



BROADENING FOOD ACCESS

THROUGH INNOVATIVE PUBLIC POLICY



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INTRODUCTION

DoorDash was founded in 2013 with the mission to grow and empower local economies. To achieve this mission, we have invested in products and partnerships that support our communities, as well as pursued public policy solutions that help drive change. This year, we are publishing white papers that outline those policy solutions: the legislation, regulations, and funding opportunities that we believe would meaningfully help Dashers, merchants, and communities broadly. In the pages that follow, we will outline the ideas we believe will help expand food access - an issue we have worked to address since our earliest days.

For local economies to truly thrive, all members of the community need to have access to the resources they need to realize their potential.

Even in 2022, hunger in America remains a critical issue. As a company that connects individuals with businesses in their local communities, DoorDash is uniquely positioned to help.

We have invested in solutions to help build the capacity of organizations and programs that provide invaluable social services to our communities. For example, [Project DASH](#) provides access to the DoorDash platform for government and nonprofit partners. Equipped with local logistics capabilities, our partners more effectively increase access to food and other essential items in communities across the country. Lasting, systematic change also requires legislative and regulatory support to continue enabling the work being done through the social and public sectors and to foster innovation.

DoorDash aims to continually evolve its approach, through the programs and resources we provide as well as by advocating for forward-thinking public policy. We believe that a core cause of food insecurity (and one in which we can play the most meaningful role) is access. To that end, our public policy goals in 2022 to improve food access stem from three pillars:

1

Supporting
food banks

2

Expanding
food assistance

3

Innovation through the
facilitation of local delivery

In the pages that follow, you'll read about our own work in this space as well as the data and experiences underpinning our belief that supporting food banks, expanding and investing in federal anti-hunger programs, and engaging local delivery to increase access will catalyze efforts to meet communities' nutrition needs.

These are complex problems, but we're committed to finding solutions in partnership with food banks and other anti-hunger organizations, our merchant partners, community leaders, and policymakers at all levels of government.

HUNGER IN AMERICA

No one should go hungry in America. Yet, in 2020 more than [38 million people, including 12 million children](#) in the United States lived in [food insecure](#) households. In early March 2022, [21.7 million households](#) reported food scarcity, including nearly 10.7 million households with children. Although COVID-19 illuminated the [country's hunger emergency](#), the challenges of food insecurity predate the pandemic and will continue beyond it.

Financial hardship, restrictions around eligibility for social safety net programs, along with barriers like [lack of transit](#) and [physical disabilities](#), are among the driving forces behind food insecurity. For example, food insecurity among seniors [remains high](#), and we also know that technology, transportation, and mobility are often barriers for them. People in rural communities experience [disproportionate levels of hunger](#), and rural areas often struggle with convenient access to food and essential items. If a grocery store or food bank is miles away, lack of transportation is a significant barrier to accessing groceries. [Six percent](#) of the United States population lives in food deserts¹ with limited access to healthy and affordable food. Structural inequities impact access as well – BIPOC communities face hunger at [much higher rates](#). Reliable access to nutritious food is a key social determinant of health, and eliminating these barriers is imperative in the fight to increase food access and strengthen communities across the United States.

¹ Food desert: Low-income census tracts where a significant number (at least 500 people) or share (at least 33%) of the population is greater than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store for an urban area or greater than 10 miles for a rural area. This measure shows that an estimated 18.8 million people, or 6.1 percent of the U.S. population, lived in low-income and low access tracts and were located more than 1 mile or 10 miles from a supermarket in 2019. This definition is sourced from the USDA as part of the Food Access Research Atlas data: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas>



PART I: INCREASING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FOOD BANKS

Food banks and food pantries are on the front lines of the fight against hunger. Households experiencing food insecurity may rely on local food banks and other food assistance programs for additional support. Policies that support food banks and food pantries – such as increased funding and resources – are a key part of the fight against food insecurity.

Government aid helped food banks continue to serve clients amidst the sudden, heightened need during the pandemic. Now, in 2022, food banks across the country face substantial decreases in funding as COVID-19 response funds are exhausted. For example, declining government support for El Pasoans Fighting Hunger (EPFH), a Project DASH food bank partner, has meant reducing its services, including evaluating whether to close up to three of its five primary food pantries and end its homeless feeding program.

To accomplish their important goals, food banks need robust resources from the public and private sectors. Increased aid during the pandemic demonstrated what is possible: for example, meeting unprecedented need through innovative approaches to reaching vulnerable people, such as new distribution models powered by partnerships between local food banks and logistics platforms, like DoorDash.

