

**Office of the Food Policy Coordinator (FPC)  
A Program of the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services (DMHHS)**

**CEO INTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY**

This overview of the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator (OFPC) is based on an internal program review conducted by the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). The data were collected between August and November 2008 through interviews and a review of program documents and quarterly reports through October 2008.

**Sponsoring Agency:** Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services (DMHHS), Office of the Food Policy Coordinator (OFPC)

**Start Date:** January 2007

**CEO Budget:** \$80,000 FY09

**Target Population:** Low income New Yorkers with limited access to healthy foods. The Food Policy Coordinator (FPC) works with City agencies and other stakeholders to coordinate food policy efforts.

**Statement of Need:** New York City has a range of needs related to health and hunger issues. These include access to healthy food, diet-related health problems, and food insecurity. NYC rates of obesity and diabetes have doubled over the past decade. Access to healthy foods is limited in low-income neighborhoods. By some estimates, nearly one third of all eligible New Yorkers are not enrolled in the Food Stamps program. The City serves approximately 217 million meals and snacks per year through its schools, hospitals, jails, etc., and to date there have not been uniform nutrition standards.<sup>1</sup>

**Goals and Services:** To coordinate food policy efforts, Mayor Bloomberg and the NYC Council established the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator in January 2007. The aim of the position is to convene the Food Policy Task Force and to coordinate the array of City agencies that are involved in hunger prevention, the promotion of health and wellness related to nutrition, and the provision of food across the City. Specific initiatives have been launched to promote collaboration, to increase Food Stamp enrollment, to increase access to City-supported meals, and to set Citywide nutrition standards. The FPC and Task Force are working toward three main goals: improving access to food support programs such as Food Stamps and School Meals; making the meals that the City provides healthier; and promoting healthy food retail access.<sup>2</sup>

### **Selected Key Findings**

**Fidelity to Program Model.** The FPC works at the policy and management level, and does not provide a direct service to enrolled participants. In assessing program fidelity, the review has focused on the extent to which the FPC has engaged in efforts promoting inter-agency coordination on food-related issues per the position's original intent. Our review suggests that the FPC has effectively brought together the important stakeholders related to food issues in city government, and has raised the profile of food and nutrition efforts in the Office of Mayor and City government overall.

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<sup>1</sup> The Mayor's Management Report Fiscal Year 2007 (see section on the Human Resource Administration)

<sup>2</sup> NYC.GOV Press Release announcing creation of FPC position, 11/22/06

**Agency Management.** Data gathered for this review demonstrates that the creation of this position has already had numerous tangible benefits (some of which are described below). The FPC is actively maintaining partnerships with various stakeholders, managing inter-agency initiatives and elevating food policy on the political agenda of the City. Established with the political support of both the Mayor and the City Council Speaker, the Food Policy Coordinator has become a key figure in moving the City's food policy agenda forward. By structurally placing the FPC within the Office of the DMHHS rather than within a City agency, the Coordinator can more effectively facilitate agency partnerships and collaboration, and can lend the issues a higher profile than they may have otherwise received.

#### **Early Outcomes:**

Several outcomes have been achieved since the launch of this initiative.

1. On September 19, 2008, Mayor Bloomberg signed Executive Order No. 122 which established a permanent ombudsman position and directed the Food Policy Coordinator to develop and coordinate initiatives to promote access to healthy food for all New Yorkers, increase access to and utilization of food support programs, and develop and enforce the City Agency Food Standards.
2. The Green Carts initiative, which was signed into law on March 13, 2008, established 1,000 new permits for "Green Carts." These mobile food carts sell raw fruits and vegetables and must be located in high-risk neighborhoods that have limited access to stores providing fresh produce.
3. The Food Policy Coordinator was instrumental in the launch of The New York Supermarket Commission, formed in May 2008. The Supermarket Commission brings together approximately forty health and child advocates, City and State government representatives, and supermarket industry executives to create a set of public policy recommendations that will bring affordable, nutritious food to underserved communities across the State.
4. Efforts to expand Summer Meals program led to a 5.25% increase in utilization for 2008 over 2007; The Department of Education established a soup kitchen/food pantry summer meals pilot to provide meals for children eighteen and under; and the School Meals Program became the first benefit that people can apply for online through ACCESS NYC, New York City's online benefit screening tool.
5. The FPC has been involved in several successful efforts to bring new resources into the City to support food policy goals. Thus far nearly \$3 million in private and public grants have been raised to support a diverse array of initiatives related to healthy food access and Food Stamp uptake.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

This initiative has had several measurable successes and has promoted food policy improvements both in NYC and beyond.

- The FPC is instrumental in the operation of bodies that coordinate governmental efforts around food issues, such as the Food Policy Task Force and the New York Supermarket Commission.
- Although most of the City's food programs are developed within specific agencies, the Food Policy Coordinator appears to have been able to promote coordination between different agency initiatives, reduce programmatic overlap, improve inter-agency communications, and ultimately help bring the initiatives to fruition.
- The need for an expansion of the FPC office is indicated by this review. Additional staff would allow a greater range of issues to be dealt with. In addition, because the FPC has successfully brought in new funding for projects, the increase in staff could essentially pay for itself with new revenues for important City projects that advance the health of New York City residents. Finally, implementing the recommendations of the various food-related planning bodies will require an investment of public funds to ensure credibility of the office is maintained.