

Strategic Plan 2013-2016

California Food Policy Advocates



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Mission

Our mission articulates the organizational identity of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) and serves to guide all that we do. Since CFPA's founding in 1992, the mission has been reviewed numerous times. This strategic planning process provided us with another opportunity to consider the scope, specificity, and relevance of the mission. With great confidence, we affirm that:

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

Vision

We envision a healthy and food-secure California where two conditions are met:

- All Californians have physical, social, and economic access to the foods¹ necessary for a nutritious diet; and
- Healthful foods are predominant, affordable options in all environments.

In this vision for the future, CFPA will initiate and incubate innovative policy solutions. We will bridge the anti-hunger, nutrition, and health movements and facilitate solidarity between them. Our work will advance social equity and mitigate poverty.

In this vision for the future, all Californians benefit from optimal health and well-being across the course of their lives.

¹ Throughout this document, “food”/“foods” refers to foods and beverages unless otherwise specified.

Principles and Core Values

Taken together, the following statements describe our principles and core values, which collectively drive CFPA's programmatic decision making.

We respect the critical connections between policy, environment, and health. We understand that public policy shapes the environments in which all Californians live, learn, work, and play. We also understand that these environments exert a significant influence on the nutritional status of individuals and families. To improve the health and well-being of all low-income Californians, we work to improve the policies and environments that determine their access to nutritious, affordable food.

We are strategic, prioritizing tactics according to available opportunities and potential impact. We are a statewide organization with a history of employing multiple tactics at the local, state, and federal levels to advance our mission. Our decisions to invest resources in any given activity are driven by two factors: the availability of specific opportunities to create change, such as partnerships and political conditions, and the potential impact of those changes, such as the number of individuals affected.

We recognize the potential of the federal nutrition programs. The federal nutrition programs have the potential to address the scope and scale of challenges associated with poor nutrition across our state. We work to optimize the reach and benefits of the federal nutrition programs as an efficient and effective means of fulfilling our mission.

We are committed to evidence-based advocacy. We promote evidence-based policies and ground our work in research. We believe knowledge is a powerful tool and often our greatest contribution to advocacy efforts. We embrace data and research as necessary and effective components in the effort to achieve lasting policy change.

We understand there are many social, political, and economic determinants of poverty. In our approach to improving the health and well-being of low-income populations, we guard against paternalism and focus on systemic change.

We strive for respect and inclusion. We celebrate our focus on the health and well-being of low-income Californians while recognizing that low-income Californians constitute a large and diverse population. We aim to be respectful and inclusive of that diversity, strategically seeking input from low-income Californians and a range of other stakeholders in order to best inform our work.

We are optimistic. For 20 years, we have successfully advocated policy change despite times of fiscal crisis and divisive partisan politics. We have learned that policy setbacks can be reversed and inhospitable conditions can be transformed in order to facilitate progress. We are steadfast in our belief that effective advocacy can always foster positive change.

We value reasonable approaches to fulfilling bold expectations. We believe that decision makers should take every necessary action to ensure the health and well-being of all low-income Californians. As an effective means of achieving that end, we work to establish realistic milestones that both acknowledge existing challenges and maximize opportunities for change.

We embrace radical incrementalism. We recognize that a collection of relatively small changes made over time can yield significant progress towards our mission. While we enthusiastically seize opportunities to create sweeping change, we diligently pursue incremental improvements in the absence of those opportunities.

We adapt. The tenor of our advocacy reflects the varying conditions that surround our work. According to these conditions, we may be proactive or reactive, collaborative or adversarial, bold or subtle in our approach.

We appreciate synergistic partnerships. We believe that effective collaborations can synergistically advance our mission. We seek short- and long-term partnerships that can deepen and amplify the impact of our work.

We aim for consensus without avoiding conflict. We work to reduce confusion, contention, and conflict in our areas of work. We recognize that finite resources and competing priorities are inherent to the environments in which we operate. Consequently, conflicts (both internal and external) will arise. We acknowledge these conflicts and aim for consensus through clear communication. We understand that achieving consensus, while desirable, is not always possible, nor is it always necessary in order to further our mission.

