

NEVADA COUNCIL ON FOOD SECURITY **2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
FOOD INSECURITY IN NEVADA	5
NEVADA CFS 2024 ACCOMPLISMENTS	8
CFS ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES	9
CFS 2024 RECOMMENDATIONS	13
CFS FUTURE FOCUS	14
DEEEDENCES	18



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governor's Council on Food Security (CFS) aims to fight hunger among Nevadans, including children and older adults, who are at an increased risk of food insecurity. CFS was established in 2014 through an executive order and was subsequently codified into state law during the 80th Legislative Session in 2019 as Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 232.4968. Tasks of CFS include, but are not limited to, reviewing legislation and protocols affecting food policy infrastructure. In addition, CFS holds special session meetings as needed and standard quarterly meetings. Board members discuss various topics (e.g., funding streams, food-security emergency response plans, quality of service and meals to Nevadans, and food security policy), providing feedback and recommendations, which include an annual report to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB). This report also includes information on community gardens and urban farms per NRS 232.4968.

CFS recognizes the need for collaboration between all partners to reduce hunger and improve wellness outcomes. As of 2024, about 13% of Nevadans receive the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, mostly comprised of workers in service, office and administrative support, and sales jobs. ¹This is a slight decrease in participation from the previous year. ² Of concern is a lack of participation in rural areas where not only poverty rates and child food insecurity remain higher according to national studies by the Unites States Department of Agriculture (USDA), but also where "persistent poverty" exists due to limited resources, including jobs. ³

Based on ongoing feedback from food banks and food pantries, numerous factors have affected Nevada's progress in addressing food insecurity since coronavirus disease (COVID-19) benefit programs ceased in 2022; i.e., inflated cost of living, consumer prices- food in particular- and disruptions to the food supply chain due to Ukraine War,⁴ collectively causing new challenges.



INTRODUCTION

CFS was created to reshape food security and help residents living in food-insecure households by implementing the goals of the 2013 Food Strategic Plan called Food Security in Nevada: Nevada's Plan for Action. A work plan was established in 2018, incorporating revisions to the state strategic plan. A Food Security Work Group conducted a comprehensive needs assessment from July 2021 to November 2022. This assessment encompassed various methods, including surveys, strategic planning sessions, focus groups, and interviews. Based on these efforts, the Food Strategic Plan was updated again and published on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Food Security (OFS) website as the 2023 Food Security Strategic Plan. The Pillars identified in the Strategic Plan address the root causes of hunger and work to generate a healthier food security ecosystem throughout Nevada (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Five pillars of Nevada's food security.



The OFS provides administrative support to the Council to assist in the development, coordination, and implementation of a robust food system in Nevada. These activities are highlighted in the 2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) and the 2023 Food Security Strategic Plan. In 2024, OFS partnered with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) Public Health AmeriCorps to hire three (3) part-time members, of which two (2) are assigned to food initiatives to further support the Council.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Per NRS 232.4968, CFS is to create a report to, "...review the accomplishments and recommendations of the Council concerning food security, including, without limitation, any recommendations concerning community gardens and urban farms." The CFS 2024 Annual Report is written in collaboration with DHHS,



Division of Public and Behavioral Health DPBH OFS. The Annual Report is due to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau by January 31, 2025.

FOOD INSECURITY IN NEVADA

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as, "...the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited/uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways." The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations states a person is food insecure when, "...they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life." Many factors, including social, political, and economic factors may impact an individual's health and well-being. For example, based on USDA data in 2023, the food insecurity rate in Nevada was 12.5%. Feeding America also indicated that the rate of food insecurity among children in Nevada was 20.9% (144,290) in 2022.