DoorDash supports increased federal resources – both commodities and administrative funds – for food banks and food pantries through programs like the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) as well as increased funding from state and local governments.

Continued, increased funding will help food banks hire and retain essential staff, make infrastructure investments, conduct client outreach, and establish and enhance programs that can help ensure that every family has convenient and dignified access to the food they need.



PART II: EXPANDING AND INVESTING IN FEDERAL ANTI-HUNGER PROGRAMS

In concert with the support provided by food banks, programs like SNAP, school meals, and more are critical in ensuring food is accessible and available for those who need it.

We believe that increasing SNAP benefits and expanding eligibility and availability for anti-hunger programs can help reduce food insecurity.

Nutrition programs should help relieve the financial burden of putting food on the table and make it easier for people to get the food they need. In 2020, Congress temporarily [raised](#) SNAP benefits by 15 percent and boosted every household to the maximum benefit for their household size. Before that, [about one-quarter](#) of SNAP households exhausted nearly all their benefits within a week of receiving them, and more than half of households exhausted all benefits within the first two weeks of the month. Allocating more funding toward these programs would expand their reach, fully supporting those who rely on them.

DoorDash also supports expanding eligibility for anti-hunger programs such as SNAP, school meals, senior meals, and other public nutrition programs. In 2021, we joined multiple letters calling on Congress to pass policies that would lead to, among other things, expanded eligibility for SNAP and free school meals for students.

Despite the importance of these programs, they have faced funding and administrative challenges that hinder easy access by the families that need them. DoorDash supports policies that improve access to these critical programs and that encourage innovation to better serve client needs.

In May 2022, DoorDash called on Congress to extend the USDA's authority to issue child nutrition program waivers beyond June 30 and through the 2022-2023 school year. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, national child nutrition program waivers have helped schools and community organizations – including many of our Project DASH partners – continue to safely and effectively reach children and ensure their access to the meals they need. With the USDA's authority to grant these waivers set to expire, community organizations will lose the flexibility to provide food in innovative ways that mitigate challenges and increase overall effectiveness. According to [research](#), failure to extend these waivers could put children at risk of missing out on more than 95 million meals in the summer of 2022 alone. Extending the USDA's waiver authority is necessary to ensure these providers can continue meeting the nutrition needs of local communities.

PART III: THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF LOCAL DELIVERY

Through local delivery, public, private, and social sector institutions can work together to broaden food access for the people they serve while increasing convenience and dignity.

Launched by DoorDash in 2018, [Project DASH](#) enables government and nonprofit partners to request pickup and delivery using the same technology available to our merchant partners. These deliveries are fulfilled by Dashers to families experiencing food insecurity and other clients – increasing access to food and other essential items while providing greater convenience and dignity. The items being delivered by Dashers include food boxes, prepared meals, school supplies, home essentials, mental health kits, and even holiday items.

With some partners, we are also providing food bank clients a way to order online, using our [Storefront](#) product. This means that people who need food assistance can request the items that are nutritionally appropriate for their households, on a timeline that works for them.

While the program grew steadily over the first two years since its launch, Project DASH drastically expanded in 2020 as providing food and supplies to seniors, the immunocompromised, and families facing food insecurity became an even greater logistical challenge. DoorDash invested in Project DASH to meet the need, establishing new partnerships with nonprofits (including food banks and food pantries) and government agencies by providing donated and discounted access to our platform. As of June 2022, Project DASH has powered more than 2 million deliveries of food equal to an estimated over 35 million meals.



CALIFORNIA
+680K
deliveries



WASHINGTON
+395K
deliveries



NEW YORK
+240K
deliveries



TEXAS
+126K
deliveries



LOUISIANA
+101K
deliveries



FLORIDA
+57K
deliveries



OHIO
+54K
deliveries



D.C.
+40K
deliveries

As of June 2022, nationally Project DASH has powered more than 2 million deliveries of an estimated 35+ million meals.

Delivery can address many of the barriers to access faced by vulnerable people – including barriers that were present before the pandemic and will persist after the pandemic recedes – while enhancing the client experience and building the capacity of food banks.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO ACCESS

In the absence of local delivery, people experiencing food access challenges may need to travel to a food bank or food pantry to obtain food assistance. Transportation barriers, a disability, work schedules, or childcare commitments can become insurmountable barriers to access for many families. Local delivery takes these barriers out of the equation by ensuring that food travels to families in need – not the other way around.