Context for the Strategic Plan

Environmental Scan

CFPA has experienced significant changes in the nutrition policy environment over the past two decades. New potential partners are intersecting with our work, such as those looking to link CalFresh to healthful eating and to health care enrollment, as well as those who are concerned with sustainable agriculture and increasing the availability of fresh produce in schools. Long-term partners have also taken on new tactics. For example, the charity-based emergency food network now engages in outreach and advocacy related to CalFresh.

Updated federal nutrition standards for school meals have focused attention on improving the quality and appeal of school food. The substantial fiscal and academic benefits that result from moving school breakfast into the classroom have increased attention to the federal School Breakfast Program. Recognizing the need for obesity prevention efforts in early childhood has made child care nutrition a priority. In addition to changes at the state and federal levels, local leaders and partners in many California communities are developing and implementing creative strategies to strengthen the federal nutrition programs.

The recent recession and the nation's slow recovery compound the importance of the federal nutrition safety net. As threats to the safety net grow, our work must often focus on preserving and protecting the federal nutrition programs. Until very recently, the nutrition programs benefited from remarkably consistent bipartisan support. The hyper-partisan climate among federal legislators and their narrow focus on reducing domestic spending have made it increasingly difficult for CFPA and like-minded advocates to positively impact policymaking in DC.

Data show that food insecurity and obesity continue to threaten the health of California's low-income communities, in part because the federal nutrition programs fail to serve many low-income Californians who are eligible to participate. Juxtaposed with low participation rates is the great deal of attention – both positive and negative – that is being paid to the federal nutrition programs by policymakers, community members, and advocates alike.

Organizational Assessment

Supervisory and Organizational Structure – We have updated and formalized our supervisory structure to better ensure that all staff have adequate support and guidance.

In order to create opportunities for professional growth and improve the coordination of work plans, the executive director has organized the staff into teams, assigning each team a staff lead. Ten teams (After School, Breakfast, CalFresh, Charter Schools, Child Care, Direct Certification, Mobile Vending, REAL, Summer, and Water) are programmatic in nature. These teams are primarily responsible for developing and executing work plans that advance CFPA's policy and advocacy goals. Five teams (State Legislation, Communications, Federal, Research-Data, and Grants-Funding) coordinate with the programmatic teams to support various aspects of the latter's work plans. One team (Los Angeles) serves a managerial purpose.

The executive director and staff continue to refine the team structure. An internal evaluation of the team structure is pending.

Information Technology (IT) – There are few systems in place to ensure that staff are provided adequate access to and training with essential hardware and software. Virtually all technological troubleshooting is conducted in-house, though an IT consultant is available to the Oakland office. CFPA should develop and implement a comprehensive system for handling IT needs.

Human Resources (HR) – There are limited processes in place to ensure uniform HR record keeping. Existing organizational policies and practices result in inconsistent HR procedures. CFPA should develop and implement additional policies to standardize HR procedures across each employee's "CFPA lifespan."

Over the next three years, we aim to address the IT and HR needs identified through this strategic planning process. Strengthening HR policies and procedures has been targeted as an immediate organizational priority.

Financial Review and Implications

Revenue & Expense Fluctuations – Financial audits of CFPA reveal a wide fluctuation in annual revenue. The fluctuation is attributable to multi-year grants being assigned to the year awarded and to the one-time receipt of funds from a legal settlement. (CFPA was not a litigant in the lawsuit that resulted in the receipt of these settlement funds.) Expense fluctuations were largely associated with changes in personnel costs. Neither revenue nor expense fluctuations have negatively impacted our ability to effectively pursue programmatic activities.

Reserve – We maintain a reserve in excess of the three-month reserve that is typically recommended for non-profit organizations.