There are several Charitable Food Systems throughout the State of Nevada. The Food Bank of Northern Nevada (FBNN) contracted with the Nevada Center for Surveys, Evaluation and Statistics (CSES) at the University of Nevada, Reno, and conducted a yearlong (2021-2022) surveillance style survey consisting of two parts: 1) a needs assessment, and 2) a neighbor satisfaction survey. This work analyzed the entire FBNN service area of 13 Northern Nevada counties and parts of eight (8) counties in California. Survey results revealed:

• The number one driver of food insecurity to be poverty, where most responders reported an annual income between \$10,000-\$19,999 (27.40%).^{9.} (Figure 2)

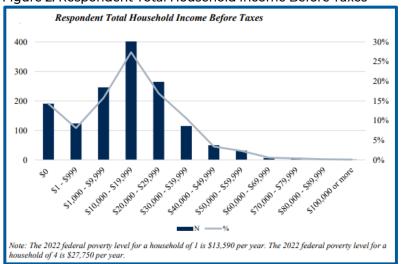


Figure 2. Respondent Total Household Income Before Taxes



- Over one in five responders (20.80%) said they run out of food and lack money to get more food almost every month.
- Similarly, 15.90% of participants cut the size of their meals or skipped meals entirely almost every month due to a lack of money for food.
- Nearly half (48.00%) of the participants also responded they agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I buy unhealthy foods more often than healthy foods because they are more affordable."
- When asked how frequently they visit pantry programs, 33.10% of participants responded, "Often, this is my primary food source."
- Another 54.10% of participants responded they come sometimes to supplement their food budget.
- Over one third of respondents (34.4%) stated they could "always" meet their household's food needs for the month after visiting a pantry program.
- Those who received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)were 39.36% of participants, 11.55% received CSFP/Senior Boxes, and 11.02% received free or reduced-price school meals, leading to the assumption that some assistance and benefit programs may be underutilized.
- In rural areas, program participation was relatively high in CSFP/Senior Boxes but low in SNAP.

The State of Obesity 2022 report indicates, "For children and adolescents, food insecurity is associated with a lower quality diet and a range of poor physical and mental health outcomes—including higher odds of having asthma, anemia, and fair or poor health and a higher risk of cognitive issues, aggression, anxiety, depression, behavior problems, suicide ideation, and hospitalization." Children experiencing food insecurity are also more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, face developmental impairments in areas such as language and motor skills, and encounter more social and behavioral problems compared to food-secure children. A 2022 UNLV State of Mental Health publication found that Nevada ranked last in overall mental health rankings. The 2021 Universal School Meals Program Act is established to address these risks and concerns. This act permanently provides free breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks to all school children regardless of income, eliminates school meal debt, and strengthens local economies by incentivizing local food procurement. The USDA extended these free services through the 2022 school year from the 2021 Universal School Meals Program Act. The Nevada Interim Finance Committee approved \$28 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to continue offering



these free meals. This funding allowed Nevada students to continue receiving universal free meals at school for the 2023-2024 school year. ¹⁵

According to the 2023 Nevada Food Security Strategic Plan, about 80,000 Nevadans aged 60 years and older identified as food insecure. Data projections suggest Nevada will witness a 36% increase in the older adult population over the next ten years. The older adult population encounters significant food security challenges, resulting in an elevated risk of hunger. Factors contributing to this vulnerability include adverse health conditions, the necessity of remaining homebound, limited fixed incomes, and various constraints that hinder their capacity to obtain or prepare nutritious food. Moreover, seniors with low incomes are frequently compelled to prioritize expenditures on housing, utilities, and medications, which leads them to purchase inexpensive and less nutritious food options. Poor health is not only a risk factor for food insecurity among older adults, but it also can be a consequence of food insecurity for this population. Older adults who are food insecure often experience adverse mental and physical health conditions and outcomes, such as diabetes, fair or poor health status, depression, lower cognitive function, limitations in activities of daily living, hypertension, congestive heart failure, peripheral arterial disease, history of a heart attack, osteoporosis, periodontal disease, and asthma.

