



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health
South Metropolitan Population Health Unit

Pathway

to improving food security



A Guide for Local Government

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The South Metropolitan Population Health Unit respectfully acknowledges the Aboriginal people both past and present, the traditional owners of the land on which we work.

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1. Introduction

Pathway to a Healthy Community

This guide has been developed as part of a series of supplementary tools designed to support the implementation of the *Pathway to a Healthy Community: A guide for Councillors*¹

The purpose of this guide is to support and assist local governments across the South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) area to develop a plan to improve food security at a local level.

Local governments are becoming more directly involved in managing food security issues and are ideally placed to facilitate a coordinated response in creating supportive environments for health and wellbeing.

Food is an essential part of our daily lives and is an integral part of the Australian society. Having reliable access to affordable, nutritious and safe food is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of the community. Meeting the challenges and seizing the opportunities to improve our food supply can create enormous social, economic and environmental benefits².

This guide provides a practical overview on the:

- benefits of food security and the risks of food insecurity
- role of local government in improving food security
- steps required to plan, implement and evaluate food security strategies
- strategies that have been shown to improve food security.

The guide applies key health promotion principles, to:

- ensure all public policies, not just health policies, contribute in some way to improving people's health
- create social and physical environments that encourage and support health and wellbeing
- develop people's personal skills and knowledge about their own health and wellbeing
- strengthen communities to support health and wellbeing improvement
- ensure services are effective, efficient and accessible to all and have a stronger role in preventing illness and disease.³

¹Department of Health. 2010. *Pathway to a Healthy Community: A guide for councillors*, South Metropolitan Health Unit, Perth.

²DAFF. 2013. *National Food Plan: Our food future*, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra.

³World Health Organization 1986, WHO Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. First International Conference on Health Promotion: WHO, Ottawa, Canada.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the *National Preventative Health Strategy 2020*, the *Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012-2016* and the *National Food Plan 2013*. These strategies contain information to improve and promote health and wellbeing by improving food security.

The South Metropolitan Population Health Unit (SMPHU) acknowledges that there are a number of ways that local government can act to improve food security and that each local government's response will vary to reflect their geographical, political and administrative setting. This will ensure local solutions are best suited to local problems.

2. What is food security?

Food security is “the ability of individuals, households and communities to acquire appropriate and nutritious foods on a regular and reliable basis using socially acceptable means.” Food security is determined by people's local food supply and their capacity and resources to access and use that food.

Source: Department of Health, WA. 2012. *Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012–2016*. Perth: Department of Health, WA.

It is well established that access to fresh and nutritious food is an important contributor to general health, growth, development and the prevention of disease and disability throughout the life span.

There is strong evidence to suggest that increasing the local availability of food, especially fruit and vegetables, is an important strategy to increase healthy eating and prevent chronic disease. Support for a local food supply can also help build a stronger and more sustainable local economy and social support networks.

However, Western Australians do not have equal and reliable access to affordable, nutritious and good quality foods. Our eating behaviours are influenced by the cost and availability of food and drink types and the locations of food outlets, including fast food outlets and grocery stores. Our food supply delivers energy dense, nutrient poor foods at a cheaper price than nutritious foods.

Lower socioeconomic groups, particularly welfare recipients, are particularly disadvantaged by the cost of nutritious foods and therefore are less likely to eat according to dietary guidelines, and are more likely to consume more energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods.

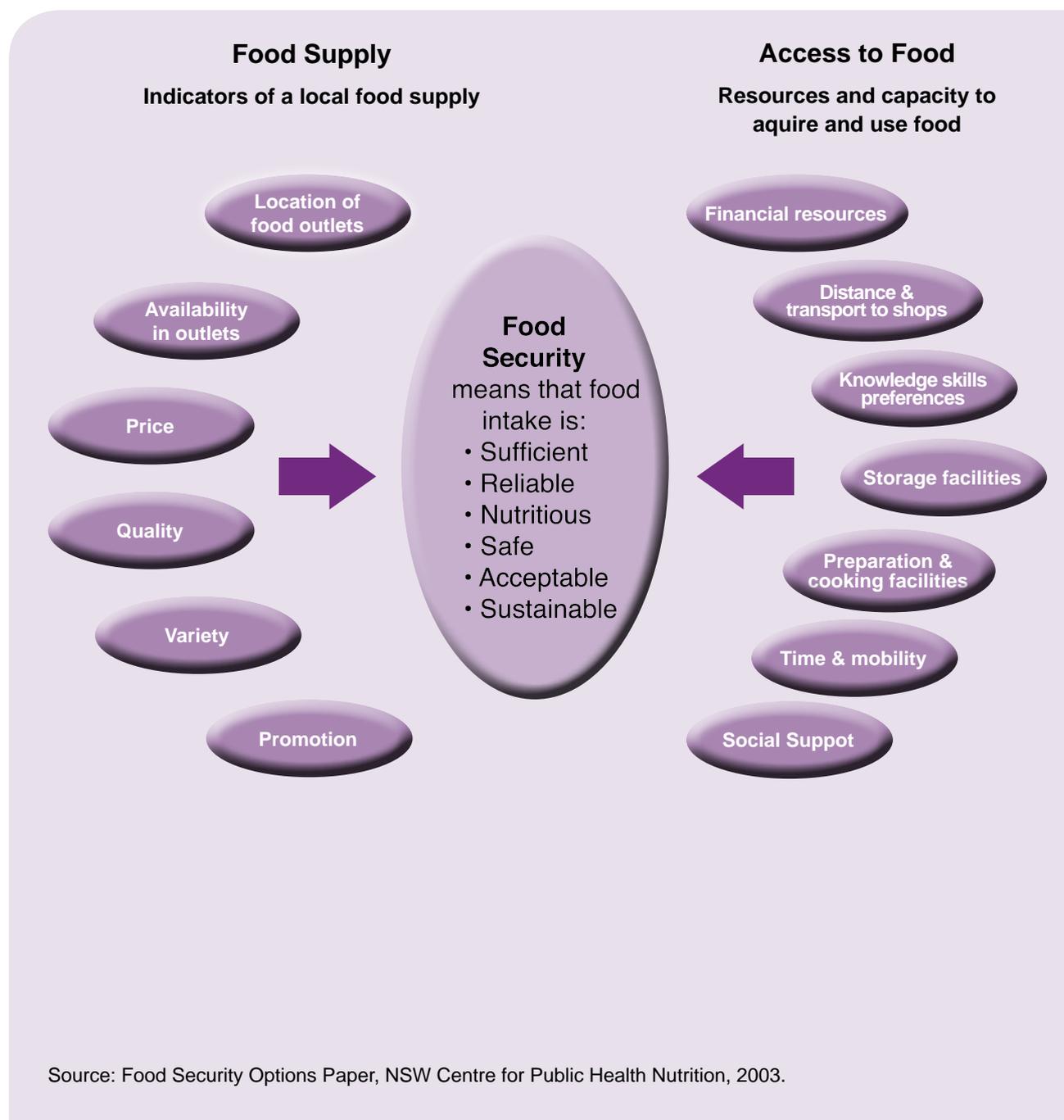
Unsafe foods can result in serious illness, undermine the confidence of the food supply and affect access to export markets. The cost of food borne illness can be significant and result in a loss of productivity, medical costs and even death.

