Over 171,000 individuals living in South Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore are food insecure, and do not know where or how they will get their next meal. Of these individuals, 42,000 are children.

It is through the Foodbank’s three-year strategic plan that we aim to meet the immediate need of hunger and to challenge ourselves to holistically tackle the issue of food insecurity and its root causes.

Our strategic plan is the collaborative effort of every team member at the Foodbank, along with our board of directors, community leaders, and representatives from partner agencies. It is the collective result of our combined wisdom, experience, and vision.

We invite you to become part of the implementation of what we believe to be a comprehensive and thoughtful plan. Ask us how you can help educate our community and advocate for food security. Consider providing vital resources like volunteer time or a monetary gift; or lend your specific skills and expertise to the effort. Our accomplishments over the next three years will be made possible with your support and commitment.

Together, we can solve hunger!

Ruth Jones Nichols, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore has provided over 261 million meals to those in our community who face hunger through our 35-year history. Through our programs, facilities, and large network of community partners, we “eliminate hunger” on a daily basis for many. However, we understand that our current work addresses hunger for individuals in the short term. It does not address the root causes which force individuals to return to a food pantry again and again. This understanding led us to commit to the development of a new strategic plan in the Fall of 2016. Over the course of 2017 we created a three-year strategic plan aimed to move Hampton Roads closer to achieving the mission of eliminating hunger for those we serve—not only for the day, or for a week, but for a lifetime.

**our mission**
leading the effort to eliminate hunger in our community

**our vision**
a hunger-free community

The Foodbank’s strategic pillars are designed to balance our efforts in “feeding the line” while giving specific attention to strategies designed to

end the line.
What Is The Meal Gap?

Every year in South Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore, children and adults are missing 31 million meals from their tables.

In 2017, the Foodbank and our hunger-relief partners provided 15 million meals to plates that would otherwise have been empty. Despite this strong safety net, 16 million meals are still missing: the meal gap.
How Can We Close It?

While the Foodbank is committed to “feeding the line” and providing those missing meals, we also strive to “end the line” once and for all.

In order to close the meal gap, we must first identify and address why food insecurity exists. Through the implementation of our strategic pillars, we intend to develop and execute innovative strategies that tackle the root causes of hunger.
We have all experienced hunger, but few know what it is like to live with hunger as a constant companion - not knowing where or how you will get your next meal. This is what is known as food insecurity.

As leaders in the fight against hunger, we will increase the public’s awareness of food insecurity in our region. We will educate the community about why food insecurity exists, where it exists, and how the Foodbank and our community partners, along with federal and state feeding programs, provide vital support to those individuals and their families. Leading is all about engaging, mobilizing, and educating our community, and lending a voice to those who struggle with food insecurity on a regular basis.
Goal 1: Increase community awareness about the root causes and consequences of hunger and food insecurity.

Goal 2: Mobilize the public to engage in advocacy that promotes hunger-relief programs for vulnerable adults and children.

We need leaders like you to help us gather, process, and disseminate information in the community about the cause and effect of food insecurity as well as its far-reaching consequences. We need your voice and your action to advocate for federal and state safety-net programs.
Providing hungry and food-insecure individuals with healthy food is at the core of our mission. The Foodbank will increase access to healthy foods and provide education about the value of a nutritious diet. We are committed to increasing the amount of nutritious foods that we and our partners distribute.

**Goal 3:**

Increase the nutritional values of distributed food to improve the overall health of our clients.
Goal 4:

Increase healthy, nutritious meals in communities with a high prevalence of food insecurity and food deserts.

**How Will We Achieve These Goals?**

In partnership with our network of community outreach partners, we will establish “Community Produce Hubs” throughout our region. These strategic sites will serve as access points for those with limited access to fresh produce.

We will increase the amount of fresh produce we distribute from 30% to 40% of our total distribution over the next five years.

What Is a Food Desert?

A food desert is an area where access to fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthy foods is limited. Residents may have access only to processed, packaged, or fast food. Food deserts are usually found in low-income areas.

The Foodbank aims to distribute meals in neighborhoods with one or more food deserts and a food-insecurity rate of 15 percent or more.
Strengthen

The important work that we accomplish is dependent on our donors, our volunteers, our workforce, and our community partners. The strength of our organization is enhanced as we nurture our many relationships and fully equip our workforce. Closing the Meal Gap requires us to not only scale and sustain our own capacity, but also to work strategically with our partner agencies to grow their capacity to distribute food and support their specific neighbors in need.

You can help strengthen the Foodbank’s organizational reach and that of our partners by contributing your time, skills, and finances.

Goal 5:

Expand our base of donor support to sustain and expand hunger-relief initiatives.
Goal 6:
Empower our workforce to improve knowledge and performance.
The Foodbank will continue doing what we do best – acquire, warehouse, and distribute healthy food. This is how we “feed the line” every day.

However, achieving transformational change will shorten and ultimately “end the lines” of hungry individuals that form throughout our region on a daily basis.

Our Transform pillar goes beyond warehousing and logistics. It requires a commitment to fostering collaboration among our existing network of partners. It also requires expanding our network in a way that leverages food to move people into a life of greater self-sufficiency.
Transformation will occur through partnerships that address the holistic needs of individuals in our community who struggle to make ends meet each day. By combining the Foodbank’s programs with organizations addressing barriers to economic success, such as job readiness or affordable housing, we can create pathways out of chronic hunger and food insecurity.

A transformational approach: In 2018, the Foodbank is launching a collaborative pilot alongside a local workforce development program. The pilot program provides consistent access to food for individuals in need over the course of 12 months. During this time, participants will learn job readiness skills to increase their earned income potential while also receiving financial literacy and nutrition education.

**Goal 7:**
Develop hunger-relief programming that incorporates a multi-faceted approach to “feeding the line” and “ending the line.”

**Goal 8:**
Build relationships with community partners to implement programs that help clients achieve economic self-sufficiency.
In closing:

“As a regional leader in the efforts to eliminate hunger in our community, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore is committed to developing and implementing strategies that address the primary root causes of hunger and food insecurity.”

Special thanks to:
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Strategic Planning Steering Committee:
Foodbank Executive Team
Melissa Boldt Smith, Board of Directors
Richard Buchanan, Community Volunteer
Darius Davenport, Board of Directors
Larry Ebinger, Board of Directors
Paul Finch, Board of Directors
Ken Thomas, Board of Directors
Leah Williams, Community Volunteer

Learn more about how to help us turn our strategic plan into action at Foodbankonline.org
Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

- Henry Ford