According to a Northern Illinois Food Bank survey, 30 to 35 percent of people receiving food through Project DASH are new to the food bank, and a survey conducted by a group from the University of Washington found that 54 percent of United Way of King County clients had not received assistance from a food bank during the COVID-19 pandemic prior to enrolling in the program.

Providing local delivery as an option helped these social service organizations reach more people than would have otherwise been possible.

People who live in food deserts face even higher barriers, and can benefit uniquely from the power of local delivery. A [recent report](#) from the Brookings Institute concluded that 90 percent of people in food deserts are located within the service range of logistics platforms, like DoorDash. It's clear that further investments into local delivery programs can make a tremendous difference for people living in food deserts.

ENHANCING CLIENT CONVENIENCE AND DIGNITY

Local delivery from local food banks not only helps remove barriers, but also improves the client experience. A struggling family should not be precluded from the convenience of home delivery merely because of where their food is coming from; families facing hardship may benefit from the convenience more than most. Despite the widespread need for food assistance, participation in social safety net programs often comes with stigma. With local delivery, people can avoid the stigma that many feel when needing to pick up food at a centralized location. This can also help a family feel more comfortable participating in the charitable food system and social programs.

“More than 337,000 older Pennsylvanians are eligible for the Senior Food Box Program, but only about 33,000 are enrolled to receive it in 2022. Accepting assistance can be hard for some, but especially so for seniors, who don't always ask for help when they're in need. Even if they do, seniors often face barriers to access for food assistance programs because of issues such as transportation, mobility, or technology. By partnering with DoorDash, we remove these barriers by giving seniors the option of having nutritious meals delivered to their front door. The program has been a tremendous success, helping us deliver more than 16,083 food boxes, or the equivalent of 160,830 meals, since its launch in 2021.”

- Sheila Christopher, Executive Director, Hunger-Free Pennsylvania.

DRIVING EFFICIENCIES IN OPERATIONS AND SERVICE

Local delivery can also drive efficiencies in nonprofit program operations and client service. For example, partnerships between food banks and Project DASH have made it seamless to facilitate home delivery to clients. Once a food bank identifies a household in need, they can use DoorDash's existing logistics platform to facilitate a delivery to the client's home the same way that many restaurants or other merchants use the platform to connect with customers. Deliveries are fulfilled by Dashers, and Dashers are compensated by DoorDash for each delivery. There is no need for a food bank to invest in its own delivery vehicles or to use scarce staff time. Programs like Project DASH promote nonprofit efficiency and allow food banks to focus their resources on client assistance, food procurement, and other important services that advance their core mission.

"Our partnership with DoorDash has been a game changer. Without DoorDash's logistical capabilities, we know that far too many of our neighbors in need would not have access to food. DoorDash enables us to serve some of our community's most vulnerable members in a way that provides both convenience and dignity. Thanks to DoorDash, we deliver not only food, but hope to so many who oftentimes feel hopeless."

- Cathy Kanefsky, CEO, Food Bank of Delaware

MEASURING THE POWER OF LOCAL DELIVERY THROUGH DEMONSTRATION PILOTS

In December 2021, DoorDash submitted testimony to the House of Representatives Committee on Rules highlighting how local delivery can break down barriers to food access. Local delivery should be considered as Congress weighs grants or demonstration pilots to evaluate the potential of alternative, innovative approaches to food assistance. Project DASH is just one example of a local delivery program, and we believe that through federal funding and demonstration pilots, food banks will be able to explore local delivery as a resource for expanding their own effectiveness. We hope policymakers will authorize federal support that would provide opportunities for food banks to start providing local delivery for their clients and to expand the scope of existing food bank delivery programs to new populations or new neighborhoods. Demonstration pilots would also allow the federal government to better evaluate the positive impact of local delivery on families and how delivery could be implemented as part of a national anti-hunger strategy.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOODBANK: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO CHOICE

Julie Yurko, Northern Illinois Food Bank's CEO, recognized how DoorDash's logistics technology could transform the food bank's programs. "Just like that, the world changes for us," she told the [Associated Press](#). Before working with DoorDash, Northern Illinois Food Bank's My Pantry Express program was unable to deliver to homebound clients. With DoorDash's partnership, however, homebound neighbors can place an order online. Nearly one third of the people who placed orders online for delivery had not previously received assistance from the food bank.