The impacts of urbanisation and the threat of climate change can also put increasing pressure on local food production and the availability of secure local food supplies. The loss of agricultural land and reduction of a sustainable local food supply has resulted in

negative social, economic and environmental impacts on the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Many people face barriers to accessing food that is available. Figure 1 illustrates the major contributors to food security, including the factors that bring food to the consumer and the factors that support consumers to purchase, store and prepare food.

Figure 1: Major contributors to food security



A snapshot of nutrition in Western Australia (Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012–2016)

- Half (49%) of the WA population aged 16 and over met the recommended minimum intake of two serves of fruit everyday and only 11% met the recommended minimum of five serves of vegetables daily in 2011.
- Nearly seven out of ten (69%) of WA children aged 4-15 consumed their recommended daily intake of fruit in 2011, but only half (50%) met their recommended daily intake of vegetables. Older children were less likely to meet recommended daily requirements than younger children.
- In 2011, more than one third (35%) of adults ate meals from fast food outlets at least once a week and two out of five (41%) of children aged 1-15 consumed fast foods at least once a week.
- In 2010, three quarters (75%) of male and more than half (54%) of female secondary school students in WA consumed at least a cup (250ml) of sugar-sweetened beverages per week. National data shows that males ages 16-24 are the highest consumers of soft drinks, drinking an average of almost one litre per day.
- In WA in 2011, seniors (aged 65 and over) were more likely than the rest of the population to suffer from diet-related physiological risk factors such as high blood cholesterol levels and high blood pressure.
- National data show that in 2004-05, metropolitan and regional-dwelling Aboriginal people aged 15 and over were generally less likely to consume recommended amounts of fruit and vegetables than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Aboriginal people living in remote regions were less likely to eat fruit and vegetables than Aboriginal people in non-remote areas, possibly due to poorer access to fresh produce.
- Although Australian guidelines recommend that babies should be exclusively breastfed in their first six months of life, this was the case for fewer than one in five (19%) of infants in WA in 2011.
- In WA in 2010, foods which were of poorer nutritional value were generally cheaper to buy than fresh fruit, vegetables, meats and dairy foods.
- Food costs rise, and the quality and availability of foods tends to decline with increasing distance from major WA cities. In 2010, a typical healthy food basket cost 24% more in very remote areas.
- In 2011, more than 62,000 (3%) of WA adults reported food insecurity, defined in this survey as having run out of food and being unable to buy more any time within the previous 12 months.

Source: Department of Health, WA. 2012. *Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012–2016*. Perth: Department of Health, WA.

3. What is local government's role?

The *Western Australian Local Government Act 1995*⁴ includes the requirement that local government is actively concerned with the social, economic and environmental needs of their communities. In addition, local government is increasingly aiming to build strong, self-reliant and resilient communities.

As illustrated above, food security can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and the community as a whole. This means that improving food security can become a significant local issue for local government.

Of course, responding to food security is not the responsibility of local government alone. For example, the Australian Government has produced a *National Food Plan* to protect and secure Australia's food supply. Both the federal government's *National Preventative Health Strategy 2020* and the state's *Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012–2016* identify food security as a priority action area. There are many other government and community-based organisations that are also involved in food security activities.

Nonetheless, looking at the major contributors to food security in Figure 1, it is clear that local government is active in many of these areas. Within this wide scope, local government can influence key supply and access factors to improve food security.

4. Why plan to improve food security?

Developing a response to improve food security means local government can focus attention on improving the health and wellbeing of the community. It will allow local government to:

- take into account the whole picture, which includes a safe, affordable food supply and ready access to food
- set out their commitment and vision in the context of the health and wellbeing of the community
- work proactively with other stakeholders to identify and implement effective and sustainable strategies
- align its efforts in an integrated way
- describe and monitor the specific action it will take.

⁴Government of Western Australia 1995, *Western Australian Local Government Act 1995*, Perth.

Some of the benefits of working in this way can include:

For the community

- Increased accessibility and affordability of locally available food, especially fruit and vegetables.
- Increased opportunities for economic participation locally through food production, processing, distribution, and associated small business enterprises such as tourism.
- Closer links between consumers and local producers.
- Increased promotion and support for local and regional agriculture, and school and community gardens.
- Improved social, economic and environmental impacts for local producers and the community.
- Improved public health and wellbeing by providing increased access to healthy, culturally appropriate and locally grown foods to priority population groups.
- Sustained high levels of employment and income coming from the food industry.

For the local government

- Raised awareness of other staff and councillors about the benefits of food security.
- Greater collaboration between departments across the organisation to achieve food security.
- Key stakeholders identified and partnerships built with the community and external agencies to ensure the development of an integrated food and healthy eating strategy.
- Greater support for health and wellbeing plans or other strategic planning documents that focus on promoting healthier communities.
- Greater opportunities for collaborative partnerships with the community and external agencies that will assist in creating effective strategies to achieve food security.
- Improved support for funding applications to obtain grants to assist funding of the actions taken to increase food security.
- Improved strategic direction on land use planning and the need for a secure and sustainable local food supply.

5. Where does planning to improve food security fit among local government plans and policies?

Local government is involved in planning and policy development for its community. This can result in policies, plans and strategies that are quite broad, (such as the “*Plan for the Future*”), or more specific, for example, dealing with a particular population group, a geographical area, a topic or a service area.

Many of these policies and plans may already influence food security. In choosing to proactively plan to improve food security, local government will need to consider whether it will:

- adopt a council food security policy
- integrate food security related strategies within other relevant plans
- develop a stand-alone food security plan.

This choice will depend on what meets the needs of each local government. Considerations will include the current circumstances and the prominence of food insecurity by the local government, with stakeholders and in the community.

Either way, it is worth understanding the governance context in order to integrate food security-related issues with other plans and policies to ensure goals or objectives align.

Developing a council food security policy

One way of establishing a council’s high-level intentions in relation to food security is to develop an overarching council food security policy.

Councils are empowered under Section 2.7 of the Local Government Act 1995 to develop policies to further the achievement of their strategic goals or contribute to their statutory obligations. Policies are generally reviewed once every three years.

