

**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.

**The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator**  
**A Program of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**

**CEO INTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

**1. Introduction**

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has funded approximately 40 initiatives across some 20 sponsoring agencies aimed at reducing the number of working poor, young adults, and children living in poverty in New York City. CEO is committed to evaluating its programs and policies and is developing a specific evaluation plan for each of its initiatives. For example, several major new initiatives will implement random assignment evaluations or other rigorous designs. Some programs are slated to receive implementation and outcome evaluations, while others may be evaluated using readily available administrative data. This differentiated approach reflects the varied scale of the CEO interventions, data and evaluation opportunities, and finite program and evaluation resources. Westat and Metis Associates are evaluating many of these programs on behalf of CEO. This evaluation was conducted and written by CEO staff. The purposes of the evaluations are to collect and report data on the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the programs in the CEO initiative to inform policy and program decision-making within CEO and the agencies that sponsor the programs.

This evaluation is a systematic review involving a review of program documents, analysis of available implementation and outcome data, and data collection through interviews with program administrators and stakeholders. Information and data for this Program Review Report are based on interviews conducted by CEO in September 2008 with relevant staff of varying community and agency partners, including staff from NYC Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Education (DOE), and the Human Resources Administration (HRA). Program documents, monthly data reports, and management reports were obtained from the Food Policy Coordinator. The results are used to assess the program design and implementation, develop a logic model to represent the underlying theory of each program, determine the extent to which the program meets key CEO criteria, and document key achievements and program strengths and weaknesses.

The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator (FPC) was established by Executive Order in January 2007 and reports to the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services. The Coordinator is responsible for convening the Food Policy Task Force and coordinating the efforts of City agencies to improve access to healthy food.

The City of New York serves approximately 217 million meals and snacks per year through its schools, hospitals, jails, senior meals, and other programs.<sup>1</sup> An array of City agencies are involved in prevention of hunger, the promotion of health, and the provision of food across the city. To facilitate these efforts Mayor Michael Bloomberg established the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator.

This Program Review Report provides an overview and assessment of the FPC on several dimensions, including goals, fidelity to the program model, target population and clients served, program services, and agency management. This program review was conducted internally by CEO

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

staff, and information in this report reflects available information as of November 2008.

## 2. Overview and Assessment of the Program

The creation of this Office was hailed by the advocacy community as an important step in advancing food issues within the City. An article by the New York Times in November 2006 reported that Joel Berg, Executive Director of the Coalition Against Hunger stated, "We are thrilled that the City will now have a point person and a Task Force to help break through bureaucratic hurdles to better coordinate food programs across City agency lines...Now we hope this tool is used effectively." Peter H. Kostmayer, president of Citizens for New York City, an agency that helps provide fresh produce to poor neighborhoods, stated "Residents face considerable obstacles in providing their families with a healthy diet," he said. "The Mayor and Speaker Quinn are doing exactly what needs to be done."<sup>2</sup>

The principal responsibilities of the Food Policy Coordinator are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- Convene the Food Policy Task Force. The Task Force was created with the goal of increasing access to healthful foods for low-income New Yorkers. It is comprised of representatives from Offices of the Food Policy Coordinator (in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services), the First Deputy Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Community Development, the City Council Speaker; the Human Resource Administration (HRA), the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Department of Education (DOE), and the Council on the Environment (CENYC). The Task Force has identified three main priorities: healthy food retail access; making the food that the City serves healthier; and hunger/food support. To tackle these three priorities the Food Policy Task Force has created three corresponding workgroups namely: Food Support Programs, Procurement, and Retail Access.<sup>4</sup>
- Interagency Collaboration. Break-down silos and create new relationships across food programs. For instance, supermarket development work involves multiple agencies that deal with real estate –HPD, DCP, EDC, NYCHA -- agencies that are not typically involved in food policy.<sup>5</sup>
- Break-down the division between responding to hunger and promoting healthy eating, for example reduce contradictory messages that result from the Health Department promoting healthy eating at the same time as other City agencies provide meals that do not follow these standards. For example, DOHMH promotes consumption of low-fat milk, but schools, homeless shelters, and other public facilities have, until recently, been serving whole milk.
- Raise the profile and priority level of food policy issues at agencies where food policy has not been a top priority.
- Manage strategic food policy projects that benefit from more intense involvement from the Office of the Mayor.