As of June 2024, the USDA reports 271,867 Nevada households and 507,169 Nevadans have accepted the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. 18,19 The SNAP program assisted low-income families in purchasing nutritious foods from approved stores. At the beginning of 2024, participants continued receiving the Supplemental Emergency Allotments (SEA) established throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, following the Public Health Emergency declaration (PHE). The SEA allowed SNAP participants to receive a second monthly payment to address food insecurity throughout the pandemic. However, SEA ceased on March 14, 2023, following the end of PHE (February 2023), with the Nevada Division of Welfare and Support Services (DWSS) issuing over \$1 billion to Nevada households during the PHE. This funding was in addition to the USDA Food and Nutrition Services bolstering budgets for food banks nationwide following the pandemic to help further public and private funding sources used to tackle food insecurity. Public funds come from federal, state, and local agencies and governmental units. Private funds are sourced from charitable foundations, direct giving programs, voluntary agencies, and various



community groups. Since the SEA ended, Nevada food banks and food pantries have reported increasing clients receiving food-related services.

To help Nevada become food secure, the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) purchases food grown and produced in Nevada through the Home Feeds Nevada (HFN)^{20,21} program, established by NRS Chapter (561), which was initially funded by USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Program funds as well as funds made available by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) relief efforts approved by Congress. In its first year, HFN helped Nevada producers sustain and grow their businesses, enabling them to feed the state's most vulnerable food-insecure families. Since inception, twenty-five small and medium sized producers enrolled in HFN, resulting in \$3 million dollars paid to Nevada producers. HFN was distributed to 300 sites across all 17 of Nevada's counties through Three Square and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada. Three Square distributed 1.02 million pounds in calendar year 2023; the Food Bank of Northern Nevada distributed 1.08 million pounds from the start of Home Feeds Nevada in 2022 through to 2024. Additionally, the State of Nevada expanded the Nevada Community Food Access (NCFA) grant through NDA to increase food access in underserved communities with an emphasis on food distribution, infrastructure enhancement, and the provision of food to households in need. To learn more about NDA Division and Programs please visit Divisions (nv.gov). To learn about NDA involvement with community nutrition and school nutrition please visit Data and Reports (nv.gov).

NEVADA CFS 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2024, CFS continued to focus on the execution of pillars in the strategic plan and the food focus area of the SHIP. By the end of 2024, the Council met five (5) times (January 16, February 2, July 16, September 30, and October 15), with one (1) of those meetings being in person to enhance collaboration, cohesiveness, and to increase efforts in reducing Council vacancies. The Council discussed the subcommittee member list and recommended agencies (Table 1). The OFS will provide administrative support in contacting these agencies and "Food for People Not Landfills" (FFPNL) remains an ongoing CFS agenda item.



Table 1. FFPNL Subcommittee Recommended Agencies

FFPNL Subcommittee CFS Recommended Agencies

United States of Department of Agriculture (USDA) or Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)

Three Square

University of Nevada, Reno, Extension

Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada, includes food rescue

Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada

Food Bank Northern Nevada, includes food rescue

North gaming industry

South gaming industry

Retail or grocery

Reno Gleaning Project

A representative from an organization that does farmers market buy back and/or food rescue from agricultural producers

Helping Hands of Vegas Valley

A representative from food service

Food Strategic Plan and SHIP: CFS Roles and Responsibilities





The Council is tasked with implementing all the pillars under their regular duties as Council Members per legislation. However, this report is only focused on the two pillars specifically assigned to the Council under the strategic plan. Within the food strategic plan, the Council has two (2) goals and three (3) objectives under the LEAD pillar and was identified as a supportive partner for OFS under the BUILD pillar regarding two (2) strategies.

CFS Goals

LEAD Goal 1: Enhance cooperation, communication, and representation to support policy development and resource utilization.

- Local and/or regional councils and/ or working groups will meet jointly and quarterly to share information and/or address issues (e.g., innovative solutions, funding, workforce challenges, eligibility barriers, data sharing).
 - The OFS meets quarterly with the Partners for a Healthy Nevada (PHN) to provide updates regarding CFS and the Southern Nevada Food Council. The



OFS also attended on August 22, 2024, at a joint meeting with PHN and the Southern Nevada Food Council.

LEAD Goal 2: reduce food insecurity through funding and policy efforts.