If established, such a policy provides an overarching framework to guide the local government response to the issue of food security in the community.

Below is an example of a food security policy developed by Hobsons Bay Council in Victoria. The policy goes on to describe a range of strategies intended to pursue the policy’s vision.

Case Study 1: Hobsons Bay City Council — Extract from *Improving Access to Food in Hobsons Bay (Food Security) Policy Statement*

The Purpose and Intention of this Policy

The purpose of this policy statement is to inform and guide future work relating to improving access to food for vulnerable populations in Hobsons Bay, within a human rights base.

Guiding principles

The following fundamental principles will guide the Hobsons Bay City Council's strategic directions for improving access to food in Hobsons Bay.

1. Access to safe and nutritious food is a basic human right to which all residents of Hobsons Bay are entitled.
2. Populations who have adequate access to food experience better health and wellbeing outcomes and are at less risk of chronic diseases.
3. The Hobsons Bay City Council recognises that the factors affecting food security are complex and include environmental, economic and social factors that relate to the acquisition and production of food.
4. The local, national and global effects of climate change will have an impact on the availability, choice and price of food.
5. All levels of government have a role to play in addressing the factors underpinning the food security. Local government is currently limited in its capacity to address all the determinants surrounding the food security issue.
6. The Hobsons Bay City Council is committed to ensuring a cooperative effort by the community and all levels of government to ensure improvements in food access at the local level occur. *Continued on page 10*
7. Local government is well placed to provide leadership to mitigate the impacts of a lack of food security in its community, through cross-departmental solutions to local needs, now and into the future.
8. The Hobsons Bay City Council recognises that it is important that the needs of those in the community vulnerable to experiencing a lack of food security are heard. The Hobsons Bay City Council can advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations as well as the services supporting them to assist in addressing inequalities.

Source: Hobsons Bay City Council, 2009, *Improving Access to Food in Hobsons Bay (Food Security) Policy Statement*. http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/Policies_strategies_plans/Social_Policies_and_Plans/Improving_Access_to_Healthy_Food_Food_Security

Integrating food security strategies within other relevant plans

At a local level, the main local government plan is the *Strategic Community Plan*. The *Strategic Community Plan* establishes the community's long-term vision for the municipality's future, including aspirations and service expectations. The plan also drives the development of other local government Area/Place/Regional Plans, resourcing and other informing strategies.

For example, '*improving food security*' might simply appear as one goal among other high-level goals within a Strategic Community Plan. Subsequent strategies or actions might then appear in health and wellbeing plans or other business unit plans.

Such an approach can elevate the topic and gain a stronger mandate from the council and senior management. This can be important where strategies span the wider determinants of health and draw on support from across council.



6. Developing a plan to improve food security

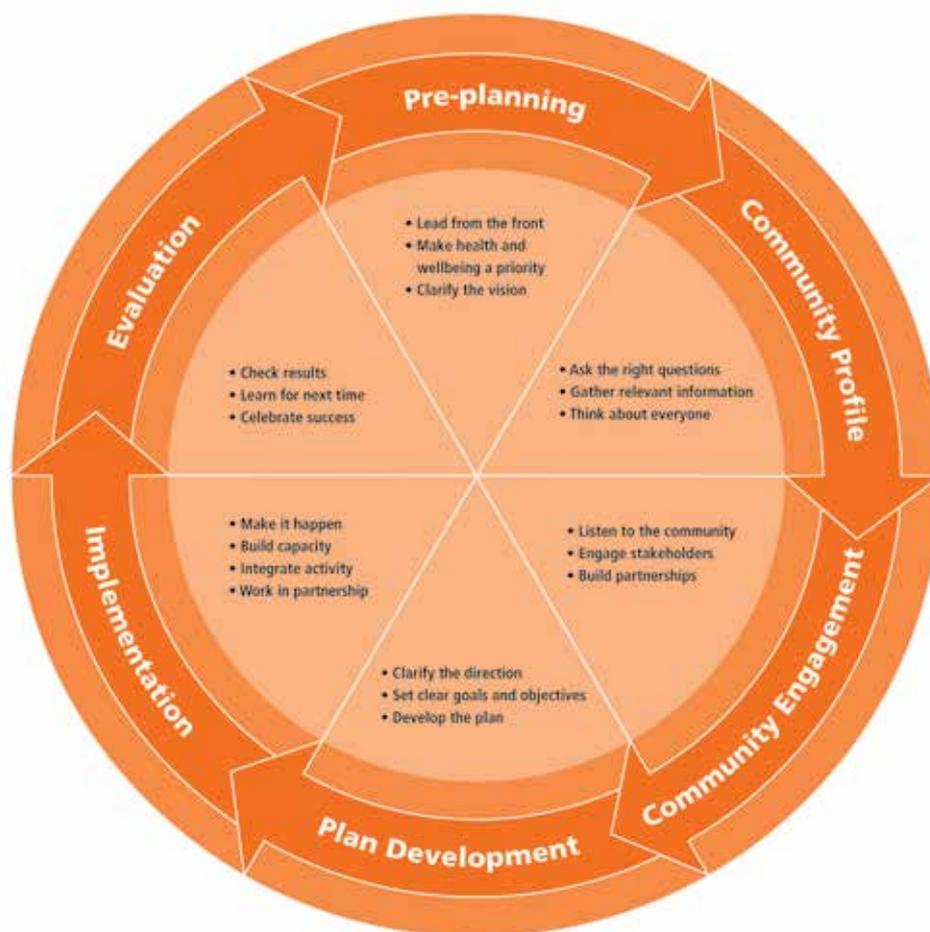
Regardless of whether a plan to improve food security occurs as a stand-alone plan or within a broader plan, staff need to consider critical information and gain agreement from key stakeholders as to the change sought and how this will be achieved.

This will vary between local governments, however, effective food security plan development will usually follow a number of linked phases.

The planning process from the *Pathway to a Healthy Community: A guide for councillors*⁵ provides a useful starting point for considering the key components.

⁵South Metropolitan Public Health Unit. 2010. *Pathway to a Healthy Community: A guide for councillors*. Department of Health, WA.

Figure 2: Community and health planning cycle



Source: South Metropolitan Population Health Unit. 2010. *Pathway to a Healthy Community: A guide for councillors*. Department of Health, WA.

The following sections look at each of the above phases of the cycle in more detail and provide prompts to support an improvement in food security.

6.1 Pre-planning

The detail of the food security plan will emerge as each phase unfolds; however, it is important to use pre-planning to:

- gain support for the food security plan across the local government
- establish the governance structure
- identify broad planning activities and time frames.

