



Policy Codesign to Improve Food Access & Promote Racial Equity

Ginna Hernandez, Policy Analyst, PHSKC

Barbara Barquero, Assistant Professor, University of
Washington

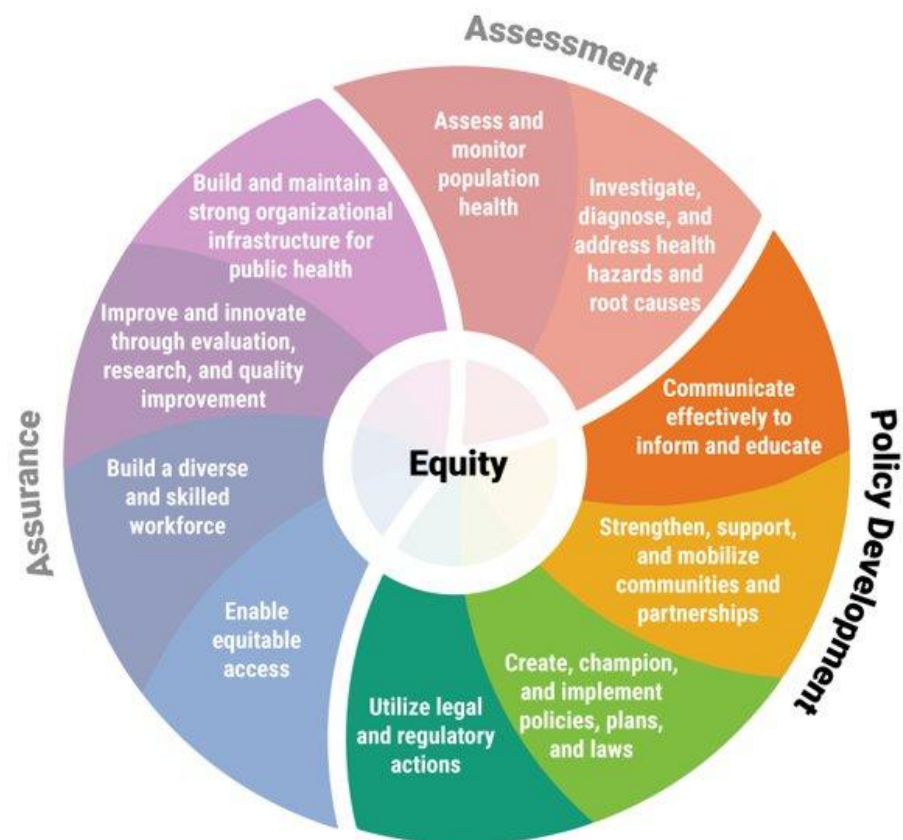
King County Board of Health, January 29, 2026





Why Codesign Policy Solutions?

- Framework for how to include multiple **perspectives**
- Including a variety of perspectives ensures that **policy solutions** meet **community needs** while being **feasible** in the eyes of policy makers
- Creative problem-solving using **human-centered** design thinking





2024-2029 Public Health Strategic Plan

- Serve as a bold leader in policy development and change
- Develop subject matter experts' ability to assess the impact of proposed policy changes and to propose new policies
- Use data and community input to guide policy development and change
- kingcounty.gov/health/strategicplan





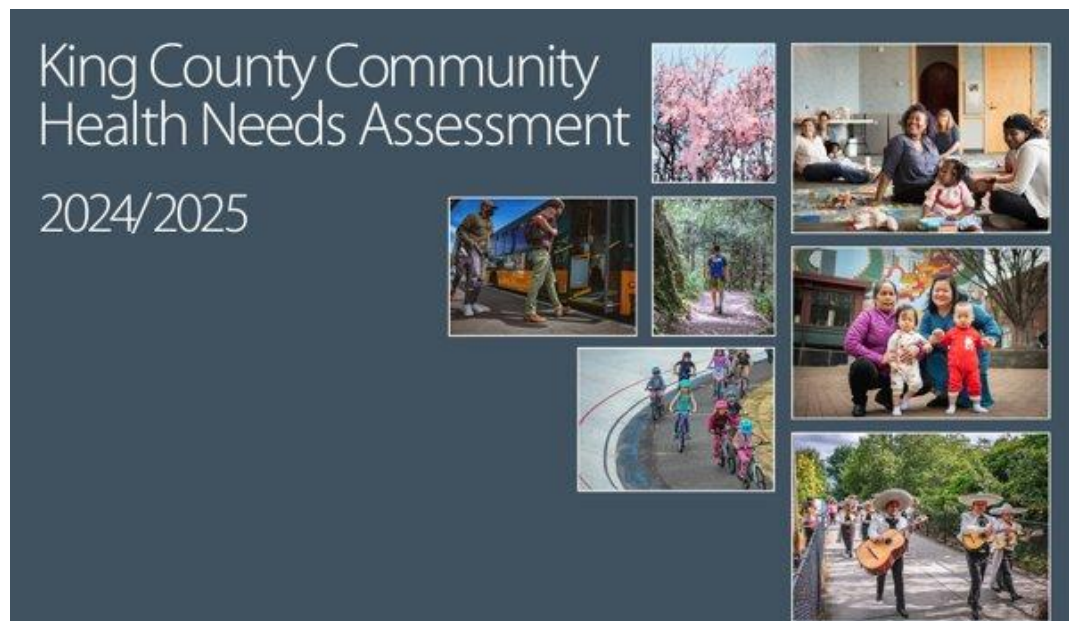
Food Access is a Community Health Priority

