 - **Safety Net programs Awareness Campaign \$50,000:** Food Security awareness and education campaigns will be focused on decreasing the stigma and normalizing the usage of programs and services available for food-insecure communities; Increasing accurate information on how the program works, and what determines eligibility. The campaign will be focused primarily on Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, and East Boston, which have either high rates of food insecurity, low utilization of programs offered, and/or a sizable SNAP gap.



- **Community Food Access Initiative grants \$ 200,000** OFA will provide support to community-sourced solutions that could lead to more affordable, sustainable, and culturally and linguistically appropriate food systems through grants. We will be opening these grant opportunities to Nonprofit organizations, cooperatives, or collectives working on food security and food access. We will prioritize projects that are led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and/or people with lived experience with food insecurity, including immigrants and people living with disabilities. A project with authentic community ownership and that provides fair compensation for all the members involved in the project.

Eligible projects can include different community-driven solutions to create a more just food system that empowers communities to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Projects could include growing or making food (gardening, incubator or community kitchens, etc), moving/distributing food (group purchasing, new delivery systems or solutions), selling food (retail or prepared), food waste recovery or food marketing, providing free or emergency food or meals.

- What did you do with your BPD OT resubmission budget allocation in FY21?
 - Increased Staff Capacity: **\$85,000**
 - Outreach and Communication Director \$68,000
 - School Food Insecurity Specialist fringe costs \$17,000
 - Salary for this position paid by Share Our Strength grant funding
 - Farmers Market Coupons: **\$55,600**
 - Mini-grants for the implementation of COVID 19 protocols \$5,500 (11 farmer's markets)
 - OFA mini-grants for farmers market coupons 2020 \$24,500 (7 farmer's
 - Winter 2020 Farmers Market Coupons \$ 25,600 (5 farmer's markets)
 - Emergency Food Response **\$65,272**
 - Emergency Food Coordinator salary \$40,000
 - Emergency food distributions: Nov-Dec Food Distribution: \$ 20,472
 - Surplus USDA Boxes distribution --March & April: \$3,600
 - Thanksgiving Food Distribution: \$1,200
 - Food Access Assessment: **\$50,000**
- Could you discuss your FTEs and what they are doing?



- *Director*: Provides support and guidance to the OFA team. Strategically plan how to achieve the goals of the administration. cultivate old and new internal and external partnerships. Advocate for external funding.
 - *Office Manager and Special Projects*: Process all the contracts, purchase and grants; LCA Liaison, REAL Liaison, Support the Staff in different initiatives.
 - *Program Manager*: Manages the development and implementation of Boston Eats, Boston Double Up and Farmers Market and other programs as needed.
 - *Outreach and Communication Director*: Outreach and Communication Director is responsible for: preparing proactive messaging and educational materials to connect Boston residents with food resources, designing communications campaigns that address food insecurity and the attached stigma, keep partners and Boston residents inform about policy changes that have an impact on food security, Support and elevate OFA and partner organization's work on food security, and effectively communicating Mayor Food Access Agenda.
 - *Deputy Director of Planning and Development*: Support all strategic planning and implementation efforts of the Mayor's Food Access Agenda" and will pursue growth of the office to ensure capacity and effectiveness of those efforts. Engage city departments and external partners, acting as the point of contact for the development of strategic partnerships, programs, and policies. Pursue funding and in-kind opportunities to actualize those strategic efforts and will manage reporting and evaluation to measure impact of their impact and maintain accountability with partners and funders.
 - *The School Food Insecurity Specialist Fellow*: Support existing efforts of BPS Food and Nutrition Services, the Mayor's Office of Food Access, and other school meal partners to increase access to food for BPS students and families and decrease their experience of food insecurity. The fellow work will be to increase awareness of programs around food access and connect BPS students, families, and administrations to these resources in order to support those who are struggling with food access.
- What metrics do we have to measure the food demand across the City? And what are things looking like for FY22?
 - Metrics:
 - Food Pantry participation Data.
 - CBO's food distribution participation data
 - Inquiries to 311, OFA, Age Strong
 - SNAP caseload and SNAP gap
 - Household size
 - meals/ groceries at meal sites distributed