These three aspects set the foundation for the food security plan and are closely linked. For example, a well-considered governance structure can help to embed support for food security strategies and a high-level mandate will generally bring with it adequate resources to conduct planning and prompt others to get involved.

Gaining support

Developing a plan to improve food security might come about in a number of ways, including being put forward to executive management as a business unit initiative or being received as a priority initiative directly from council. Either way, it will be important to gain (and maintain) support across the organisation. This may be particularly important when working with other local government business units that do not have a strong exposure to community health and wellbeing.

Gaining support may involve the following actions:

- Raising awareness among the councillors, senior managers and staff on the impacts of food insecurity on the community and the need for action
- Reinforcing the role of the local government in promoting the health and wellbeing of its community in general and its roles in relation to food security
- Identifying people within the local government who can contribute to improving food security, and who might be willing to champion the plan
- Focusing on the mutual interests and concerns of those most likely to be responsible for implementation or affected by the plan in other ways
- Seeking a commitment from senior management and councillors as to how the plan will be coordinated and managed.

It is important to make clear links between local government's legislative responsibilities, its stated vision and any relevant existing policies. Mapping or auditing existing plans or policies within the organisation and identifying the roles and functions of other departments in relation to food security will help to ensure there is a clear alignment with the vision of overarching plans, such as the *Strategic Community Plan*, and will avoid unnecessary duplication with other plans.

Establishing the governance structure

The governance structure describes how the development of the food security plan will be managed. It will answer the questions:

- Who will sign off on the food security plan?
- Who will lead the plan development?
- Who will carry out tasks?
- How will decisions about the plan be made?

It is likely that the resulting food security plan will require endorsement from the council. This is preferable as it can provide greater profile and accountability across the organisation. Nonetheless, in order to be presented to the council it will also need to be signed off by the senior management team and chief executive. This approval process will need to be factored into the time frame.

Establish a small internal working group

The development of the food security plan can be managed in a range of ways, however, getting it right takes effort and requires the input of more than one person. One way of spreading the load while at the same time reinforcing a whole of council approach is to establish a small internal working group. Such an approach can embed support and stimulate champions across the organisation. It also allows a pooling of resources, abilities and energy needed to drive the development and implementation of the plan.

The make-up of the working group will be important if it is to achieve these outcomes.

Consider the following:

- ask the most senior person accountable for the plan to chair the working group
- invite councillor representation onto the group. This may be a councillor with portfolio responsibility or a councillor with a compatible interest
- select members based on their roles in the organisation; their interest and willingness to contribute; and their span of influence.

Once an internal working group has been established, it is useful to establish its roles and responsibilities. For example, would the group's role be to advise, make decisions or to manage the process? These roles can be placed on the agenda of the first group meeting. A draft terms of reference could be developed as an agenda item.



A suggested structure for a terms of reference is outlined in the box below:

Structure of terms of reference

Background

This should be a brief section describing:

- how the food security plan fits within the priorities of the local government and community why the working group is needed.

Role

This section should describe:

- the main roles of the working group and their responsibility for the plan's direction, finances and results
- how the plan meets the needs of the stakeholders
- important action plans that will guide the lead officer and the team on important planning actions.

Membership

- list of who is in the working group and their special tasks (if any)
- list of who will chair the working group
- how the working group will meet
- frequency of working group meetings.

Other

- framework for agendas and minutes
- how issues may be managed
- where the meetings are to be held
- use of proxies.

Source: Stoneham M & Cotton R, 2005. 2nd Ed. *Building a Healthy Community*. Healthway, Perth.

In addition to an internal working group, an external reference or advisory group might help share the workload. This would be made up of key stakeholders and would benefit from a similar terms of reference approach.

Where activity is focused on local government action alone, simpler consultative mechanisms may be sufficient.

Identifying broad planning activities and time frames

One of the first actions of the internal working group will be to map out the planning activities and time frames. This can be described in a simple discussion paper that answers the following questions.

- What is the purpose of the food security plan?
- How will the plan be developed?
- When does the plan need to be finalised?
- What broad activities need to be completed to meet this deadline?
- What are the key milestones and time frames?
- Who will do what?
- What resources will be required?

A discussion paper can also be used to clarify the resources needed and gain management endorsement. It will also ensure the internal working group members are clear about how activities will proceed and assist in keeping the plan's development on track.

6.2 Community food security profile

A community food security profile might be developed as a preliminary step in gaining support for the plan's development. It will provide a picture of the current circumstances and support the need for change. It will be a key tool in gaining or maintaining support. If, for example, councillors, senior management and staff are not convinced that food security is a priority issue, they are unlikely to support the development of the plan or its implementation. Compelling information, such as a community food security profile, can influence and change entrenched views.

Developing a community food security profile also allows local government to identify the risks of food insecurity at a local level and to identify the challenges and opportunities to improve food security.

Ask the right questions

Asking the right questions means a community food security profile will identify:

- the impacts that food insecurity is having on the community
- the built, social, economic and natural environments that can influence food security
- priority population groups at most risk of food insecurity.

Gather the data

Data on the local impacts of food security can be sourced from SMPHU. Individual local governments may also conduct their own community surveys to provide additional data on relevant food-security issues of concern to the local community.

Some of the ways in which local government can gather useful local data are shown below:

Ways to gather local data on food security

- Research current international, national and local government policies on food security.
- Develop a survey to assess food insecurity concerns in the local area.
- Map data on transport routes, fresh and fast food outlets, local food prices, community garden locations.
- Research local government-owned land for food growing.
- Research health statistics on emergency food relief demand in the area.
- Identify local government data from population surveys, or from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA).
- Identify food security strategies already in place in the local area, for example, food coalitions and community gardens.
- Map potential stakeholders both inside and outside government involved with issues relating to food security.

Identify priority population groups

Some members of the community will be more at risk to food insecurity. Local governments have a particular responsibility to ensure that vulnerable people in their community are protected and supported.

Priority populations

Individuals and groups more vulnerable to food insecurity include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- low-income families (particularly women of childbearing age, children and adolescents, and single parents with young dependent children)
- people who are unemployed or have limited formal education
- people with a disability, including mental illness
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds (refugees and asylum seekers)
- frail elderly people (particularly those who are socially isolated and have low incomes).

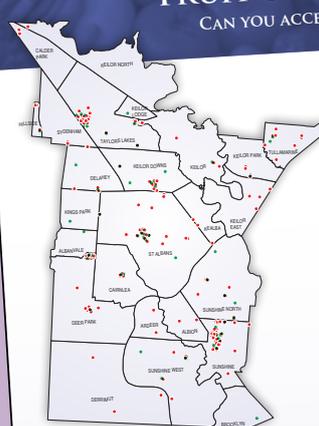
Complete the profile

Once the profile is completed, it is useful to consolidate this information into a single brief document. This can then be used to educate, engage, advocate and plan with councillors, management, staff, community and external agencies.