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<sup>2</sup> Cardwell, D. "City to Name Food Policy Official to Address Hunger Issues." The New York Times. November 23, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Food Policy Coordinator. E-mail to CEO Senior Advisor. September 9, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> The working groups include representatives from various City agencies including: the Human Resource Administration, the Administration of Children Services; the Departments of Education, Health and Mental Hygiene, The Aging, Youth and Community Development, Homeless Services, Juvenile Justice, Parks and Recreation, Citywide Administrative Services, Housing Preservation and Development, Corrections, Small Business Services; and the Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> Food Policy Coordinator. E-mail to CEO Senior Advisor. September 9, 2008.

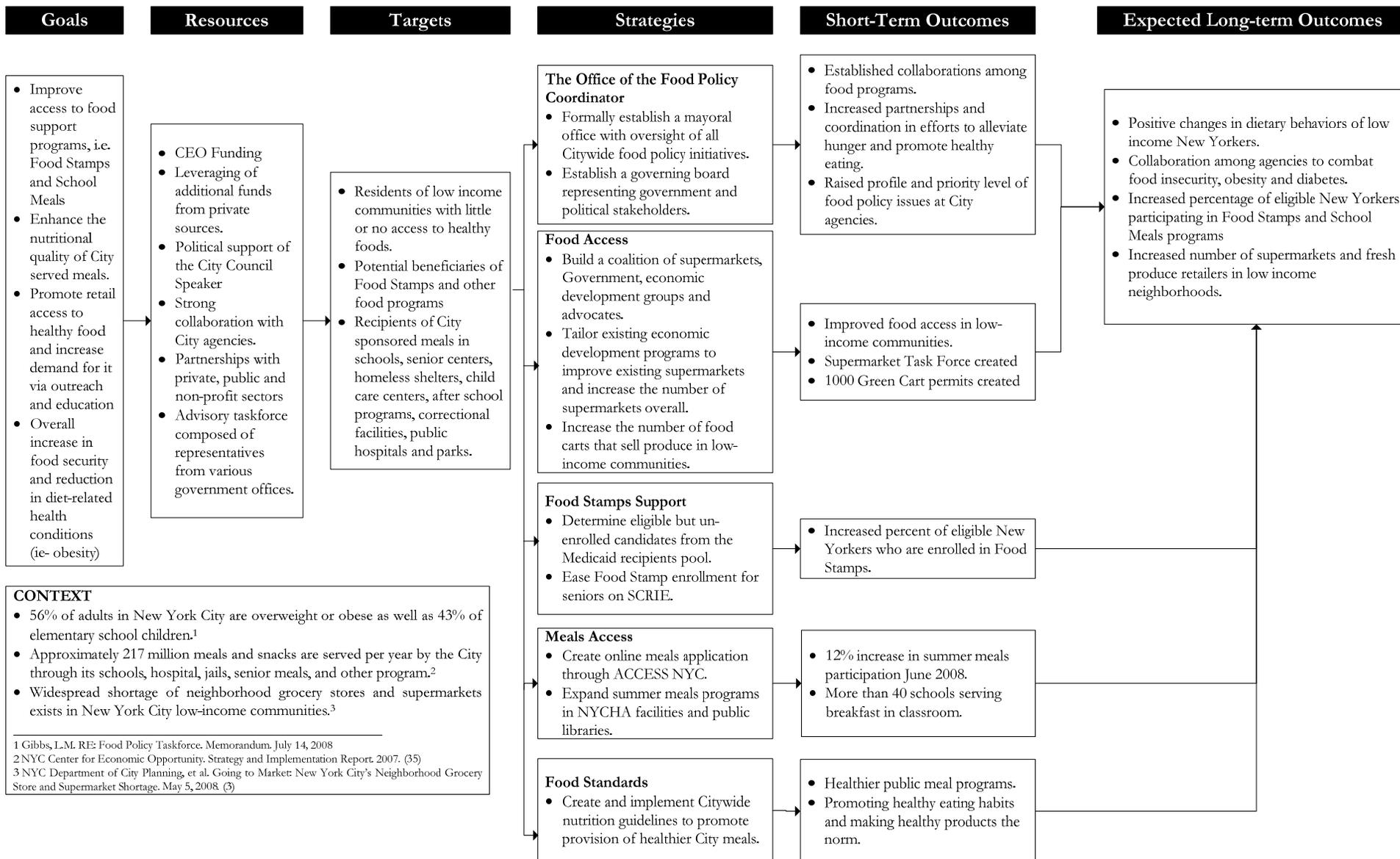
**Program Goals.** The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator was established by Mayor Bloomberg in January 2007. The FPC is responsible for convening the Food Policy Task Force and coordinating the efforts of City agencies to improve access to healthy food. The vision for the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator and the Food Policy Task Force is to reduce food insecurity and the prevalence of obesity in low-income communities. They are working toward three main goals to accomplish this vision: improving access to food support programs such as Food Stamps and School Meals; making the meals City agencies and their contractors serve healthier; and promoting Healthy Food Retail Access and Demand.<sup>6</sup>

A key analytic tool in the program review is development of a logic model that serves as a visual representation of the underlying logic or theory of a program. The program logic model details the program's context, assumptions, and resources and their relationships to one another. By examining the program's internal logic and external context, the evaluation team and reader are able to determine if the program design is consistent with overall goals and capable of achieving its intended outcomes. Toward this end, this brief focuses on early outcomes and the challenges faced in achieving them.

