Food insecurity continues to persist and increase in Oregon leaving many struggling to find enough to eat every month.

This report documents the interconnected factors that impact food security and recommendations for ensuring all Oregonians have access to the food they need.

“...food affects all aspects of our life...we don’t recognize it is taking a toll on these other aspects of our life until we have a discussion.”
Eight focus groups were conducted in Portland, Oregon during spring and summer 2016 with 67 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients from communities that disproportionately experience food insecurity. Two research questions guided the study: What prevents SNAP participants from becoming food secure? How do SNAP participants obtain food security?

Findings were organized using a social ecological model to better understand the focus group data. The model includes six factors: individual, interpersonal, perceived environment, personal environment, built environment, and policy—and 29 sub-factors that affect participants’ food security status. The key finding in this study is that food insecurity is influenced by multi-level, interconnected factors presented in the social ecological model.

Food security is therefore found when aspects of individuals’ lives discussed in the model—such as housing, employment, living in a safe neighborhood, having a social support network—are stabilized.

This is a snapshot focus group participants’ views of factors that affect their food security status. See the full report for comprehensive findings.
“In the beginning of the year, I ran out of food and I didn’t know what to do. I ran out of food stamps, and I went to the food pantry. I kind of felt ashamed. So when I went home I was grateful I had food, but it was a feeling I didn’t like. And I went home and started crying because I didn’t like feeling that vulnerable or that struggle to where I had to ask someone. It’s not a shameful thing, but at that time I felt like it was. It was new to me...I just felt really shameful and sad and I just was like, it was a low point.”

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
Interventions addressing factors at multiple levels of the social ecological model are most effective at improving rates of food security (Glanz et al., 2008). See the full report for more recommendations.

INDIVIDUAL
• Ensure SNAP participants have access to affordable housing, healthcare and employment opportunities that provide financial security and living wage jobs.

INTERPERSONAL
• Improve translation services to ensure access to basic necessities for non-English speaking SNAP recipients.

PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT
• Reduce the stigma of access food programs and increase empathy for SNAP participants when they access needed resources.
• Locate affordable grocery stores within walking distance of large concentrations of SNAP recipients.

PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT
• Ensure SNAP participants have access to affordable housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities that provide financial security and living wage jobs.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT
• Ensure SNAP participants have reliable and accessible transportation to affordable grocery stores that is feasible to use while transporting children.

POLICY
• Increase the benefit amount of SNAP to align with the USDA Low Cost Food Plan to adequately supplement the cost of a healthy diet.
• Provide education opportunities to SNAP participants, including ensuring all SNAP recipients receive information on SNAP-Ed resources, particularly on the most requested topics such as thrifty shopping, healthy cooking and gardening.

READ THE FULL REPORT AT OREGONHUNGER.ORG/ FINDINGFOODSECURITY

Partners for a
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Ending hunger before it begins.

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