The Council of Food Security has been supporting legislation, policies, and programs
to ensure Nevadan's food security since 2015. CFS provided a platform for
community members, Tribes, implementing partners, interested parties/groups, and
subject-matter experts to make recommendations to state agencies on addressing
food insecurity in Nevada and has enhanced connectivity among food insecurity in
Nevada and has enhanced connectivity among food security initiatives and partners.

CFS Objectives

LEAD Objective 1: This goal is to convene local food ecosystem partners, community members, policymakers, and keynote food security speakers.

- The Council developed one (1) SHIP objective to align with this LEAD objective:
 - 1. "Improve collaboration, communication, coordination, and information and datasharing among food ecosystem partners by developing and delivering a well-designed presentation to the Nevada legislature on food insecurity and food needs in Nevada. Collaborating with existing organizations like DPBH and CFS, as well as other relevant food ecosystem partners, to increase the effectiveness of these presentations. Host two (2) Food Security fairs/conferences in Southern and Northern Nevada, bringing together local food ecosystem partners, community members, and policy makers, to engage through various keynote speakers and discussions. Also, the provision of opportunities to interact with local vendors, farmers, and community organizations to learn about local foods and resources is essential."
 - In 2024, the Council established a Northern Nevada workgroup to plan and hold a 2025 Food Security Conference statewide to convene the local food ecosystem. The workgroup developed and distributed a survey for further planning and guidance.

LEAD Objective 2: This goal is to increase the representation of partners from the transportation and housing sectors, Tribal communities, and those who have lived experience with food insecurity in decision-making processes related to food security.

The Council developed one (1) SHIP objective to align with this LEAD objective:



- "Partner with local farmers, food vendors, Tribal communities, and other community organizations to support initiatives aimed at increasing mobile access (food trucks, community gardens, mobile markets, etc.) to healthy foods throughout the State of Nevada, specifically the underserved and remote areas (Churchill County, Elko, Esmeralda County, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, Mineral, Nye, Pershing, Lyon, Storey, Douglas, and White Pine)."
 - The DHHS's Nutrition Unit Deputy Chief and the CFS Chair, Allison Genco, presented to the Joint Interim Standing Committee (JHHS) on 04/08/2024 through food security presentations and requested to add up to three (3) seats. One seat for an individual who has lived with food insecurity and/or homelessness and two (2) members of a Tribe. The request for the seats was not approved. The Board will consider relief under NRS 232.4966 1(1) to seek the appointment of these members as designated by the Governor.

LEAD Objective 3: The objective is to fund efforts to assist programs and initiatives to reduce food insecurity, expand the availability and accessibility of food, and improve food affordability.

- The Council developed two (2) SHIP objectives to align with this LEAD objective.
 - "Support new strategic partnerships and increase awareness among the food security ecosystem regarding service providers and funding opportunities that can assist with distributing food to people, particularly individuals at increased/higher risk for food insecurity."
 - The Office of Food Security (OFS) and the Council on Food Security (CFS)
 will leverage a statewide Food Security Fair/Conference and other existing
 marketing to assist with awareness.
 - 2. "Utilize existing outreach channels and participate in marketing opportunities to inform eligible individuals and eligible households about WIC and SNAP benefits, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and any other additional summer food, school lunch, and breakfast programs. Increase awareness of existing campaigns that emphasize the benefits, requirements, and application processes for sponsors."
 - To help guide the Council in making informed decisions within this objective, the Council discussed statewide food security data and reviewed several programs;



- NDA on the Community Food Access Project, gaps analysis on food security
- ii. Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)
- iii. Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA)
- iv. The Summer Food Program (SFP)
- v. Home Delivered Meals Program
- vi. Home Feeds Nevada Program

Data discussed included food insecurity statistics (pounds of food distributed, people served, etc.), food distribution, general food access, awareness of food insecurity programs, and existing food databases to access food-related resources statewide. CFS also discussed the state's nutrition statistics to determine potential barriers to increasing food insecurity, how food insecurity is being addressed in hard-to-reach areas and/or food deserts in Nevada, and where the Council can advocate for change.