- FY22: Food insecurity levels will remain high until the economy fully recovers. Despite this, we see that this food insecurity will continue to persist in our community until housing insecurity, low wages, stigma associated with food insecurity, immigration reforms, health disparities and poverty are addressed. OFA will continue to support food pantries to provide emergency food, working to close meal gaps and SNAP gaps, supporting programs that empower people to buy and choose the food they need, and want, and provide funds and resources to the community to find localized solutions, and build a more resilient food system.
- How will your responsibilities change as we emerge from the pandemic?
 - As we move toward recovery we will be working addressing the root causes of food insecurity. We will be working more closely with CBOs on connecting residents with sustainable food resources and other programs that can help lift people out of poverty and provide economic mobility. We will be providing support to find community led solutions. We have started working in a more coordinated way with BHA, Age Strong, BPS, and BPDA to find ways to increase food access through the programmatic and planning processes.
- What is your outreach like to the Native and Indigenous communities like?
 - Over the past year we have worked closely with organizations connected to our office through BRF, MOIA, BHA, Age Strong, Main Streets, and other communities organisations. During that time, we had no connection with native and indigenous organizations. As we move through the recovery phase, we are currently reaching out to organizations that were not part of the emergency response to involve them in recovery and renewal. We have sent an email to the North American Indian Center of Boston requesting a meeting. We welcome other suggested organizations that we should reach out to.
- Can you discuss the decrease to Double Up Food Bucks and the Children's Hospital Boston Eats grants in FY22?
 - Boston Double Up: Pilot Program was funded by grants from the USDA and the Dell Foundation. We are currently re-applying for the USDA grant for \$500,000. If awarded, the funds will support the program and will permit expansion to an additional six stores in the city. If OFA does not receive the grant, we currently have \$200,000 allocated for this program in OFA's budget



that will allow it to run the program as it is (no additional expansion or TA to stores) for the following year.

- Boston Eats Grant: we are currently going through the last year of the grant. We have funding to run Boston Eats in 2021. We will be re-applying to Boston Children's Hospital Collaboration for Community Health, and we will be seeking funds for the program for the next three years. If the grant is not awarded to OFA, we will be recommending a new investment to support the program in FY2023 and we will continue to apply for additional external funding opportunities.
- What sorts of food access work are we looking to expand or continue with one-time ARP funding, and how are we thinking about avoiding the cliff effect after the ARP funding and other federal grants cease?
 - We are looking to find ways beyond connecting people with existing safety net programs and decreasing stigma. We need to provide opportunities for investments in local community solutions that can strengthen the community food system and address some of the main barriers: affordability, cultural propriety, accessibility, and education. We will not use ARPA funds to finance the programs we currently have in the office.

Councilor Flynn

Would like to see the OFA budget increased significantly

- How does OFA reach out to residents who may face hunger-related issues? In particular, what outreach is done toward seniors, residents with disabilities, those who speak a language other than English, and those who live in public housing?
 - **Communication efforts**

Emergency Response

During the public health emergency the Office of Food Access collaborated with several City departments and agencies including Age Strong Commission, Boston Planning and Development Agency, Boston Public Health Commission, Inspectional Services Department (ISD), Boston Public Schools, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement, and Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics. Additionally, with help from the Boston Resiliency Fund, we supported more than 255 partners working to increase access to food and other basic needs for Boston residents.

As part of our emergency response, and given that we were receiving an unprecedented number of calls, we did a chatbot pilot with MONUM for food emergency delivery. The chatbot initially contacted 846 Bostonians in 4 different languages, however only 360 residents engaged with it to order



food at least once. Some Bostonians even used the chatbot food delivery more than once, some of them ordering more than 5 times during the prototype period. Amongst those that ordered more than once, they ordered on average every 8 days.

OFA's communication efforts were mainly centered on our community-based-organizations, as they are the experts in their communities and they have the residents' trust to speak about topics such as food insecurity. To help our CBOs, OFA set up a form for them to ask for printed updated information about food resources and safety net programs such as SNAP, P-EBT, WIC, and HIP in 12 different languages. Additionally, our team hosts a bi-weekly check-in meeting with immigrant serving organizations. We also have weekly calls with all the Organizations that have been involved in responding to emergencies. The invitation is open to all organizations in the city of Boston that want to participate. Additionally, we send an email every week updating all CBOs of changes in the food distribution programs, other available resources and opportunities for external funding sources. Lastly, we have a living document that CBOs can add their weekly needs, challenges, and successes to. OFA monitors the difficulties that arise in the network and shares good practices and successes.