The case study below provides an example of how one local government has profiled local food security issues.

Case study 2: Developing a food security profile in the City of Brimbank

FRUIT & VEGETABLES: CAN YOU ACCESS YOUR FAIR SHARE?



Food security has been identified as a priority issue for the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. In response to this, the Western Region Food Security Network, the City of Brimbank and ISIS Primary Care have partnered to identify and address local food security issues.

What is food security? Food security is defined as regular access to **safe, nutritionally adequate & culturally acceptable** food from non-emergency sources.

What we found:

- 99 Fruit & Veg Outlets
- 268 Take Away

Other findings:

- 24 Chain Supermarkets
- 30 Cultural Supermarkets
- 42 Alcohol outlets

Factors affecting food security:

Food security can be affected by **food supply**, such as location, food production, cost and variety of available foods and **food access**, including distance and transport options to food outlets.

- Of the 463 food outlets audited in Brimbank, take-away outlets account for 58% while only 21% are fruit and vegetable outlets, 6% cultural supermarkets and 5% chain supermarkets.
- **Mapping data for Brimbank indicates that:**
 - Non-nutritious, high calorie take-away foods are more readily available than core foods.
 - There is a greater concentration of take-away outlets in the most disadvantaged areas.
- Cultural supermarkets represent only 6% of the total food outlets, despite almost 60% of residents being born overseas. The limited amount of cultural supermarkets may affect culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities' access to culturally appropriate food.
- Community consultation indicated that 10% of survey respondents worried about not having enough to eat on a daily basis. Time, cost of healthy foods and transport were identified as the main barriers to food security.

FOOD DESERTS ARE AREAS LOCATED OUTSIDE A 400M RADIUS OF A FRUIT & VEGETABLE OUTLET

75% OF BRIMBANK RESIDENTS LIVE IN A FOOD DESERT; PUTTING THEM AT A GREATER RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY



Vulnerable populations:

In Brimbank, some population groups are more vulnerable to food insecurity. However, not all individuals who identify with one of the listed groups may be experiencing food insecurity.

The most vulnerable populations are CALD, newly arrived and refugee communities, individuals with chronic illness or disability, aged, homeless (or at risk of), low socioeconomic status, and people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Recommendations for Change

ISIS Primary Care recognises the positive benefit of food security on the health and wellbeing of community members. In response to the identified issues, the recommendations are to:

- Establish partnerships between local agencies, council and local business interest groups to ensure equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable community groups.
- Ensure ongoing communication between agencies working in the area of food security.
- Develop evidence based strategies addressing the determinants of food security, including socio-economic disadvantage and transport.
- ISIS Primary Care plans to undertake a more comprehensive and evidence based needs assessment in Brimbank to inform future intervention planning.

The Victorian Healthy Food Basket (VHFB)

The VHFB survey assessed the affordability of a healthy diet for a typical family and found that 29% of the total income was required to purchase a healthy food basket, with the median basket costing \$375.70.

Consequently, residents reported using a number of strategies to deal with food insecurity, including reducing the meal size or skipping meals altogether.

- Advocate to local council and relevant decision makers to re-evaluate the number and type of food outlets licensed in Brimbank.

Typical family: 2 unemployed parents with two fully dependent children

For more information please visit:
www.healthwest.org.au
www.isispc.com.au
www.brimbank.vic.gov.au



Source: HealthWest Partnership - Access to Nutritious Food (Food Security): www.healthwest.org.au/access-to-nutritious-foods.html.

6.3 Community engagement

Improving food security requires the participation and cooperation of many government and community stakeholders. Successful plans, therefore, should be developed in consultation and partnership with others with an interest in food security. This includes listening to and engaging with the local community.

Consultation is most effective when it occurs early in the planning process and is also used to validate the proposed way forward.

There are many individuals and organisations within a local community who will have an interest in improving food security. Identifying those individuals is an important step. Questions to ask when trying to identify local stakeholders are listed below:

Identifying local stakeholders

- Who might be affected positively or negatively by the concerns to be addressed?
- Who are the 'voiceless' for whom special efforts of engagement may need to be made?
- Who are the representatives of those likely to be affected?
- Who is responsible for what is intended?
- Who is likely to mobilise for or against what is intended?
- Who can make what is intended more effective through their participation or less effective by their non-participation or outright opposition?
- Who can contribute by financial and technical resources?
- Whose behaviour has to change for the efforts to succeed?

Source: World Bank. 1997. *Sourcebook on Participation*. Washington, DC..

Suggested stakeholders

- South Metropolitan Population Health Unit
- Healthy Eating Australia
- Department of Agriculture and Food
- Australian Department of Health and Ageing
- Healthy, Active Australian Government Initiative
- Australian Farmers' Markets Association
- Diabetes Western Australia
- Foodbank
- Red Cross

- Aboriginal Medical Services
- Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia
- Child and Adolescent Health Service
- Local community groups
- Local sporting/recreation centres
- Local media and community newspapers
- School representatives
- Other community members including representation from the Aboriginal community and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities.
- Other non-government organisations and interested community members including representative from the priority population groups

Before engaging with stakeholders, it is important to consider their interest in the topic. Many will be focused on improving food security but will nonetheless have their own specific focus, for example, a population group.

For each stakeholder it is important to think about their interest in improving food security: what's in it for them? For example, for health agencies, it will be reduced health risks; for food producers, more sales, and so on. This analysis will guide decisions about how and when to engage each stakeholder in planning and implementation.

6.4 Writing the plan

Writing the plan involves clarifying what needs to change, prioritising the actions and choosing the strategies most likely to address the identified needs.

In considering what goals are important for a local community, it is worth considering the major contributors to food security identified in Figure 1; for example, what needs to change locally about the supply of food or access to food? Potential goals, therefore, might focus on improving local supplies of fresh food and reducing other barriers to affordable, nutritious food. Objectives will be more specific but again might benefit from considering the dot points from Figure 1.

Whether the resulting plan is a stand-alone local government plan or a more integrated plan that includes strategies pursued by partners, it is important to ensure goals, objectives and strategies are clear and readily understood by stakeholders.

The SMART technique is a good way to ensure that the goals, objectives and strategies are as clear as possible.

SMART goals, objectives and strategies have the following characteristics:

- S** — **specific:** it is about a particular health determinant, population group or setting, and describes the change to be achieved
- M** — **measurable:** it includes measures that indicate whether, or to what extent, it is achieved
- A** — **attainable:** it can be achieved within available resources: funds and people
- R** — **relevant:** it makes sense to the overall aspirations of the community and the vision of the local government
- T** — **time-framed:** it has a timeline that indicates when it will be achieved.