- The Council efforts on the Food for People Not for Landfill (FFPNL) Program also aligns with this objective. FFPNL is designed to increase food security by decreasing food waste and redirecting excess consumable food to underserved communities throughout the state. CFS monitors the program as a standing agenda item and DHHS continues to look for funding to support the unfunded mandate.
- The Council continue to review the Fund for a Healthy Nevada-Hunger Funds Annual Report. DHHS Grants Management Unit (GMU) administers the FHN Grant, which utilizes 60% of tobacco settlements received/recovered by the State of Nevada. The funds support the 2019 Statewide Community Needs Assessment and align with the recent needs assessment identified in the 2023 Food Strategic Plan (NRS 439.630). Please reference the FHN Hunger Funds annual report at Home -Office of Food Security (nv.gov) (expected to be posted in 2025).

OFS Strategies

BUILD Strategy 1: This strategy is about analyzing public funding streams and
models of best practices in other states, identifying policy gaps and opportunities in
Nevada, and identifying ways to increase public funding for programs to reduce food
insecurity, expand the availability of and accessibility to food, and improve the
affordability of food.



- o The 2023 Food Security Strategic Plan is a systemic plan that is intended to be used by all partners to promote food security efforts across Nevada. In 2024, CFS continued to assure progress and guidance of the plan, and OFS provided administrative support to carry out the plan with its partners as both partners continued to seek to increase access to nutrition-dense and affordable food for populations at increased/higher risk for food insecurity.
- BUILD Strategy 2: Identify and coordinate with designated state Tribal Liaisons, community partners established within tribal communities, and points of contact at the Nevada Indian Commission. CFS members to attend Intertribal Council of Nevada (ITCN) meetings.
 - In 2024, CFS worked to address food insecurity across the state, including Tribal communities. CFS established a workgroup to include Tribal partners in planning the 2025 Food Security Conference. CFS is also seeking a seat for Tribal members on the Council.

Food Strategic Plan Remaining Pillars







The Council on Food Security (CFS) assures progress and guidance of the food strategic plan to promote food security efforts across Nevada. OFS carries out the plan with its partners as it seeks to increase access to nutrition-dense and affordable food for populations at increased/higher risk for food insecurity. OFS also oversees the FHN funds aligning with the FEED and BUILD pillars. Please reference the FHN Hunger Funds annual report at Home - Office of Food Security (nv.gov) (posting anticipated 11/30/2024) for further information.



CFS 2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Advise and inform the Governor on the food policy of this State

The Council continues to discuss the need for a legislative brief to address food policy in the State of Nevada.

Funding the Plan

The Council can review grant proposals and alternative funding sources as requested by the Director to provide recommendations for funding the Plan. No request has been made for review in 2024.

Advise, assist and make recommendations to the Director

There has been no creation and administration of the Council request to the Director. However, the Council is reviewing options to make a request to add a seat for individuals with lived experience with food insecurity and/or homelessness along with adding 2 members of Nevada's Tribal communities (North, South).

Community Gardens and Urban Farms

The Council can research and develop recommendations on community gardens and urban farms, which must include, without limitation to the examination of the following:

- Local and regional efforts to develop community gardens and urban farms.
- Regulatory and policy barriers to the development of community gardens and urban farms; and
- The potential effects of community gardens and urban farms on economic development in this State; and

The Council's efforts have been on the SHIP and strategic plan initiatives for 2024, which will likely impact the Community Garden and Urban Farms.

CFS FUTURE FOCUS

In the calendar year 2025, CFS will continue to focus on <u>SHIP</u> food initiatives, guiding the FFPNL subcommittee, and activities identified in the 2023 Food Strategic Plan. The Council will more specifically work on the following:

 Another presentation to JHHS and provide a legislative brief to provide the necessary data needed to make informed funding decisions regarding food security in the state.



