

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Restaurant Meals Program Task Force: Legislative Recommendation Report

January 31, 2025

Oregon Department of Human Services

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Executive Summary

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) has compiled the following report at the request of the 2024 Legislative Assembly. The report details the recommendations for the initial design and implementation of a new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Restaurant Meal Program (RMP), enacted through Senate Bill (SB)1585 in the 2024 Regular Legislative Session.

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is a federal state option that allows certain SNAP clients (including people who are elderly, have a disability, or are experiencing homelessness; or the spouse of the SNAP participant who is eligible) who might not be able to prepare meals for themselves or who do not have permanent housing for storing and preparing food, to be able to buy prepared meals at restaurants with their SNAP benefits.

“This program is not just about feeding people—it is about restoring hope, dignity, and strength to those who need it most. For many, a warm meal at a restaurant is not a luxury but a necessity due to physical limitations, lack of kitchen facilities, or overwhelming financial struggles. By allowing authorized restaurants to accept SNAP benefits, we can provide an essential service that fosters community, health, and stability. Additionally, RMPs have the power to uplift our local economy, supporting restaurants and food service workers who continue to rebuild from the challenges of recent years.”

Jessica Morris, Meals on Wheels People

The 15-member SNAP RMP Task Force, in partnership with ODHS staff, has developed an initial list of eight recommendations that cover a diverse range of considerations for the successful development and launch of an Oregon SNAP RMP Pilot, including subsequent suggestions for a statewide implementation.

1. Pilot Site Recommendation: The Task Force recommends that Jackson/Josephine Counties (ODHS District 8) geographic area is the Pilot area for the Oregon SNAP RMP launch.

2. Phased Implementation Schedule: The Task Force recommends that the remaining counties in Oregon are implemented through a phased approach to support the successful restaurant system updates, federal contract requirements and community engagement needed to launch the program in an area.

3. Oregon Business Technical Support: The Task Force recommends two supports for businesses are developed: (1) contract support for Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) applications; and (2) provision of Oregon SNAP RMP branded marketing tools businesses can use so that SNAP participants can easily recognize participating restaurants.

4. Oregon Community Communication Support: The Task Force recommends the development of a Community Partner Toolkit and the development of clear branding for Oregon SNAP RMP.

5. Contract Recommendations: The Task Force recommends that ODHS researches and develops additional criteria for two primary considerations (1) price of “concessional” SNAP meals and (2) the number/type of restaurants that can apply to Oregon RMP. These considerations affect the contract requirements for businesses to engage in the federal RMP program.

6. ODHS Staff Training: The Task Force recommends that a full RMP orientation and awareness training is developed for ODHS staff, including support staff, staff who determine eligibility, community partnership coordinators and managers to ensure that local level support is in place for SNAP participants regarding RMP.

7. RMP Community Communication Support: The Task Force recommends that ODHS develops two toolkits, one for community partners and another for business partners to support implementation of the RMP in the local community.

8. Budget Recommendations: The Task Force recommends that ODHS recruit two additional full-time permanent positions to help administer and support the new program. In addition, the Task Force recommends that funding for system changes be supported through General Fund dollars that will allow the department to seek federal administrative match.

The Task Force recommends the transition of this important work to an RMP Advisory Group model. The Advisory Group would center the work between the department, community partners, business partners and people with lived experience, it must remain a central component to the ongoing delivery of this valuable work, ensuring that the planning and communication for this project meets the needs of the people who access and use the resources the most.

In Conclusion

Overall, the Oregon SNAP RMP Task Force recommends the initial allocation of state General Funds dollars for the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025-27 biennium of **\$480,157.06** for the ongoing implementation of the Oregon SNAP Restaurant Meal Program.

Pending no additional federal changes Oregon intends to proceed with the initial RMP plan submission to the federal Food and Nutrition Service as part of the Oregon State Plan of Operations for SNAP by August 15, 2025.

Background

Senate Bill (SB) 1585 passed in the 2024 Oregon Legislative Session directing ODHS to convene a Task Force focused on the implementation of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Restaurant Meals Program (RMP). The bill required the Task Force membership to include individuals who represent the geographic, and racial or ethnic diversity of the state and who have expertise in food insecurity, or personal experience receiving SNAP benefits, experience in the restaurant industry, and personal or professional experience in working with Oregonians who experience barriers to accessing hot food. Direct experience with how seniors, individuals with disabilities or homeless individuals are impacted by food insecurity and the effects of access to hot meals was also a priority consideration.