Source: Doran, G T 1981, There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management goals and objectives, in *Management Review* Nov 1981, 70.11

Table 2 provides broad definitions for each planning statement and provides examples of the SMART technique.

Table 2: Hierarchy of health planning statements

Health Planning statements	SMART example
<p>Goals</p> <p>Goal statements describe the improvements and long-term benefits sought for a given population.</p> <p>When it comes to health and wellbeing, they are statements about reducing a health risk or improving health and wellbeing status, quality of life and equity.</p>	<p><i>To increase the proportion of people consuming locally grown food by 5% by 2015.</i></p>

Health Planning statements	SMART example
<p>Objectives</p> <p>Objective statements describe what will be done to achieve the goals. They are specific and concise and identify who will make what change, by how much, where and by when.</p> <p>Objectives achieving health and wellbeing goals are likely to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific risk or protective factors • policy development • infrastructure development • changes to surroundings • skill development • community participation • community action. 	<p><i>To provide incentives that will increase the availability of locally grown food by 10% by 2015.</i></p> <p><i>Note: This is just one of a number of possible objectives designed to meet the above goal.</i></p>
<p>Strategies</p> <p>Strategy statements describe the shorter term activities that are undertaken to meet the objectives.</p>	<p><i>Support the establishment of five community food-growing projects in targeted communities by 2015.</i></p> <p><i>Develop and promote a local 'how to' guide on growing fruit and vegetables by 2015.</i></p> <p><i>Note: These are just two strategies designed to meet the above goal.</i></p>

An example of a planning worksheet that could be used in the plan development can be found in Appendix A

Selecting strategies

Once goals and objectives have been clearly stated, it is necessary to select strategies most likely to achieve these objectives. Strategies are shorter term activities that are undertaken to meet the plan's objectives. Before deciding on what strategies to use, it is useful to examine what has worked in the past and elsewhere. Strategies with strong evidence provide the greatest likelihood of success.

Strategies selected should always be those best suited to local circumstances — taking account of population characteristics; settings; needs; and the contribution of local partners. Using a variety of strategies to address a single issue is more successful than using single strategies. For example, the harvest of food from community gardens can be supported by food preparation and cooking classes.

Suggested objectives and strategies

The following is a list of suggested objectives and strategies that can be used to support actions to improve food security. They are grouped under broadly stated objectives commonly applied to food security goals and are taken from key national and state strategic plans.

Objective 1: Increase healthy eating for residents

Economic, physical, social and cultural barriers affect the ability of people to grow, buy, cook and eat nutritious food. Some people are more vulnerable to food insecurity, including Aboriginal people, newly arrived migrants and those living on limited incomes such as pensioners, single parents, students and the unemployed.

Local government, ideally in partnership with appropriate agencies, can significantly assist residents in increasing their understanding of how to grow, access and cook healthy meals.

Suggested strategies

- Develop and disseminate information resources that give information about local food outlets providing healthy meals, as well as resources that demonstrate how to purchase and prepare cheap nutritious meals with fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Support training and education of community workers and community group leaders in healthy eating practices which can help transfer the information widely into the community as well as into their own homes.
- Facilitate cooking classes, develop resources and bilingual education sessions to help Aboriginal people and newly-arrived migrants understand how to buy, prepare and store locally available foods.
- Encourage local businesses to increase the number of affordable, healthy food options on their menus.



Objective 2: Encourage local people to grow food

Encouraging and supporting residents to grow fresh fruit and vegetables can produce many individual and community benefits. Growing and harvesting fresh produce is a great way for people to become more familiar with a wide range of fruit and vegetables. For some people, growing their own food gives them access to traditional vegetables they may not be able to buy in their local shops. Participating in a community project encourages residents to work together to grow fresh food and fosters feelings of social connection.

Suggested strategies

- Support the establishment or development of community food-growing projects in specific or targeted communities including childcare centres, local neighbourhood centres or public open spaces.
- Support urban agriculture; that is, the planting and growing of fruit trees and vegetables in public spaces such as parks, gardens and streets.
- Develop and promote a local 'how to' guide on growing fruit and vegetables and put this information on the local government website.
- Encourage people to use existing resources regarding food growing, for example, email/newsletters on growing food.
- Facilitate, promote and support small-scale 'back yard' food growing.
- Develop a network of existing growers who would be happy to help, support and advise new growers.
- Promote and share good practice examples through existing community demonstration food-growing projects and encourage more to develop.
- Promote and support local food-growing initiatives and information about food growing at local events.
- Facilitate social networking groups to set up their own food-growing projects, for example, on or off their own premises.
- Engage expertise in horticulture and sustainable food growth who can train community members on site.
- Change the way people think about their surrounding land so they may see it as a place to grow food.

Objective 3: Promote and celebrate local produce

Local governments can help promote and celebrate local food produce. This will help improve community awareness and attitudes towards local produce. Good examples already exist such as initiatives that involve growing food in and around cities.

Suggested strategies

- Support information and awareness campaigns through the local media.
- Develop and update a local government website page and link to other websites.
- Support the development and distribution of posters, leaflets and stickers promoting local produce.
- Support the development and distribution of local food recipe books and a calendar of food events.
- Establish local food trails.
- Ensure local food festivals, trails and recipe books are recognised as part of the local area, cultural heritage and tourism precincts.
- Improve access to local produce for the general public through supporting the development of a sustainable transport/distribution system for local produce upon existing good practice.

Objective 4: Encourage public and private sector procurement

Strong partnerships between council, community, welfare and support organisations are crucial to the success of programs that are designed to increase residents' access to fresh foods. This includes encouraging public and private sector organisations such as schools, hospitals, universities, colleges, cafes, markets, shops, supermarkets, hotels and so on to source local produce.

Suggested strategies

- Raise awareness of the importance of sourcing local food with procurement managers/officers and local producers.
- Host a 'meet the buyer' event.
- Develop a directory of local producers, highlighting where you can buy local food at private businesses.
- Support training for local producers in tendering for public sector contracts.
- Support the development of local distribution hubs and local producer cooperatives.
- Facilitate the development of innovative meal services for aged and disabled residents such as subsidised meals provided in local cafés and group meals.
- Provide community transport to get people to and from local shops or markets that sell fresh food.
- Support local businesses that provide free or cheap transport to and from food outlets or provide cheap delivery services which people can access online, by phone or in person.
- Support school-based programs such as breakfast programs for children within families who are experiencing food insecurity.
- Support the development of a mobile service that delivers food to residential areas and sells fruit and vegetables to local residents.