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<sup>6</sup> City of New York (19 September 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg and Shaquille O'Neal Announce New Food Standards for City Agencies" Press Release.

## The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator Logic Model



### **Fidelity to the Program Model.**

The FPC Office works at the policy and management level, and unlike most CEO initiatives does not provide a direct service to enrolled participants. In assessing program fidelity, we have therefore addressed whether the FPC has engaged in efforts promoting inter-agency coordination on food-related issues. 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.

Interviews with stakeholders indicate that the FPC made remarkable progress with initiatives. Stakeholders point to the FPC's ability to form partnerships with community organizations, City agencies, City Council and Mayoral offices, and engage these key players in a shared mission to promote better food policies in the City.<sup>7</sup> The FPC has been operating effectively in accordance with various strategies described above. Programs are being implemented Citywide and are targeting poor neighborhoods.

#### **FPC Initiatives:**

The FPC was instrumental in developing and implementing the programs listed below. While much of his work took place behind the scenes the FPC lent his efforts to forming partnerships and coalitions, promoting inter-agency communication, advocating for public and political support of these programs, identifying needs and barriers to services, and pushing issues onto the agenda.

The execution of the programs described below involved the work of a variety of other actors, and much of the FPC's efforts were directed towards coordinating these stakeholders and facilitating their constructive cooperation, or helping these issues to advance more quickly by prioritizing them.

### **Retail Access: Green Carts**

#### *Need:*

This initiative is designed to improve the overall health of New Yorkers and reach those who most lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables. New York City rates of obesity and diabetes have doubled over the past decade, and the communities where these numbers are rising are often those that also lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables.<sup>8</sup> It has been shown that eating more fruits and vegetables has myriad health benefits, including lowering the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.<sup>9</sup> However, many residents of lower income neighborhoods in New York City have little access to fresh produce.<sup>10</sup> A recent NYC DOHMH study found that supermarkets in Harlem are 30% less common than on the Upper East Side, and while 20% of Upper East Side markets or bodegas carried leafy green vegetables, only 3% of those in Harlem sold these items.<sup>11</sup> Individuals who consume fruits and vegetables at least three times a day are 42% less likely to die of stroke and 24% less likely to die of heart disease than those who eat them less than once a day.

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<sup>7</sup> Stakeholder interviews included personnel from three City Agencies and a food policy advocacy organization.

<sup>8</sup> City of New York. (March 13, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg Signs Legislation Establishing 1,000 New 'Green Cart' Permits." Press Release. September 9, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> City of New York. (March 13, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg Signs..."

<sup>10</sup> City of New York. (February 27, 2008). "Green Carts Legislation." Press Release. September 9, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> City of New York. (February 27, 2008). "Green Carts..."

Program Description:

The Green Cart initiative was developed by the Food Policy Task Force in an effort to advance its goal of promoting healthy foods access. Under legislation signed into law in March 2008, 1,000 new mobile food vending permits for carts selling fresh fruits and vegetables will be issued on a phased-in basis over the course of the next two years.<sup>12</sup> A \$1.5 million dollar grant from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund will help vendors develop a recognizable and branded cart design, establish a relationship with non-profit wholesalers that will result in a flow of high-quality and low-cost produce, create a loan fund in partnership with Acción New York to help cart operators cover their start-up costs, and launch a coordinated marketing campaign to promote the Green Carts.<sup>13</sup>

The FPC was instrumental in ensuring the passage of the Green Cart legislation through the City Council. Despite controversy raised by supermarket and bodega owners concerned about the potential losses to their businesses, the bill was more palatable to Council members because it was part of a larger, coherent City food policy. In addition, the FPC's relationships with community based organizations, including his position as co-chair of the New York City Food and Fitness Partnership, were critical in the development of a coalition of more than 100 organizations that supported the Green Cart legislation. The FPC has also been involved in the planning and implementation of the Green Cart program, including the mechanics of permit allocation, writing and overseeing implementation of private funding for the program, negotiating and balancing the sometimes conflicting needs and desires of various stakeholders, and extensive media and communications work.