Grant Management – For the period 2004-2011, CFPA maintained individual hardcopy files for all grants received. Electronically, grants were tracked through a spreadsheet that indicated total grant awards; grant start and end dates; and whether grants were applicable to child nutrition activities, general support, or CalFresh activities.

Developing and implementing systems to increase transparency and accountability with regard to fund development and grant tracking has been targeted as an immediate organizational priority.

Governance

A historical review of CFPA's governance found several consistent components, which are described below.

Stability – CFPA's board of directors has been very stable over time. The average length of service for board members is just over 12 years.

Support, Counsel, and Connections – Board members have provided programmatic advice that reflects their respective areas of professional and personal expertise. Board meetings are generally, but not exclusively, the forum for providing this counsel. Board members who have relationships with state administrators and legislators have supported CFPA's advocacy efforts by sharing those connections with the staff. The staff appreciates the insights and recommendations offered by the board as well as the board's ongoing endorsement of the staff's work.

Fiscal Oversight – The finance committee has provided fiscal oversight as well as support and guidance on issues related to human resources and employee benefits.

Fund Development – CFPA's board of directors has not served as a fundraising board in the traditional sense. There are no requirements or expectations that board members donate to CFPA. Instead, some members provide the staff with introductions, referrals, or leads to facilitate fund development.

Specific opportunities to strengthen CFPA's governance have emerged over the course of this strategic planning process and during the transition of staff leadership to a new executive director. Those opportunities are described below.

Board Openings – With the unfortunate passing of one board member and with the retirement of two board member expected by the end of 2012, CFPA has an immediate opportunity (and need) to select new board members. Several long-term board members are also interested in transitioning out of their positions in 2013.

Needs and Capacity – The current board has committed to assessing and supporting CFPA’s need for board members who represent the geographic and ethnic diversity of California; for board members with specific program-related experience and relationships; and for a board that is best suited to lead CFPA toward the [vision](#) articulated in this strategic plan.

Term Limits and Expectations – The current board agrees that CFPA would benefit from establishing formal expectations of board members. There is also consensus that CFPA would benefit from establishing reasonable terms limits that allow for board stability while providing periodic opportunities for new leadership.

Expertise – Given the limited resources available to hire staff or consultants with specific skill sets, existing staff are interested in opportunities to utilize the expertise of current and future board members in areas such as communications (including social media), finance, and human resources.

Strategic Planning Process

To date, decision making at CFPA has been largely staff- and mission-driven without a formal, multi-year strategic plan. With the hiring of a new executive director and the implementation of a new team-based structure, CFPA identified the need for a comprehensive, cohesive, and long-range organizational plan of action.