- Ongoing meetings to expand knowledge and understanding of food insecurity in Nevada.
- Hosting a 2025 Food Security Conference in Northern Nevada and a 2027 Food Security Conference in Southern Nevada.
- Monitor the FFPNL Program and partner with OFS to access NACDD AmeriCorps members to support the Council goals further.
- An in-person meeting option for CFS in Carson City and/or Las Vegas Office(s) to enhance collaboration cohesiveness further and increase efforts to reduce Council's vacancies.
- Prioritize building awareness around food distribution, support, and general food access throughout Nevada.
- Hosting presentations focusing on food insecurity statistics (pounds of food distributed, people served, etc.), food distribution, general food access, and building awareness on food insecurity programs and existing food databases to access foodrelated resources statewide.
- Reviewing the Home Feeds Nevada Program Annual Report and/or outcomes.
- Review federal standards or policies that create barriers and food insecurity risks.
- Determine where the Council can advocate for change.
- Continue addressing food insecurity in hard-to-reach areas and/or food deserts.
- Change the Annual Reporting period timeline align with Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) versus a calendar year.
- Reviewing food hubs and mobile food distributions throughout Nevada.
- Reviewing emergency food plans and the need of dissemination throughout Nevada.



Table 2. 2024 CFS Board Members

Board		D. 11.
Member Names	Description	Position
Allison Genco	State of Nevada Governor's Designee	Director of Government Relations
Charlotte Williams	A representative of a food bank serving northern Nevada	Research and Innovation Manager
Deacon Tom Roberts	Representative of an organization that provides community-based services in southern Nevada	President and CEO; Catholic Charities, Southern Nevada
Jeff Duncan	Designee of the Administrator of the Aging and Disability Services Division of the Department	Designee; Agency Manager; Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division, Child Services
Kelly Cantrelle	Designee of the Administrator of the Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services	Designee; Deputy Administrator; Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services
Dr. Dorian Stonebarger	Director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development within the Office.	Designee; Director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development
Dr. Pamela Juniel	Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Nevada Department of Education or designee within the Department.	Designee; State Coordinator for the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator
Dr. Sabina Malik	Representative of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension	Public Health Specialist; University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
Jenny Yeager	Representative of a food bank serving northern Nevada	Chief Operations and Programs Officer; Food Bank of Northern Nevada
Jesus Mendoza, Jr.	Western Regional Director of the United States Department of Agriculture or designee from within the Department.	Regional Administrator; United States Department of Agriculture Western Regional Office
Jill Moe	Representative of farmers or ranchers engaged in food production	UNR-Desert Farm Initiative
Julian Goicoechea	Director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture or designee from within the Department.	Nevada Department of Agriculture, Director
Kelli Kelly	Representative of persons engaged in the business of processing or distributing food	Director; Fallon Food Hub
Lisa Swearingen	Director of the Department of Health and Human Services or designee from within the Department.	Chief, Eligibility and Payments Unit, Division of Welfare and Supportive Services
Marcia Blake	A person who possesses knowledge, skill and experience in the provision of services to senior citizens and persons with disabilities	Executive Director; Helping Hands of Vegas Valley

Maria Menjivar	One member representing community- based services (Rural Nevada).	Environmental Health Division Manager, Carson City Health and Human Services
Marie Baxter	Representative of an organization that provides community-based services in northern Nevada	CEO; Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada
Maurice Johnson	Representative of a food bank serving Southern Nevada	Director of Operations; Three Square
(Tori) Samantha Lawson-Boffelli	A person who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the provision of services to children and families	Program Analyst – USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Dr. Kenneth Osgood	A representative of a local health authority	Southern Nevada Health District Board of Health
Gabby Everett, MPA	Representative of a food bank serving Southern Nevada	Director of Advocacy, Three Square
Vickie Ives	Designee of the Administrator of the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health	Designee; CFCW Health Bureau Chief, Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health
VACANT	Representative of those engaged in the business of processing or distributing food.	N/A
VACANT	Representative of the gaming industry, hospitality industry, or restaurant industry.	N/A
VACANT	Representative of manufacturing that is not related to food.	N/A
VACANT	Representative of a local health authority	N/A

^aAs of 12/16/2024



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