News accounts and interviews suggest there was a great deal of political controversy among supermarket owners, bodega owners and health and food advocates in getting this initiative passed. With the creation of the Green Carts, an official with the DOHMH noted that the FPC played the important role of neutrally representing multiple perspectives and the various sides of the issue during meetings with various stakeholders. It was noted that this objectivity depoliticized the project in a way that was critical to getting its later success and that the FPC was able to effectively engage stakeholders in dialogues and build consensus around the project.<sup>14</sup> The DOHMH staff noted, "From a political perspective, literally just having a position of Food Policy Coordinator that existed within the Mayor's office with support of the Speaker brought things together and allowed us to diffuse concerns that people had raised."

Target Population: Permits are granted to vendors located in specific neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs where access to and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is limited.<sup>15</sup>

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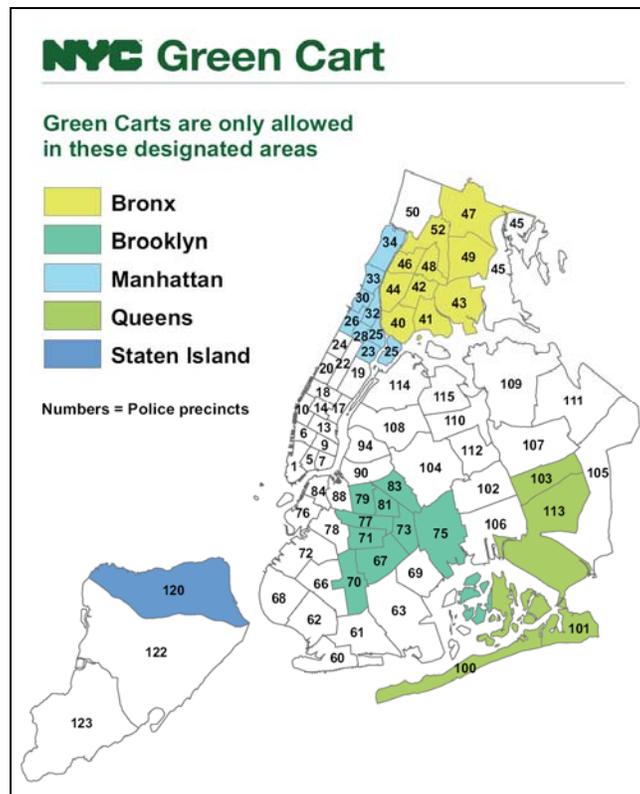
<sup>12</sup> City of New York. (March 13, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg Signs..."

<sup>13</sup> City of New York. (March 13, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg Signs..."

<sup>14</sup> NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Staff, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 18, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> City of New York. (18 December 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn Announce Green Cart Legislation to Improve Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Neighborhoods with Greatest Need." Press Release. September 9, 2008.

*Green Cart Permit Distribution*



Outcomes:

Based on recommendations made by the Food Policy Task Force, permits for the initial 500 carts are being allocated as follows beginning in July 2008.<sup>16</sup>

Borough	Number of Permits
Brooklyn	175
Bronx	175
Manhattan	75
Queens	50
Staten Island	25

As of November 2008, the first 59 Green Carts passed inspection and are permitted to begin operating.

In addition to the allocation of the 500 permits described above, an additional 500 permits will be issued in 2009. Once operating at full capacity, it is anticipated that the initiative will result in at least 75,000 New Yorkers eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, which could save at least 50 lives a year

<sup>16</sup> Provided by NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, see [http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp\\_pan\\_green\\_carts.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp_pan_green_carts.shtml).

in the long term.<sup>17</sup>

## **Retail Access: New York Supermarket Commission**

### Need:

Two recent reports by The Food Trust<sup>18</sup> and The Department of City Planning<sup>19</sup> highlight the lack of supermarkets in low-income communities throughout the New York area. In its report, “The Need for More Supermarkets in New York City,” The Food Trust found that New York City is 137 supermarkets short of meeting the national rate of people per supermarket. In addition, they note that the number of supermarkets in New York City has declined by one-third in the past six years.<sup>20</sup> Low-income communities and individuals are disproportionately affected by this shortage, and individuals who live in lower-income areas without access to supermarkets appear to suffer from diabetes-related deaths at a rate higher than that experienced by the population as a whole. Through mapping, the Food Trust study shows that many low-income neighborhoods in New York City have both poor supermarket access and a high incidence of diabetes-related deaths. The research indicates that poor supermarket access is related to significant health problems that adversely impact lower-income neighborhoods.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, a growing body of research indicates that the presence of supermarkets in communities has a direct impact on people’s ability to eat a healthy diet. Recent studies in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* and the *American Journal of Public Health* have found that fruit and vegetable intake increased by 32% for each additional supermarket in a community.<sup>22</sup> These studies have also found that the increased availability of supermarkets is associated with lower adolescent body mass index and obesity,<sup>23</sup> indicating that boosting the number of supermarkets in underserved communities is also a key tool in the fight against childhood obesity.