The SNAP RMP Task Force's charge, with staff support from ODHS, was to analyze options and provide recommendations for the implementation of an Oregon SNAP RMP program designed to maximize the food choices for recipients of SNAP benefits to access hot foods/meals allowable under the current federal regulations for federal pilot programs stipulated in 7 U.S.C. 2026.¹

Federal background and provisions

Since 1977, the SNAP Restaurant Meal Program has been an optional component for states. Section 4014 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (herein referred to as the "2014 Farm Bill;" P.L. 113-79), amended the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525) to include certain oversight provisions for States that opt to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Restaurant Meals Program (RMP).²

The Act allows states the flexibility to expand access for certain SNAP participants to use their food benefits in participating restaurants or retailers, authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service, to purchase hot, prepared meals. It also requires states that administer an RMP to submit plans and reports to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that show how the RMP meets the needs of its target populations.

Under regular SNAP federal rules, benefits generally cannot be used to buy hot foods meant for immediate consumption (such as those served in restaurants). The RMP federally regulated option is only available to specific groups of SNAP recipients who otherwise might have difficulty preparing meals at home, including people who are **elderly, have a disability, or are experiencing homelessness; or the spouse of the SNAP participant who is eligible**. The state must ensure that only RMP eligible populations can use their benefits at participating restaurants and businesses.

¹ <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=49&f=treesort&num=292>

² <https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ79/PLAW-113publ79.pdf>

FNS requires the local SNAP state agency (ODHS) to work with local restaurants and retailers. The ODHS team will be required to assess each business for their readiness to run the state program. The state team must review and provide technical assistance at the local state-level to approve or deny a business from proceeding with the mandatory state level contract required for the business application process with FNS. The business must also demonstrate that they will provide “concessional” pricing for SNAP customers. Concessional pricing means that the SNAP participant must receive access to the hot meal at a reduced dollar amount. This part of the program can be set by the state regarding the threshold of the cost of a meal (not to exceed a particular dollar amount); or the percentage of discount on any meal on the approved restaurant menu (for example, 15 percent discount for SNAP).

The FNS Retailer Division is ultimately responsible for final approval of any business entity. The FNS Retailer Division also activates and monitors the EBT compatible Point of Sale (POS) device linked to the federal hub that allows SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to be accepted for use at the approved premises.³

The program requires close coordination between federal, state, and local entities to set up, operate and manage RMP.⁴ While there is current federal rules and guidance to implement and deliver a SNAP RMP, FNS has also previously stated their intent to publish a proposed rule in spring 2025 to establish the information that States must provide to meet the requirements of the 2014 Farm Bill provision.⁵ This intention may be affected by the delays in implementation of the new Farm Bill in 2025 and any subsequent changes in administration at the USDA, FNS Division. The Continuing Resolution for the SNAP program was set to ensure program funding through April 2025.⁶ Additional considerations regarding new resolutions or Farm Bill changes may also impact eligibility factors for SNAP which could have impacts on the overall timeline for implementation of the Oregon SNAP RMP.

Pending no additional federal changes Oregon intends to proceed with the initial plan submission to FNS with the Oregon State Plan of Operations by August 15, 2025.

National RMP perspective

The SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is currently operating in nine states: Arizona, California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia.

Each participating state operates and has customized the RMP parameters, such as

³ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer>

⁴ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/restaurant-meals-program>

⁵ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CMR-A98-00183231/pdf/CMR-A98-00183231.pdf>

⁶ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-impact-americanReliefAct-010225.pdf>

selecting eligible restaurants (the number or type of restaurants) and setting service/nutrition and concessional requirements (the discount percentage for SNAP meals) based on the unique circumstances and capacity in each state and has federal approval to operate based on the state parameters. Two state examples of this varied level of customization that the Oregon RMP team consulted with are California and Massachusetts. A summary of their program elements is featured below:

California

- **History:** Initially a county-based pilot in the late 1970s; expanded statewide in 2021 with the option for counties to operate independently.
- **Structure:** All counties participate in the state-run program except Los Angeles and Riverside, which manage their own RMP.
- **Economic Impact:** Los Angeles County recorded 5.1 million RMP transactions and \$74.6 million in sales from April 2020 to March 2021, highlighting significant community demand.