Additionally, OFA also ramped up the efforts to connect people to enroll in safety net programs and with help from BRF, funded and partnered with Project Bread to make an assessment specifically for SNAP enrollment. This assessment helped inform our outreach and communications strategy moving forward.

Recovery Response

For our recovery response we are focusing on two main lines of work. First streamlining and cross-referencing programs so people are aware of the different benefits they can access. Second, transitioning residents from food emergency programs to sustainable and long-term programs.

On the cross-referencing side, we continue to maintain our outreach form for CBOs to ask for printed material. We've now included other departments' information (DND, Age Strong, MOIA). Additionally, we are piloting an SMS outreach program (chatbot style) to Rental Relief Fund referrals from the Department of Neighborhood Development. We will be reaching out to those that are accepted to be contacted via text message. For those that marked email as a preferred contact method we will also be reaching out to them via



email. We have also worked closely with the Health Line to provide them with tailored outreach material for MassHealth enrollees.

As COVID-19 vaccination rates increase and COVID-19 infection rates decrease, we are connecting people to sustainable programs such as SNAP, WIC, HIP, Double Up Food Bucks, and Farmers Markets Coupons. As part of this effort, OFA is planning a city-wide Safety-Net Programs de-stigmatizing campaign, together with grants to support community based organizations that are already working on this space, and are trusted by their communities.

Targeted Communication Efforts

Seniors + Public Housing

The Office of Food Access works very closely with the Age Strong Commission and Boston Housing Authority to make sure residents are provided with the resources available to them. OFA also holds check-in meetings with these two departments to coordinate efforts and make sure staff is updated. A possibility that has been identified by OFA, together with BHA is promoting urban gardening in a couple of their locations. We are exploring possibilities to source raised beds for identified locations.

Non-English speakers

OFA is very conscious of the language barrier that people face when accessing different services. That is why we work closely with MOIA and community based organizations to make sure our communication pieces are appropriate, relevant, and engaging for non-english speaking residents. Our vital documents we translate them to 12 different languages: spanish, haitian creole, cape verdean creole, french, vietnamese, french, chinese traditional, chinese simplified, russian, arabic, and somali.

- Having access to healthy food is critical, especially for children. Please talk about your partnerships with other city departments, including Age Strong, BPS, and BCYF.

Since March 2020, we have been working closely with Age Strong providing food to the elderly population through the emergency feeding program and connecting this population with SNAP, HIP, and Double Up.

For the past four years, we have worked with BPS increasing participation and consumption of school meals and closing the summer meal gap. In the last 13 months, we have worked very closely to make sure there are no food



gaps for the youth of the city. BCYF currently distributes youth meals and groceries at nine locations.

- What are some programs that would enable families to buy healthy foods like fresh fruit and vegetables?
 - Farmers Markets Coupons can be used to buy fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, eggs and bread at farmers markets
 - HIP: SNAP Incentive program for locally grown fruit and vegetables at the farmers market, CSA program, and mobile markets.
 - Boston Double Up Program: SNAP matching program for fruits, vegetables, and culturally relevant food at corner stores

Councilor Flaherty

- How many FTEs does Food Access have? Do we need to expand the department to ensure they are sufficiently staffed to tackle the food issue?
 - The OFA team is well staffed to manage the programs and initiatives that currently have. We are working on improving our system to connect and better serve Boston residents. We do not foresee a need for additional staff at this moment

Councilor Arroyo

- Can OFA talk a bit about the decreases in external funds, including the Children's Hospital - Boston EATS grant, the Double Up Food Bucks grant, and the Strategic Planning grant? What did these grants fund and how will those operations be funded with these new decreases? **See Above**
- What specifically will the new investments in OFA fund? **See Above**
- What specifically did OFA do with its increased investment last year from the BPD OT budget reallocation? **See Above**
- What will staffing (FTEs) look like for OFA in FY22? What did it look like in FY21? **See Above**
 - What will FTEs look like for your department in FY22?
 - 5FTEs
 - 1 Fellow: This position is grant funded. The grant will end in October 2021. We will seek an extension of the grant for this position.