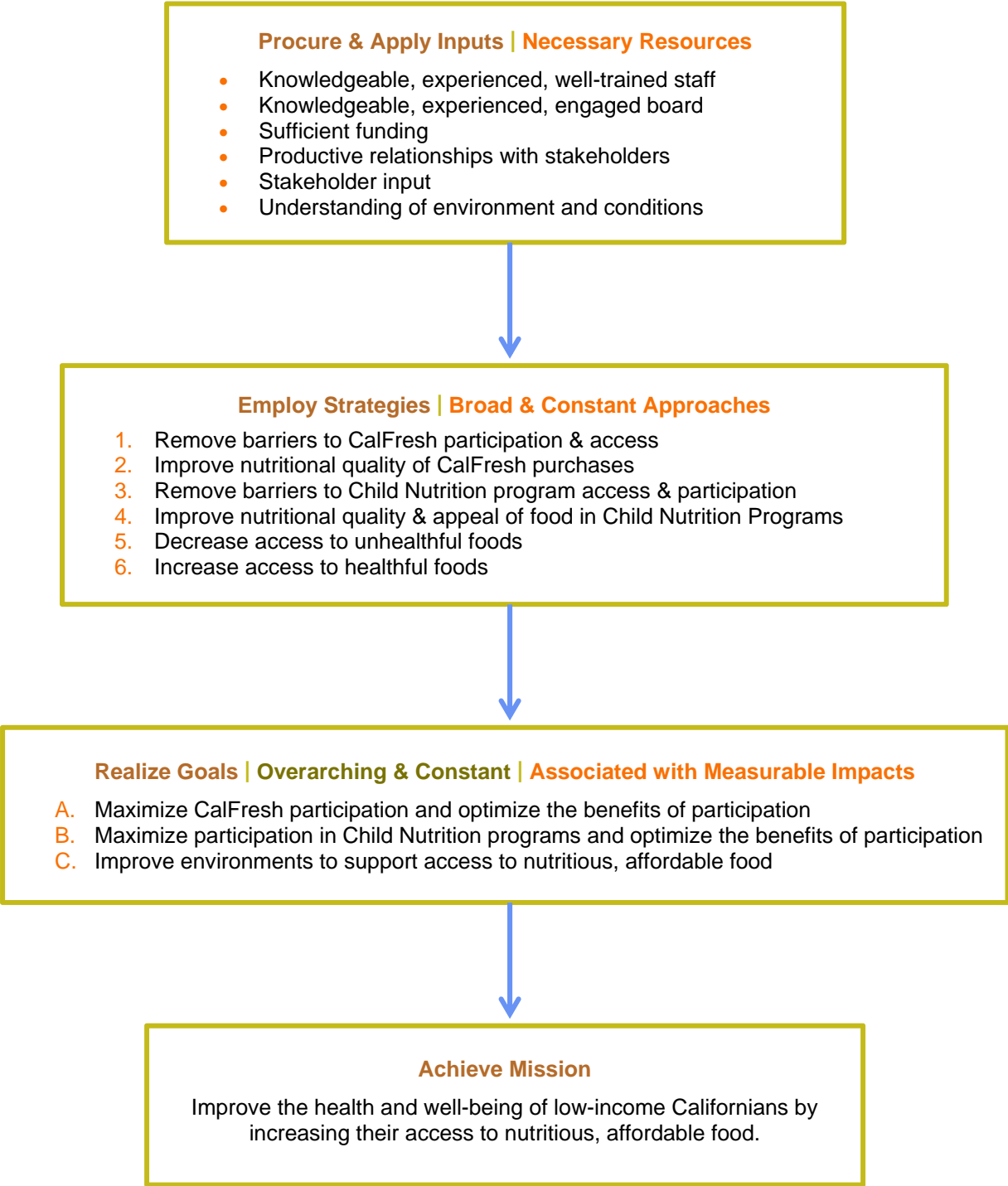
In March 2012, CFPA hired Michael Allison as a strategic planning consultant. The planning process began with an all-staff meeting facilitated by Michael. Following the all-staff meeting, seven staff members formed an internal strategic planning committee. Committee members worked to complete an organizational assessment and environmental scan, conduct 30 stakeholder interviews, draft a logic model, and propose both organizational and program priorities. Committee members provided frequent updates to the staff throughout the seven-month planning process. Strategic planning was a staff-led effort with CFPA's board members being formally engaged at three points during the process.

On October 31, 2012, the board approved CFPA's three-year strategic plan. The logic model, program priorities, and organizational priorities presented in the following sections of this document summarize select elements of that plan and other materials developed during the strategic planning process. The three-year plan and associated documents will drive CFPA's annual planning processes through 2016.

- The three-year strategic plan will take effect on January 1, 2013.
- Annual plans for programmatic teams will be adopted on January 1st of each year.
- Planning for our annual state legislative agenda will commence during the summer of each year.
- Planning for our annual budget will begin during the spring of each year. (Note: our fiscal year commences on July 1.)

We will describe our progress on the three-year strategic plan and annual plans in a report to be released January 1st of each year through 2016.

Logic Model



Program Priorities for 2013-2016

CalFresh Priorities

Over the next three years, CFPA will prioritize work that helps to ensure the following.

