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Food Assistance Advisory Committee Meeting

June 26, 2025 11:00am – 12:30pm

## Present

Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline

Adrian Soliz, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Ahndrea Blue, Esq. Eloise Cooking Pot

Aja Bridge, Rural Resources Community Action

Amanda Sparks, Orcas Food Bank

Andra Smith, Sequim Food Bank

Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition

Emily Straw, Clark County Food Bank

Erik Mora, Blue Mountain Action Council

Erin Kester, WSDA Food Assistance

Heidi Cobun, WSDA Food Assistance

James Scovel, WSDA Food Assistance

Kim Eads, WSDA Food Assistance

Kyla Tucker, Washington Food Coalition (WFC)

Kyle Merslich, WSDA Food Assistance

Lonnie Walls, Community Action Council (CDCAC)

Mallorie Shellmer, WSDA Food Assistance

Michelle Douglas, Emergency Food Network

Mike Hatada, WSDA Food Assistance

Petra Vallila-Buchman, Ross Strategic (Facilitator)

Sam Walker, Emergency Food Network

Stasia Hazelwood, OCCAC

Trish Twomey, Washington Food Coalition (WFC)

Yamila Sterling, Solid Ground

## Welcome and Housekeeping

Erik Mora (BMAC Food Bank Director and FAAC Chair) welcomed attendees and invited them to share their names and affiliations in the chat. He also encouraged participants to keep their cameras on for the first 15 minutes.

The April 2025 FAAC Meeting Minutes were approved. Aja Bridge (Rural Resources) moved to approve, and Sam Walker (EFN) seconded.

## Anticipated Organizational Changes & 3-Month Outlook

Participants shared updates on organizational changes and short-term outlooks. Key themes included:

**1. Widespread Uncertainty and Funding Challenges**

* Erik (BMAC) described a murky outlook tied to contract timing.
* Michelle (EFN) noted disruptions to CSFP and challenges with new federal contract language.
* Claire (AHNC) highlighted threats to SNAP-Ed and WIC funding in federal legislation.

**2. Programmatic Adjustments and Service Reductions**

* Amanda (Orcas Food Bank) expressed concern about sustaining nutritious offerings post-pandemic funding.
* Trish (WFC) and Erik (BMAC) reported reduced service frequency and client choice due to food and staffing shortages.
* Erik also noted the discontinuation of mobile distributions in Walla Walla and a shift toward rural pantry support.

**3. Strategic Planning and Organizational Shifts**

* Aaron (Food Lifeline) shared the launch of a new Community Impact Plan focused on:
  + Network resilience and technical assistance
  + Equitable access and culturally relevant food
  + Community power through organizing and advocacy
  + Merging community programs and advocacy teams
* Food Lifeline aims to infuse $1 million into the local food economy and is seeking $10 million to meet food sourcing needs.

**4. Anticipated Cuts and Policy Impacts**

* Claire warned of state-level budget cuts and urged preparation for leaner times.
* Yamila (Solid Ground) echoed concerns about SNAP funding uncertainty and its impact on family nutrition programs.

## EFAP and EFAP-Tribal Biannual Meeting Process Experience

Participants reflected on the EFAP and EFAP-Tribal biannual meeting process. Key takeaways included:

* **Streamlined Application Process:** The updated application was praised for being simpler and more efficient. WSDA staff, especially Heidi and Mallory, were commended for their support.
* **Need for Standardized Site Screening:** Participants called for a consistent process to evaluate new sites and avoid duplication of services.
* **Value of WSDA Presence:** WSDA’s attendance at meetings was seen as essential for real-time clarification and support.
* **Mixed Experiences with Meeting Tools:** The WSDA-provided minutes tool was helpful but inflexible. Many used a second document for note-taking.
* **Sub-Agency Engagement Challenges**: Some sub-agencies were unprepared due to staff turnover. Suggestions included pre-meeting training and required orientation.
* **Conflict Resolution Needs:** Some meetings experienced tension between sub-agencies. Participants suggested conflict resolution training or facilitation support.

## Training Needs and Interests

Breakout discussions identified the following training priorities:

* Best Practices: For both new and long-standing staff; interest in one-on-one coaching and idea exchanges.
* Fiscal Operations: Including expenditure reporting, audit prep, and QuickBooks for nonprofits.
* Onboarding Support: For new sub-agencies and staff, including team management and collaboration.
* Advocacy & Legislative Engagement: Especially for smaller organizations. Claire Lane (AHNC) offered to partner with WFC on this.

## WSDA Updates

Presented by Kim Eads & James Scovel (WSDA Food Assistance)

**Funding Overview**

* WSDA is managing both ongoing and new funding, including a $93.25 million allocation.
* New funding supports EFAP, EFAP Tribal, Farm to Food Pantry, and the Food Rescue Grant Program.
* Bridge funding will consolidate CSFP and TEFAP GAP programs.

**Program Shifts**

* WSDA will exit direct food purchasing, shifting to pass-through funding.
* Trish (WFC) and Claire (AHNC) asked clarifying questions about this transition. Kyle noted that details are forthcoming.

**Strategic Considerations**

* Funding decisions were informed by:
  + Loss of COVID-era funding
  + Rising demand and food costs
  + Rural access challenges
  + Cuts across related sectors (e.g., housing, staffing)

**Program Priorities**

* Doubling of EFAP and EFAP Tribal funding
* Increased investment in resiliency grants and community engagement
* Simplified agreements
* Continued support for local food access and farmer partnerships

**Projected Food Volume**

* TEFAP Supply: $13 million below 2024 levels due to CCC product cancellations.
* Bonus Purchases: Expected in July–August but won’t close the gap.
* Spending to Date: $30.5 million; 25 million pounds of food distributed.
* Cost Efficiency: Price per pound has dropped to $1.22 (from $1.42 in 2022).
* Client Demand: 353,000 families and 1 million individuals served monthly.
* Upcoming Deliveries: 59 trucks of fresh produce expected July–September. Emphasis on quick distribution to prevent spoilage.

## WFC Committee Updates

Claire Lane (AHNC) provided an update on the succession planning process for Trish Twomey’s upcoming retirement:

* A committee is finalizing the new Executive Director job description.
* The hiring timeline was adjusted to avoid overlap with Trish, who will remain through year-end.
* Claire encouraged attendees to help amplify the job posting once it’s live.

## Good of the Order

*[Insert upcoming dates, events, or deadlines here]*