3x
County average

Food insecurity for Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander adults is nearly three times the county average

2.5x
higher

For transgender adults, the rate is nearly 2.5 times higher than for cisgender adults

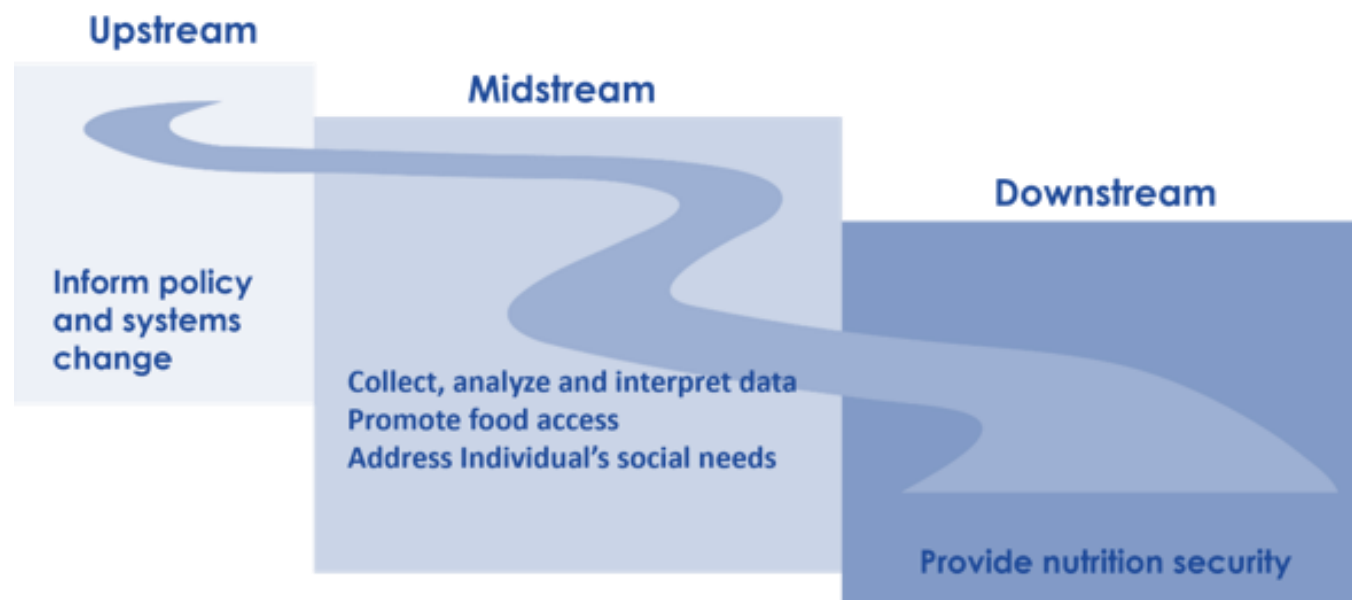


The King County [Community Health Needs Assessment 2024/2025](#) and Community Navigators identified food access as a priority



Goals and Outcomes

- Pilot a Codesign project to be replicated for future topics
- Address upstream drivers that lead to food insecurity
- Policy recommendation tailored to Public Health - Seattle & King County
- Create toolkit for other health departments

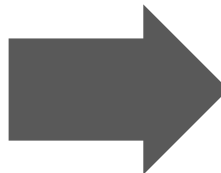




Policy Codesign is a Participatory, Creative Process

10-15 people come together to develop policy recommendations

Identify shared values, review policy information and discuss community experiences



Collectively create a list of policy recommendations ranking policies from highest to lowest priority