### Program Description:

The New York Supermarket Commission was formed in May 2008 to combat the growing epidemic of childhood obesity and diet-related disease impacting urban and rural communities across New York State. The Supermarket Commission brings together approximately 40 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 communities across the state that are underserved by supermarkets. The Commission is led by The Food Trust, the Food Policy Coordinator for the City of New York, the Food Bank for New York City, the Food Industry Alliance of New York State, and the United Way of New York City. Members

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<sup>17</sup> City of New York. (March 13, 2008). “Mayor Bloomberg Signs...”

<sup>18</sup> The Food Trust is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization which works to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food.

<sup>19</sup> *Food for Every Child* by The Food Trust, and *Going to Market* by the Department of City Planning ([http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/supermarket\\_access/presentation\\_2008-05-05.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/supermarket_access/presentation_2008-05-05.pdf)). The City Planning report, “Going to Market”, was requested by the Food Policy Task Force and edited by the FPC.

<sup>20</sup> The Food Trust. “Special Report: The Need for More Supermarkets in New York City.” (Philadelphia, P.A.: The Food Trust, 2008), 3. [http://www.thefoodtrust.org/catalog/download.php?product\\_id=148](http://www.thefoodtrust.org/catalog/download.php?product_id=148).

<sup>21</sup> The Food Trust (2008), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Morland, K. et al. “The contextual effect of the local food environment on residents diets: The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study.” *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 11(2002):1761-1767.

<sup>23</sup> Powell, L. et al. “Associations Between Access to Food Stores and Adolescent Body Mass Index.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 33, no. 4 (2007): S301 - S307.

include child advocates, health experts, food retailing executives, business and civic leaders. The FPC was instrumental in working with staff from the Food Trust to launch and fund this initiative, and he currently serves as a co-convenor of the Commission. Financial support for the initiative was obtained from the NY City Council and the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman Foundation.

New York's supermarket initiative is modeled after a successful initiative in Pennsylvania that helped spark the new development or renovation of more than 30 supermarkets. This initiative has been recognized as a model program by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Governor's Association.<sup>24</sup>

To date, the Commission has convened three times, and will meet again in November 2008 before issuing its findings in February 2009. Recommendations will focus on public policies that aim to increase the number of supermarkets and food stores in underserved communities.<sup>25</sup>

Over the course of three meetings held to date, the New York Supermarket Commission has identified several barriers to supermarket investment including, but not limited to:

- Dramatic increases in rent that drives out existing supermarkets and discourages new ones from opening.
- A lack of suitable parcels for supermarket development.
- The land review process, which is often a slow moving and high cost process.<sup>26</sup>
- The need for up-to-date information on the purchasing power of neighborhoods in regard to a supermarket's potential for profit.

To overcome these problems, the Commission is compiling a set of policy recommendations that will include identifying targeted areas for supermarket development, tailoring existing economic development programs (such as tax abatements, density bonuses, and tax exempt financing) to better fit the supermarket industry and the creation of a statewide business financing program for supermarkets. The FPC and the Commission have also facilitated conversations among City agencies regarding potential policy interventions with respect to barriers to supermarket development.

#### Target Population:

This initiative targets supermarket owners and consumers in low-income neighborhoods across New York.

#### Outcomes:

The Commission has been launched and is laying the foundation needed to achieve its goals. The City is anticipated to release its response to the Commission's recommendations in early 2009. The FPC continues to advance this work in a variety of ways, for example, by collaborating with City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to explore how tax and zoning incentives under the City's jurisdiction can be marshaled to attract supermarkets to underserved areas. He is also working with NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) to initiate conversations about

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<sup>24</sup> City of New York. (December 18, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg and..."

<sup>25</sup> From "Supermarket Commission Briefing for DM Gibbs"

<sup>26</sup> FPC noted that New York City's land review process can be lengthy and requires a significant investment from entrepreneurs. Development propositions are not always approved at the end of the process, creating a further disincentive for individuals to invest in opening a supermarket (Interview, FPC with CEO staff, 11/5).

the possible development of Supermarkets on NYCHA sites.

