

# Please support Senate Budget Amendment #34

## Grant program for local food policy councils

Massachusetts is home to more than twenty food policy councils (FPCs) that work to strengthen the food system and increase food security. Each of them bring together players in the food system, including public health, agriculture, and anti-hunger organizations as well as institutions, schools, youth, farmers, and people experiencing food insecurity. They conduct community food assessments that reveal needs and help set policy priorities, they build the capacity of local stakeholders to serve community members, and they amplify the importance of a healthy food system to public health, the environment, and social justice. Public support would help make them more effective, particularly in times of crisis, and would help move the state toward its goal of increased food security.

Senate Budget Amendment #34, introduced by Senator Joan Lovely, will invest **\$250,000 in the FY23 budget to offer grants to FPCs**. The program will be administered by the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), in consultation with the Massachusetts Food Policy Council.

The program will provide funding to increase the equity, efficacy, and capacity of FPCs. Grant funded activities will include, but not be limited to: developing community food assessments; conducting outreach and education; staffing and administration; and stipends to support participation by socially disadvantaged community members.

## Food Policy Councils in Massachusetts

[Belmont Food Collaborative](#), Belmont

[Boston Food Access Council](#), Boston

[Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council](#), Cambridge

Central and South Berkshire Food Access Collaborative, Central and South Berkshire County

[Everett Food Policy Council](#), Everett

[Franklin County Food Council](#), Franklin County

[Greater Quabbin Food Alliance](#), Greater Quabbin Region

[Hampshire County Food Policy Council](#), Hampshire County

[Healthy Chelsea](#), Chelsea

[Lynn Grows](#), Lynn

[Massachusetts Food Policy Council](#), Massachusetts

[Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition](#), Mattapan

Medford Food Policy Council, Medford

[MetroWest Food Collab.](#), Framingham, Natick, Hudson and Ashland

North Berkshire Food Access Collaborative, North Berkshire County

Plymouth Ag Commission, Plymouth

[Revere Food Policy Council](#), Revere

[Salem Food Policy Council](#), Salem

[Somerville Food Security Coalition](#), Somerville

[Southcoast Food Policy Council](#), Bristol, Norfolk, and Plymouth Counties

[Springfield Food Policy Council](#), Springfield

[Worcester Food Policy Council](#), Worcester



The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative facilitates a network of local FPCs. [Learn more here.](#)

# MA Local Food Policy Councils

## Building and feeding communities

The [Worcester Food Policy Council](#), founded by the Worcester County Food Bank, implemented a very successful program to use donated funds to purchase meals from minority-owned restaurants and deliver them to people who were isolating with COVID. Through this program, additional community members engaged with the Council and have helped inform the group's work, which includes efforts to address the root causes of food insecurity. The Council has led advocacy efforts in support of two bills in the legislature – one would make it easier for people to access DTA offices and the other would enable older, disabled, or unhoused people to use SNAP benefits to purchase prepared meals. They have also advocated for municipal issues, such as how ARPA funding is directed, and have supported advocacy campaigns of aligned organizations.

The [Southcoast Food Policy Council](#) published the 2021 *Southcoast Food System Assessment*, identifying strengths and weaknesses in their regional food system. They are using this report to educate decision-makers about food system issues and needs in Bristol, Norfolk, and Plymouth counties, as well as to guide the work of the Council. Based on community input, the Council will include four working groups which will focus on education and communication, policy, food access, and capacity building. Each working group will center equity and inclusion, engage community members impacted by food insecurity, use a systems thinking approach, and elevate climate change mitigation concepts. In addition, the Council, managed by The Marion Institute, is completing a food hub feasibility study.



The [Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition](#), founded in 2006 by Mattapan residents, focuses on increasing access to healthy food and promoting active living in their neighborhood. The organization has managed the Mattapan Square Farmers Market for 15 years, making it a place to find affordable, culturally relevant foods. They select farmers that are able to sell their produce at reasonable prices and encourage the use of SNAP, HIP, WIC, and Senior farmers market coupons. The Vigorous Youth program helps young adults learn about their role in improving the physical and food environment in Mattapan through running a farm stand and assisting with two community gardens. The Coalition works with partner organizations to offer cooking classes, maintain a food forest, and run a summer meals program for kids.

[Salem Food For All](#) is a quasi-governmental/grassroots organization with representatives from the City of Salem, Salem Public Schools, Salem State University, multiple food assistance organizations, farmers, and invested residents. During the pandemic, this well-established group was tasked by the city's mayor to help coordinate a response to food needs. Thanks in part to outreach and education from the group before the pandemic, the city started a 10,000 square foot farm on an unused baseball field. Over 7,000 pounds of produce is grown annually and donated to the local food pantry and other programs. They plan to add a food forest, a water catchment system, and solar energy. The city just approved an urban ag ordinance, thanks to advocacy from Salem Food for All, which will allow residents with appropriate permits to raise honeybees, hens, and produce and sell their products.