- A. CalFresh is a critical component of health coverage, health care, and healthy lifestyles;
- B. Enrolling and participating in CalFresh is straightforward and consistent for individuals and families across the state;
- C. The CalFresh brand reduces stigma and enhances the public image of CalFresh. “CalFresh” becomes the name predominately used by policymakers and participants;
- D. In-reach to other public benefit programs increases CalFresh participation;
- E. Data are a primary factor driving CalFresh policy decisions, particularly at the state level;
- F. Feedback from CalFresh applicants and participants is a primary factor driving CalFresh policy decisions, particularly at the state level; and
- G. Strategic alliances between CalFresh stakeholders increase CalFresh participation and optimize the benefits of CalFresh participation.

Child Nutrition Program Priorities

Over the next three years, CFPA will prioritize work that helps to ensure the following.

- A. The federal Child Nutrition Programs are an essential component of the school day and child care settings;
- B. California’s implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (S.3307) will increase participation in the federal Child Nutrition Programs and will improve the foods served through those programs in schools and child care settings;
- C. The federal Child Nutrition Programs are recognized as healthful, appealing, and palatable nutrition resources;
- D. Data drive CFPA’s policy and programmatic decision making with respect to child nutrition;
- E. Stakeholder input informs CFPA’s policy and programmatic decision making with respect to child nutrition; and
- F. CFPA builds stronger strategic alliances with child nutrition stakeholders to increase program participation and optimize the benefits of program participation.

Food Environment Priorities

We are committed to using our expertise and experience with the federal nutrition programs to help guide our work in related food environments. Over the next three years, CFPA will prioritize work that helps to ensure the following.

- A. CFPA identifies and pursues opportunities to improve the food environments that impact populations who participate in or could benefit from the federal nutrition programs;
- B. The environments on and around school campuses limit access to unhealthful food options and promote healthful food options;
- C. The environments within licensed child care settings promote sound nutrition and limit the availability of unhealthful foods;
- D. Data drive CFPA's policy and programmatic decision making with respect to food environments;
- E. Stakeholder input informs CFPA's policy and programmatic decision making with respect to food environments; and
- F. CFPA builds stronger strategic alliances with food environment stakeholders to increase access to healthful foods and decrease access to unhealthful foods.

Organizational Priorities for 2013-2016

CFPA will focus its resources on three organizational priorities over the next three years. These priorities are critical to procuring and maintaining the resources that enable us to pursue our programmatic goals.

Priority 1: Transform the Board of Directors

Transform Our Board of Directors to Facilitate the Next Phase of Organizational Growth

We will re-energize the board of directors by establishing new expectations of service and selecting new board members. We will develop a board that is prepared to support CFPA in uniting the anti-hunger, nutrition, and health movements; to expand our capacity for leveraging new and traditional media; and to maintain fiscal viability while working to diversify our funding sources.

Outcomes:

1. Expectations for serving on the board of directors are formalized.
2. Six new members join the board by 2014.

Priority 2: Strengthen HR Policies & Practices

Update HR Policies and Strengthen HR Practices Across the Staff “Life Cycle”

The “life cycle” of a CFPA staff member starts with the publication of a job opening, continues through hiring and orientation, progresses through professional and leadership development, and ends when the job is terminated. Over the next three years, we will refine and implement policies that support consistent, comprehensive, and legal HR practices.

Outcomes

1. Hiring protocols are established by spring 2013.
2. Professional development plan is established by 2014.

Priority 3: Revamp Fund Development & Grant Management

Revamp Fund Development and Grant Management to Improve Transparency and Accountability

Over the next three years, CFPA will coordinate fund development, planning, and operations to ensure that our priorities are driving funding requests and that we deliver what we have proposed. We will modernize fund development to explore new avenues of support.

Outcome: A fund development and grant management system is fully operational by 2014.

Strategic Plan 2013-2016

For more information about the strategic plan, please contact George Manalo-LeClair at george@cfpa.net or 510.433.1122 ext. 103.

California Food Policy Advocates

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