## **Food Security: Food Stamps**

### Need:

The Food Bank of New York estimates that approximately 1.3 million New Yorkers rely on soup kitchens and food pantries. Many of these individuals are also members of New York's most vulnerable populations - children, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and the working poor. The State office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, using United States Department of Agriculture Data, determined that as of 2004, nearly 13% of all New York City households experienced food insecurity. As of 2006, HRA's internal estimates indicated that more than 350,000 New York residents were eligible for the Food Stamp program and not receiving benefits.

The efforts to streamline the Food Stamps application process and ease application wait times stem from a desire to increase the percentage of eligible New Yorkers accessing Food Stamps and to reduce barriers by creating a more efficient application process. Many of the documents and forms that need to be submitted for the Food Stamps application overlap with the application for Medicaid but as it stands now, most individuals who are applying for either program usually need to go to two separate offices and fill out two separate applications.<sup>27</sup> By some estimates, nearly one third of all eligible New Yorkers are not participating in Food Stamps and that significant numbers of New Yorkers who are eligible for Medicaid (including children eligible for CHIP) are not enrolled.<sup>28</sup> The efforts to ease the application process and capture dual-eligibles in a single site aim to increase the number of individuals benefiting from these programs.

### Project Description:

Increasing uptake and improving the administration of Food Stamps for the City's low-income population is another focus area of the FPC. These efforts include:

- A data match initiative that was designed to increase the number of New Yorkers enrolled in the Federal Food Stamps program. The data match identified current Medicaid recipients who were qualified to receive Food Stamps but who were not enrolled in the program at the time of the match. Conducted in June 2008 by the City's Human Resources Administration (HRA), the data match identified over 600,000 households who may qualify for benefits. Based on the results of the data match, targeted outreach campaigns are now being undertaken by HRA, the City Council and community based organizations to reach these households and enroll them in the Federal Food Stamp program.<sup>29</sup> HRA has completed mailings to 300,000 households in Queens and the Bronx, and letters to Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island will be sent in January. Preliminary results for Queens and the Bronx show that over 28,500 people in these two boroughs filed applications so far and over 21,400 of them received a Food Stamp benefit.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Children's Defense Fund. "Coordinating New York's Medicaid & Food Stamp Programs: Making it Easier for Families to Access the Benefits They Need. By Kinda Serafi and Anne Marie Castello. (New York, N.Y.: Children's Defense Fund, 2006). 1.

<sup>28</sup> Children's Defense Fund (2006), 1

<sup>29</sup> City of New York (June 16, 2006). "Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn Announce Completion of Medicaid Food Stamp Data Match." Press Release.

<sup>30</sup> Doar, R. Testimony in Feeding Hungry New Yorkers During the Financial Crisis: Before the General Welfare Committee, New York City Council. November 25, 2008.

- The FPC assisted HRA in their attempts to reduce the wait times associated with the Food Stamp application process. The FPC assisted in identifying a customer service process expert to work with HRA Food Stamp Offices, and has worked with that consultant on an ongoing basis to ensure the success of this effort. As part of these efforts, the FPC oversaw the collaboration including HRA, DFTA, and the Food Bank. The effort received support in September 2008 from the USDA to ease the Food Stamp application process for seniors enrolled in the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption program (SCRIE).<sup>31</sup>

Target Population:

All initiatives are aimed at individuals eligible for Food Stamps who are not currently enrolled, including low-income working individuals, seniors, and the disabled. The USDA grant is specifically aimed at low-income senior citizens who are also enrolled in SCRIE.

Outcomes:

While outcome data is not yet available due to the recent nature of these initiatives, the initiatives have the potential to aid thousands of new people in accessing Food Stamps. The FPC was instrumental in bringing new private and government resources into Food Stamps promotion efforts. In addition, stakeholder feedback has been very positive. According to an official who manages work supports at HRA, the FPC has spurred them to do more. As he stated, “he was helpful in thinking through what was most important... Having extra attention of someone from City Hall forced us to pay more attention to some things that otherwise might not have been priority.”<sup>32</sup> He further noted that when the FPC was created, the Office gave the City more credibility with community groups who had been critical of the City’s Food Stamps efforts by demonstrating that the City took their issues seriously as a priority and wanted to be an active partner. The staff member noted that since the FPC position was created, they receive less criticism and more collaboration with community groups, a sign he felt that the position was having a positive impact. Similarly, the multiple perspectives that the FPC brought to the table helped HRA understand what issues other stakeholders were prioritizing; assisting them to integrate these diverse interests into their initiatives, making for more robust and coordinated program efforts.