Develop an implementation plan to ensure the recommendations move forward



The codesign team
developed **policy
recommendations** to
improve food access





Recruited a Multiple Sector Codesign Team



American
Heart
Association®



AntiHUNGER
& Nutrition
COALITION

FOOD
LIFELINE
HUNGER DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN

MEMBER OF
FEEDING
AMERICA



KCRHA
King County Regional Homelessness Authority



FEEDING
FEASIBLE
FEASTS
NO ONE LIES ABOUT BEING HUNGRY

solid
ground
Building community to end poverty



Seattle

UTOPIA
WASHINGTON



SAFEWAY



Additional Teams Offered Broader Perspectives

Health
Equity Anti
Racism
Community
Advisory
Group

Community knowledge

Consisted of grassroots organizations and people with firsthand experience. 12 members.

Food
Systems
Advisory
Council

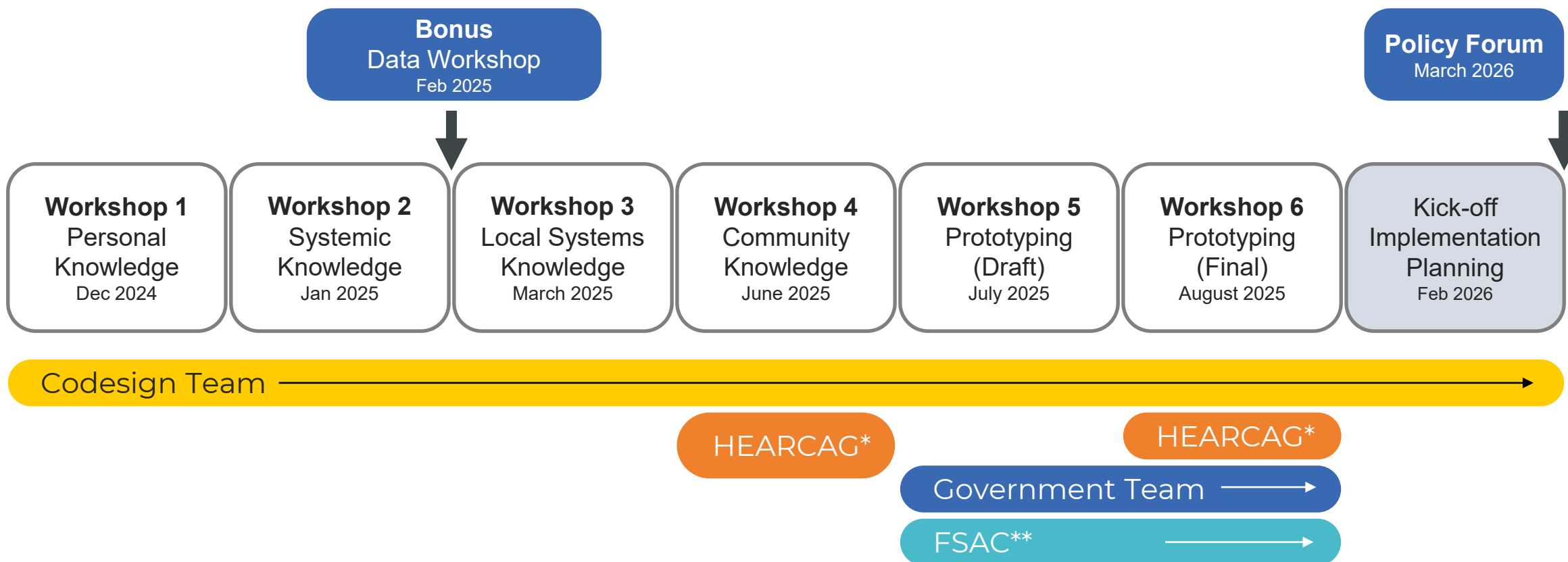
Advisory team

8 members from King County's Local Food Initiative Food Systems Advisory Council

Government
Team

Advisory team

7 King County staff members working toward better food access



* HEARCAG: Health Equity and Anti-Racism Community Advisory Group

** FSAC: Food System Advisory Council

Workshops 1- 4

- Completed a policy review and evaluated evidence
- Mapped King County services, systems, funding and how people interact with them
- Heard from communities with lived experience



Results: Common emerging themes used to develop policy principles



Second Phase: **Prototyping** *Workshop 5*

- Developed a set of policy principles which served as the criteria for choosing policy strategies



Pursue bold systems changes towards food sovereignty rooted in the idea that food is a basic right.



Center people experiencing food insecurity and the community-based organizations that serve them in policy design and implementation.