Objective 5: Support farmers' markets/school and community gardens

Initiatives that can be developed and supported by local people will be more likely to be tailored to their needs and sustainable.

Suggested strategies

- Develop a 'how to' guide to support communities developing farmers' markets, and school and community gardens.
- Facilitate the development of farmers' markets, and school and community gardens.
- Raise awareness and encourage greater numbers of customers at farmers' markets, and school and community gardens.
- Increase the variety of produce available at existing farmers' markets, and school and community gardens.



Objective 6: Local government leading by example

Local governments can lead by example by supporting healthy eating choices and raise the profile of food security strategies through its own activities and programs. Local government is also well placed to use its local regulatory role to influence the social, built, natural and economic environments to improve residents' health. This can include the use of its fiscal and regulatory powers to increase the supply of healthy foods and decrease the supply of unhealthy foods.

Suggested strategies

- Use local government communications to promote healthy eating and food security.
- Provide healthy, locally sourced food at local government functions and services such as Meals on Wheels.
- Support a healthy workforce by sponsoring healthy food days, and a staff-run fruit and vegetable garden.
- Run events that profile food security, for example, Healthy Eating Week.
- Add healthy food options to relevant local government contracts, for example, leisure centres, swimming pools, senior citizens' centres.
- Modify council community grants' criteria to encourage action on priority food security issues.
- Require that council owned and run facilities have registered commercial kitchens functioning to a standard that contributes to safe and efficient food preparation and that meets occupational health and safety regulations.
- Amend local laws or fee structures to facilitate the use of public open space for roadside/farm gate sales, street markets or van sales, and the planting of vegetables or fruit or nut trees on nature strips and public parks.
- Amend signage, local laws or planning requirements to restrict the advertising of fast food outlets or waiving fees for not-for-profit or fresh food-related activities.
- Provide financial incentives to increase fresh food outlets in the local area; for example, reduced licensing fees.
- Develop a local food purchasing policy.

Objective 7: Land use planning

Local government has a number of mechanisms available under town planning schemes to support food security initiatives by influencing the local, built and natural environments.

Suggested strategies

- Develop a local planning policy to protect existing land used for food production and support initiatives that increase food production.
- Adopt requirements for developers to undertake social or health impact statements that incorporate food access issues before development plans are approved.
- Insist that developers provide a specific amount of space for community gardens, water collection and storage systems to facilitate food growing.

Objective 8: Advocacy

There are a number of areas where local government can advocate on behalf of its residents and influence factors around food insecurity that are normally outside its capacity.

Suggested strategies

- Advocate for the provision and costs of public transport, particularly in low socio-economic areas and areas with low car ownership rates.
- Advocate for the availability of affordable housing, and for the location of public housing to be close to shops and transport.
- Promote health factors as important considerations when planning for urban land use and infrastructure and promote the importance of state government leadership in ensuring this occurs routinely in relation to food access issues.
- Advocate to state and federal governments and generate public awareness and media around issues of food pricing, the advertising of unhealthy and healthy food products and food labelling.
- Advocate for the Water Corporation to provide a reduction of watering restrictions for local, work-based, community or home fruit and vegetable growing initiatives.

6.5 Implementation

The plan itself will have created timelines and assigned responsibilities. It will nonetheless be important to refer back to the objectives and strategies to keep on track. Some tasks that should be completed during this phase are listed below:

Tasks to be completed during implementation phase

- Ensure your plan stays within budget.
- Document the plan's progress and any associated issues.
- Complete progress reports.
- Monitor plan progress.
- Generate media interest in the plan.
- Motivate your working group to take on components of the plan as their core business.
- Advocate for policy and environmental change to sustain the plan after the funding cycle has finished.
- Recognise individual and organisational commitment to the plan.
- Celebrate successes.

Source: Stoneham M & Cotton R, 2005. 2nd Ed. *Building a Healthy Community. Healthway*, Perth.

Capacity Building

Successful implementation of the plan requires strong internal leadership and management; clear allocation of resources; and a commitment to workforce learning and development. It also means developing effective partnerships — working with others to achieve common goals. This is often referred to as capacity building.

Working in partnership

Building partnerships has become an imperative for local government, particularly in the face of scarce resources, overlapping interests and, at times, an uncertain future.

A partnership means sharing expertise and resources to achieve common goals. Partnerships with community organisations, local businesses and other government bodies offer many benefits. Partnerships might cover⁷:

Networking	→	exchanging information
Coordination	→	aligning activities
Cooperation	→	sharing resources
Collaboration	→	providing mutual support

⁷VicHealth 2003, Partnerships Facts Sheet, VicHealth, Carlton

The governance structure established in the early stages of planning will have built some of these relationships, both internally and externally. It can be useful to review the role of the working group and reference group, if these were established, to consider their roles in implementation. For example, can they play a useful monitoring and review role? Maintaining relevance for members is important, and implementation is likely to be quite different to the relative business of the planning process. Consider less frequent meetings based on key plan milestones and reports.

6.6 Evaluation

Evaluation checks whether the plan's goals, objectives and strategies are achieved. It has two prime purposes:

- **Accountability** — to demonstrate returns for the investment of resources
- **Learning** — to contribute to evidence about what works and what doesn't.

It is important to design the evaluation early in the planning development cycle — not once the cycle is coming to an end. This makes it easier to develop measures and to set up any data collection processes. For example, it is difficult to use pre-project and post-project measures once the activity is concluded. Measures or indicators provide a way of checking whether goals and objectives are being achieved. At the same time they can expose who is and who is not experiencing harm from food insecurity.

The use of measures provides a way to:

- engage stakeholders and communities in informed discussions about shared goals and priorities
- gather information and guide evidence-based planning
- report on progress towards agreed goals and objectives.

By deciding on measures in the plan development stage, evaluation and future community profiling can become clearer. The information gathered in developing the community profile will often provide the information needed to support the measures.

When it comes to evaluating specific strategies or programs, there are many different evaluation techniques. Choosing an approach to evaluation will depend on:

- the key stakeholders with an interest in the findings
- the time frame for when the information is needed
- the resources available to conduct it
- the use or uses for which it is intended. These might include:
 - improving and informing policy development
 - guiding financial management and resource allocation
 - assisting in organisational learning and skill development
 - pursuing service quality and delivery
 - demonstrating accountability and transparency.

Regardless of the approach, an evaluation should generate information that is credible and useful for decision-making and program improvement.