**Healthy Meals: Nutrition Standards**

Need:

The effort to improve the nutritional quality of City-sponsored meals was launched in response to an increasing awareness and concern for the physical health and well-being of the City’s residents as it relates to nutrition. According to the Associated Press, “more than half of adult New Yorkers are overweight or obese, and some 700,000 have diabetes.”<sup>33</sup> New York City agencies represent a vast system of meal provision, and this scope presents a unique opportunity to improve the health of broad segments of the city’s most vulnerable populations. City agencies provide 225 million meals and snacks annually, with New York City Public Schools alone providing more meals per day than any other national organization except for the Department of Defense.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture (September 17, 2008). “USDA Grants \$5 Million to Increase Access and Participations in Food Stamps Program.” Press Release. September 24, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> NYC Human Resource Administration Staff, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 18, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> “Mayor Bloomberg introduces new standards for city-served meals.” The New York Daily News, September 19, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> “Mayor Bloomberg introduces new standards for city-served meals.” The New York Daily News, September 19, 2008.

Program Description:

This initiative set nutrition standards for all foods served or purchased by City agencies and contractors that are served in City-sponsored programs or activities. All meals and snacks served in schools, senior centers, homeless shelters, child care centers, after school programs, correctional facilities, public hospitals and parks are subject to these nutritional standards.<sup>35</sup>

The standards were drafted by City Food Policy Task Force, and are summarized below:<sup>36</sup>

- Each meal must provide an appropriate range of calories, salt and fiber
- Water must be available at all meals in addition to the other beverages regularly served
- Juice must be 100% fruit juice and recommended servings should not exceed 8 ounces
- Lunches and dinners must include at least two servings of vegetables
- Agencies that serve three meals daily must provide at least five servings of fruits and vegetables
- Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables should be used in place of canned products, where appropriate
- Deep fryers will be eliminated over time
- All food purchased and served must have 0 grams trans fat

Target Population:

City meals are provided in a wide variety of settings including the school system, jails, homeless shelters and senior centers. The people reached at these venues include low-income youth enrolled in New York City's School Meals Programs, vulnerable populations such as the elderly, the homeless, incarcerated persons, and the medically indigent. The new food standards impact approximately 1.1 million meals served each day.<sup>37</sup>

Outcomes:

New Citywide food standards were officially introduced on September 19, 2008. City agencies and contractors have been given six months to reach compliance, with some exceptions made for the standards that are most challenging to comply with. While it is too early to have any health outcomes identified as a result of this initiative, the passage of new City standards was a major achievement. The process for developing these standards required cooperation across a dozen City agencies, and protracted negotiations to balance health concerns with cost constraints, and the need to protect the quality of the food.

**Food Policy Coordinator: General Achievements**

Thus far, based on a review of program materials and interviews with key stakeholders, the FPC Office appears to be reaching its short-term outcomes, and efforts are resulting in positive changes impacting low-income New Yorkers. These projects resulted in increased healthy food access in low-income community, and continued collaboration with City agencies to combat obesity and diabetes, and can reasonably be expected to lead to positive dietary changes for low-income New Yorkers.

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<sup>35</sup> City of New York. (December 18, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg and..."

<sup>36</sup> City of New York. (December 18, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg and..."

<sup>37</sup> City of New York. (December 18, 2008). "Mayor Bloomberg and..."

Universally, stakeholders who were interviewed for this program review noted that the creation of this position has already had numerous tangible benefits. Key early successes already achieved were described in the sections above. Additional examples of outcomes resulting from the efforts of the FPC include:

School Meals:

- Working with DOE to increase the number of meals provided to low-income students. DOE expanded summer meals to libraries and emergency food programs, and served nearly 364,000 more meals in the summer of 2008 than they did in the summer of 2007. This represents a 5.3% increase in the total meals served from 2007 – 2008, and a total increase from 2006 (before the creation of the Food Policy Task Force) of 12.5%.
- Promoting an online application for school meals with HHS Connect.
- Creating an in-class breakfast pilot program with DOE that is now in more than 40 schools. Pilot is undergoing authorization to permit a massive expansion.

Increased resources

With the support and efforts of the FPC, new resources have been obtained to promote food policy goals in NYC. These include:

Funders	Grand Awards	Project Descriptions
Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman Foundation	\$175,000	Food Trust and Food Bank for New York City will work with City and State governments and grocery industry to ensure adequate access to fruits and vegetables for all New Yorkers and attract supermarkets to underserved low-income communities. This grant supplements an earlier \$75,000 allocation by the City Council to the Food Bank for this project.
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	\$677,948	A collaboration between HRA, DFTA, and the Food Bank overseen by the FPC to ease the Food Stamp application process for seniors enrolled in the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption program (SCRIE). <sup>38</sup>
Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund	\$1,500,000	Toward the Green Cart initiative to provide an array of supports for Green Cart vendors. These supports include: technical assistance procuring high-quality, low-cost produce, a loan fund in through Acción New York to help cart operators cover their start-up costs, and developing a branded design and a coordinated marketing campaign to promote the Green Carts. <sup>39</sup>
Jessica Seinfeld Foundation	\$228,000	Contribution to the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York for the replication of a program integrating Nutritional Education and Cooking in after-school programs. <sup>40</sup> The

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture (September 17, 2008). “USDA Grants...”