Leverage and strengthen existing infrastructure and systems, including removing barriers and restrictive processes that hinder food access.



Engage continuously with community-based organizations in programs and solutions.



Protect and improve food access for communities through **economic and community development**.



Second Phase: Prototyping

Workshop 6

- Developed three policy strategies based on the policy principles



Guaranteed Basic Income

Guaranteed cash payments to people meeting certain eligibility requirements to buy what they need most



Countywide Produce Subsidy

Expand and enhance an existing program that provides \$60 monthly benefits for fruits and vegetables



Healthy Food Retail in Low-Income Areas

Support grocery stores in underserved areas to ensure neighbors have places to buy nutritious foods.



Voting Criteria for Policy Strategies

Factor	Low	High
Political will		
Time		
Cost/money		
Public supporters		
Opposition		
Existing efforts		
Impact – numbers of people		
Alignment with policy principles		
Will this activate allies? i.e. forum attendees		



Recommended Policy: Countywide Produce Subsidy

- Recognizes the success of the Fresh Bucks program
- Builds on an already supported and widely recognized model
- Offers opportunities to expand the network of participating retailers
- Serves as a local response to recent SNAP cuts
- Closest to giving people cash

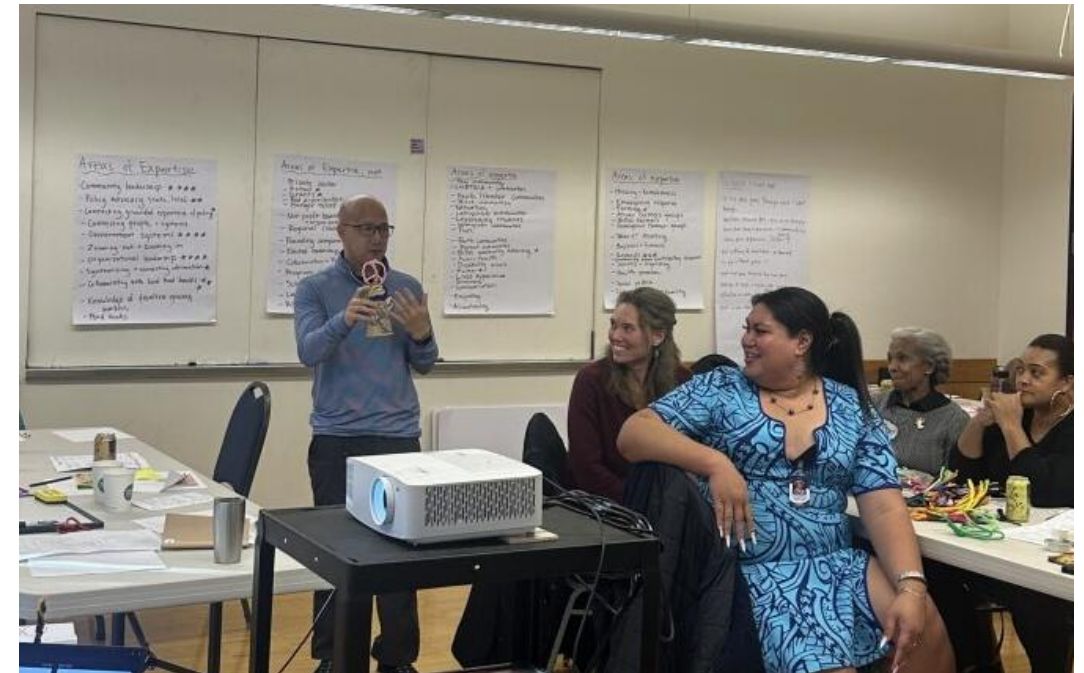
ELECTRONIC MONTHLY CASH BENEFIT SPECIFICALLY FOR PURCHASING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES





Reflections from Codesign Members

- Able to share lessons learned from our direct services
- Elevate the voices of the communities Codesign members partner with
- Help shape policies that reflect real need
- Align with King County's goals for equitable, community driven solutions



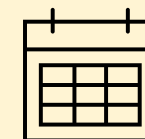


Next Step: Community Sounding Board

- Host a food insecurity policy forum to raise awareness, collect feedback and build momentum around policy funding and community strategies to improve food access.



- “Food Access Now: Advancing Local Solutions to Food Insecurity” is **scheduled** for March 24, 2026, at Highline College.





Thank you!

Questions? Contact:

KCBOHAdmin@kingcounty.gov



For accessibility concerns or complaints contact: ADAPublicHealth@kingcounty.gov