"There's so much dignity in not just being able to say yes to what I want, but also to say no to what I don't want," Yurko said. "I can't tell you how many people say, 'I don't want anything I can't use. There's somebody else who needs it.'"

EL PASOANS FIGHTING HUNGER: BREAKING DOWN TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY BARRIERS

El Pasoans Fighting Hunger (EPFH) is the only food bank in El Paso, TX. It's the distribution center for over 132 partner pantries across the borderland region and a hub for hunger-focused initiatives like assisting with SNAP applications. In 2021, Dashers fulfilled over 60,000 deliveries with EPFH, providing approximately 1.7 million meals to vulnerable community members, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and veterans.

Martina is a client of EPFH. She is in her late 60s and lives in a rural town located on the U.S.-Mexico border. When she reached out to the food bank, she shared that she had recently lost her husband, which significantly impacted her financially. She was also recovering from a set of knee surgeries. Martina didn't know how she would be able to get food because of the financial hardship she was experiencing, coupled with her age and lack of mobility. Martina asked if there was any service that could help her without requiring her to leave home. EPFH signed her up in the food bank's home delivery program, powered by a partnership with Project DASH.

UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE AND 211 NETWORK: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

DoorDash partners with United Way Worldwide and the 211 Network, whose teams both work with local organizations to connect essential goods to the community. In 2021, through our platform, United Ways and 211s completed more than 500,000 deliveries of food, school supplies, pet supplies, and other essential items to households in cities throughout the country.

United Ways and 211s are empowered to identify innovative uses for delivery based on their community's needs. In August 2021, the United Way of Southeast Louisiana team leveraged DoorDash's logistics platform to deliver hurricane preparedness kits to more than 1,600 households in a single day, ahead of Hurricane Ida. These deliveries proved vital for residents as they endured flooding and power outages after the storm.

PART IV: LOOKING AHEAD AND STANDING TOGETHER

We know that local delivery, including the work we facilitate through Project DASH, is just one part of the solution to a complex issue which requires action at every level and with a variety of stakeholders.

Partnership between government entities, nonprofits, companies, and community members is imperative and each has a unique role to play in transforming access to food in the United States.

We believe that by bringing together the strengths of various stakeholders and aligning on policy priorities, we can empower meaningful, collective action.

DoorDash is a proud member of the [Alliance to End Hunger](#), a coalition of corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, universities, foundations, international organizations, and individuals to build the public and political will to end hunger at home and abroad. In addition to sharing best practices with key social, public, and private sector actors, we participate in the Alliance's advocacy committee and coordinate with other key voices to advance systematic change. DoorDash has proudly joined letters calling on Congressional leadership to bolster anti-hunger programs like SNAP and summer meals for students and we'll continue to look for ways to use our voice to advance these conversations.

"We are grateful to partner with DoorDash, a technology company that has gone above and beyond to ensure access to nutritious foods in some of our most vulnerable communities during the pandemic. At the Alliance to End Hunger, DoorDash brings a unique perspective on the intersections between transportation and food, enhancing our ability to end hunger and improve nutrition in the United States."

- Eric P. Mitchell, Executive Director, Alliance to End Hunger

SUPPORTING A HISTORIC NATIONAL SUMMIT TO END HUNGER

Over 50 years ago, the White House held the first national conference on hunger – a gathering that led to several pieces of landmark federal legislation that meaningfully advanced the fight to end hunger in America. DoorDash [endorsed](#) and [supported](#) Congressman Jim McGovern’s efforts in Congress to establish a second national hunger summit, bringing together leaders from food banks, hospitals, government agencies, and more, with the goal of identifying solutions and establishing benchmarks to end hunger in America by 2030. The White House recently [announced](#) plans to hold a conference on these issues in September of this year, known as the **White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health**, and we are eager to support this meaningful discussion in any way we can.

We can increase access to food in America, but it will require collaboration and innovative solutions. We’re proud that our platform can help increase access to nutritious food across the country, including in food deserts, communities of color, rural, and low-income communities. DoorDash will continue to invest in Project DASH, and advocate for anti-hunger policies, including those that support food banks and federal anti-hunger programs.

The partnerships DoorDash has forged through Project DASH have demonstrated the power of local delivery in overcoming some significant barriers to food access. As elected leaders look for solutions to this critical issue, we hope they’ll consider the proof points we’ve shared. We also hope to see continued, adequate resourcing for hunger relief agencies and the prioritization of other anti-hunger policies. We look forward to working with partners, nonprofits, elected officials, government agencies, and members of our community to increase food access in America.