<sup>39</sup> City of New York. (March 13, 2008). “Mayor Bloomberg Signs...”

<sup>40</sup> The project is called Fun Food Smart Food.

		program is named Fun Food Smart Food.
Robin Hood Foundation	\$400,000	Collaboration with Met Council on Jewish Poverty and HRA to pilot a joint initiative to streamline the Food Stamp/Medicaid application process through a facilitated enrollment process at 15 community-based locations.

*Working with Stakeholders and Promoting Collaboration*

The FPC is actively maintaining partnership 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 Office within the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS) rather than within a City agency, the Coordinator can more effectively facilitate agency partnerships and collaboration and lend the issues a higher profile than they may have gotten otherwise.

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 (for example the Green Carts Initiative and the USDA grant with the DFTA). One stakeholder noted that the FPC is a go-to resource to assist in coordinating efforts between City agencies, that he “helps put things together,” and “acts as a centralized point of collaboration, (and) can help link a diverse range of sources to each other on overlapping efforts.”<sup>41</sup> Another stated that before the FPC position existed, “so many agencies didn’t talk to each other. Before the position there was less of the communication- political issues were separating agencies.”<sup>42</sup>

Some interviewees discussed the challenge of having the FPC located in the Office of the DMHHS. One respondent, for example, felt that it resulted in stronger coordination with agencies that fall under one Deputy Mayor, but that coordination was somewhat weaker with agencies under other Deputy Mayors. Overall however, it appears agencies have benefited from the FPC raising the profile of food policy issues within City Hall. Interviewees also discussed the importance of the staffmember in the FPC having the ability to balance the coordination role with the need for respecting agency autonomy.

One source described the impact of the FPC by saying: “It’s hard to get big [City] agencies to reassess how they do things- how they use their purchasing power for example. All this has changed- someone is thinking about these issues on the daily basis... making important questions get tackled over bureaucratic concerns. It’s a challenging position and [the FPC] has done a fantastic job in balancing interests... People feel they’re being heard- that he’s responsive. It’s a big challenge... it’s understaffed and under-resourced.”<sup>43</sup> These comments indicate strong support the

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<sup>41</sup> NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Staff, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 18, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> NYC Department of Education Staff, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 24, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Staff, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 18, 2008.

FPC efforts, and point to a need for increased staffing for the initiative.

A representative from a non-profit food advocacy organization stated that thanks to the position, the profile of food issues in the City has been raised, something she considers to be in and of itself a “huge success.”<sup>44</sup> She also complimented the knowledge and experience of the current FPC, pointing out that having the right person in the position is essential to making it function well.<sup>45</sup> Interview subjects both within and outside of the City noted that the FPC position has resulted in improved relations with advocacy groups, who now feel they have a centralized person to speak with and bring issues to within the City and who will act on their behalf.

#### Advocacy:

The FPC also has advocated for better food policies through policy and advocacy work, including:

- Drafting a letter from the Mayor to Congress regarding the Farm Bill, and developing consensus with agencies regarding its content;
- Travel to Washington with the DOE’s CEO of School Support Services to meet with a USDA Official to discuss efforts to ease paperwork burden of school meals program on DOE.

#### **CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Several of the individuals interviewed stated that some of the benefits of the FPC position created their own set of challenges. One person noted that the very success of the FPC and the positive response to the position generated very high expectations for what will be taken on by the Coordinator. The creation of a highly visible position that works with multiple stakeholders and that has such a large scope has meant that there are many issues and demands being taken to the FPC. As one person put it, the FPC now has “a long to-do list” coming from City Council, unions, grocers, and supermarkets, among others.<sup>46</sup> As noted by several people interviewed, with the FPC involved simultaneously with several agencies and projects, the volume of projects reaches a point where additional staff are necessary. Others noted that while the FPC time and attention are focused on one or two key issues, other issues can get pushed to the back burner. This review indicates that the City would benefit from an expansion of the FPC office given the large, and growing, portfolio of the FPC.

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<sup>44</sup> Food Bank of New York Staff Member, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 23, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Food Bank of New York Staff Member, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 23, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Staff, interview by CEO Senior Advisor. September 18, 2008.