Program evaluation is widely applied in Australia and internationally and has the following features:

- **Process evaluation** assesses elements of program development and delivery. The quality, appropriateness and reach of the strategies used to implement the program are of key interest in this type of evaluation.
- **Impact evaluation** measures immediate program effects and assesses the degree to which program objectives are met.
- **Outcome evaluation** measures the long-term effects of programs and assesses the degree to which the original intent or program goal has been achieved. It is concerned with the actual changes that have occurred for individuals and communities and often considers outcomes such as mortality, morbidity, disability, quality of life and equity.

The following table describes the kind of measures and evaluation questions each evaluation type poses.

Table 3: Program evaluation: types, measures and evaluation questions

Type	Measures	Questions
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of activities implemented/not implemented. • Levels of participation. • Participants' satisfaction with the program. • Program reach. • Recall of key messages. • The quality and accessibility of resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all projects and activities developed and implemented? • Are all materials and components of the program of good quality? • Are key partners involved in the program able to fulfil the program goals and objectives? • Is the program reaching the target or population groups? • Are all parts of the program reaching all parts of these groups? • Are participants satisfied with the program?
Impact	<p>Changes in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge, skills or attitudes • behaviour • public policy • the extent of policy implementation • the environment • the nature of service provision • social support structures • patterns of community participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has knowledge increased concerning healthy lifestyles? • Have attitudes, motivation, confidence, behavioural intentions and personal skills improved? • Are communities active participants in the program? • Is public opinion supportive of the direction of the strategies? • Are supportive public policies and organisational practices in place? • Are adequate resources allocated? • Are strategies integrated with other relevant activity?
Outcome	<p>A change in health status such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a reduction in risk factors, mortality, morbidity or disability • improved quality of life. (This is not a realistic outcome for short-term projects.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the strategy achieved its program goal? • Have changes in behaviour been sustained over time? • Have environmental conditions improved? • Have there been improvements in health status?

7. Resources

Developing strategies to develop a secure and sustainable local food supply can be challenging. Access to up-to date statistical information and research and networking with others in the field helps to build a robust evidence base and boost motivation. This is particularly important in local government where strategies cut across the built, social, economic and natural environments for health and will call for partnerships across diverse agencies and professions.

Western Australian

West Australian Department of Health

Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012–2016 Search for 'Food' or 'Healthy Eating' to go to all food-related information and links.

Website: www.health.wa.gov.au

South Metropolitan Population Health Unit

The South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) is committed to protecting, promoting and enhancing the health and wellbeing of the population living in the south metropolitan region of Perth. It is responsible for delivering a range of public health services to the community, through the South Metropolitan Population Health Unit (SMPHU). These services include: Aboriginal health, health promotion and community development, communicable disease control, service planning and development, evaluation and research. Services target the whole of the SMHS population, with a specific focus on delivering customised programs for groups at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, including Aboriginal people. Public health interventions are focussed on priorities identified at a local, state and national level, and guided by evidence, current practice, and appropriate public health benchmarks.

The SMPHU recognises the important role of local government and is committed to working in partnership to protect, promote and enhance the health and wellbeing of communities across the SMHS.

The SMHS region includes the following local government areas: City of Armadale, City of Gosnells, Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale, City of Belmont, City of Canning, City of South Perth, Town of Victoria Park, City of Cockburn, Town of East Fremantle, City of Fremantle, City of Melville, City of Kwinana, City of Rockingham, City of Mandurah, Shire of Murray, and Shire of Waroona. This area includes the health districts of Fremantle, Bentley, Armadale, and Peel & Rockingham/Kwinana (PARK).

Website address: www.health.wa.gov.au

Diabetes WA

Provides practical advice and education services to help people live well with diabetes.

Website: www.diabeteswa.com.au

The Cancer Council Western Australia

Provides information, services and resources on cancer and ways to reduce your risk.

Website: www.cancerwa.asn.au

National

Australian Government Department of Health

The Australian Government's site provides information on food-related health, news and policies. Includes information on the Dietary Guidelines for Australians, Healthy Weight 2008, Australia's Future: The national action agenda for children and young people and their families.

Website: <http://www.health.gov.au/>

Australian Preventative Health Taskforce

National Preventative Health Strategy 2020

Website: www.preventativehealth.org.au

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Search for subject areas for quick links to information. See 'Chronic Diseases'.

Website: www.aihw.gov.au

Department of Agriculture

National Food Plan 2013

Website: <http://www.daff.gov.au>

Healthy, Active Australian Government initiative

This website provides a range of information and initiatives on healthy eating, regular physical activity and overweight and obesity to assist all Australians to lead healthy and active lives.

Website: www.healthyactive.gov.au

National Health and Medical Research Council

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's peak body for supporting health and medical research; for developing health advice for the Australian community, health professionals and governments; and for providing advice on ethical behaviour in health care and in the conduct of health and medical research. Information includes: *Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults* and *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*.

Website: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>

National Public Health Partnership

This website provides a historical record of the projects undertaken regarding food and healthy eating. Resources include: *Eat Well Australia: An agenda for action for public health healthy eating 2000–2010* and *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healthy Eating Strategy and Strategy 2000–2010*.

Website: <http://www.nphp.gov.au/>

Healthy Eating Australia

Healthy Eating Australia is an independent, member organisation that aims to promote the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

Website www.healthy eatingaustralia.org

The Heart Foundation

The Heart Foundation aims to improve health through funding world-class cardiovascular research, guidelines for health professionals, informing the public and assisting people with cardiovascular disease.

Website: www.heartfoundation.org.au

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APPENDIX A: An SMPHU example of a public health planning worksheet

Program area	Chronic disease prevention			
Goal	To increase the proportion of children and young people who eat the minimum recommended serves of fruit and vegetables every day by 10% by June 2015			
Objective	To increase the proportion of people consuming locally grown food by 5% by 2015			
Strategies (What will we do?)	Targets (How much? By when?)	Indicators (How will we measure progress?)	Responsibility (Who will take the lead role?)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment or development of community food-growing projects in specific or targeted communities including childcare centres, local neighbourhood centres or public open spaces. Support urban agriculture; that is, the planting and growing of fruit trees and vegetables in public spaces such as parks, gardens and streets. Develop and promote a local 'how to' guide on growing fruit and vegetables and put this information on the local government website. Encourage people to use existing resources regarding food growing, for example, email/newsletters on growing food. Facilitate, promote and support small-scale 'back yard' food growing. Develop a network of existing growers who would be happy to help, support and advise new growers. Promote and share good practice examples through existing community demonstration food-growing projects and encourage more to develop. 	<p>Customise these strategies and add local targets to make sure they are:</p> <p>Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-framed</p>	<p>Have we done what we said we would do? Are we having the influence we expected? Have we achieved our goal?</p>	<p>This might be an internal staff member or external partner</p>	

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