Massachusetts

- **History:** In June 2023, 27 restaurants and food trucks were announced to have been selected for the Massachusetts Restaurant Meals Program pilot beginning in fall of 2023. The application process for RMP businesses centered on providing access to fresh and culturally diverse food options.
- **Structure:** Eligible businesses in this pilot phase of the program include restaurants and food trucks that are local and privately-owned and provide counter-based service and payment. Of the selected local businesses, 77 percent are women-owned, and 90 percent have owners who identify as Black, Asian and/or Hispanic/Latinx. The pilot includes both traditional restaurants and food trucks .
- **Economic Impact:** Meals purchased from RMP Restaurants and Food Trucks are exempt from any state meals tax. The average meal price for RMP restaurants is \$11.

The USDA provides RMP training and application resources for interested restaurants, aiming to increase participation and food access across the country.

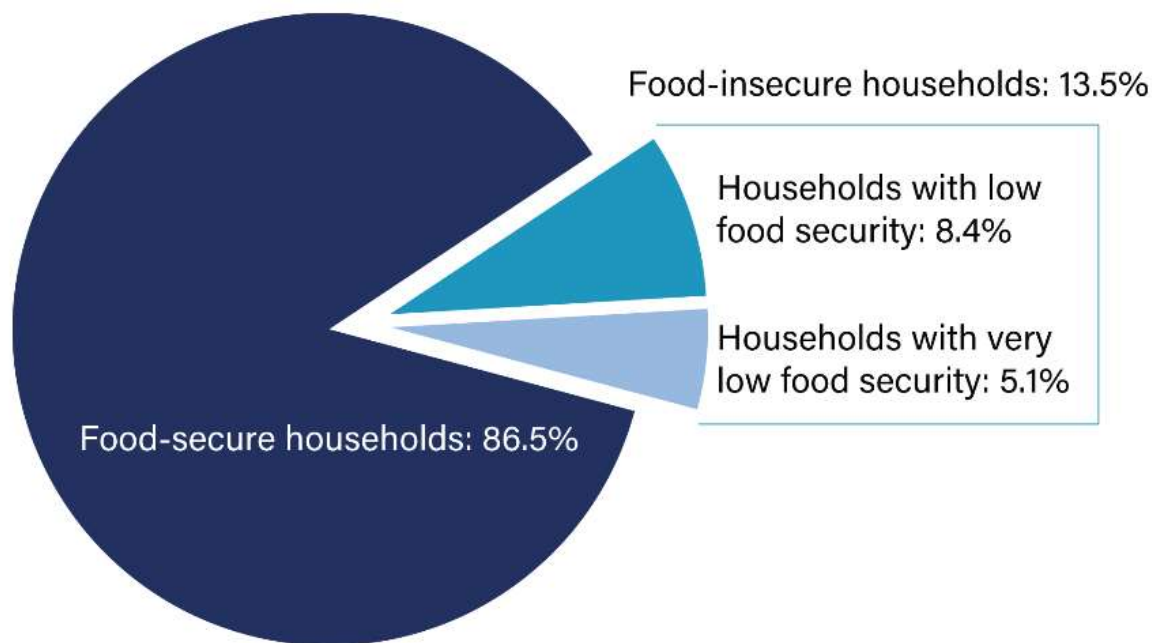
A FNS report to Congress, *Report on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Restaurant Meals Program*, from November 2023 indicated that the RMP had a total of 3,489 restaurants across seven RMP-participating states authorized to redeem SNAP.⁷ In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, 763 restaurants were withdrawn from the program nationally with 73 percent due to non-redemption of SNAP benefits; 25 percent voluntarily withdrew; and 2 percent based on failure to cooperate in the reauthorization process.

⁷ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CMR-A98-00183231/pdf/CMR-A98-00183231.pdf>

Oregon demographics, food insecurity and the business sector

The national food insecurity levels continue to demonstrate the depth of need facing families and individuals who experience lack of sufficient access to nutritious and cost-effective food sources.

U.S. households by food security status, 2023

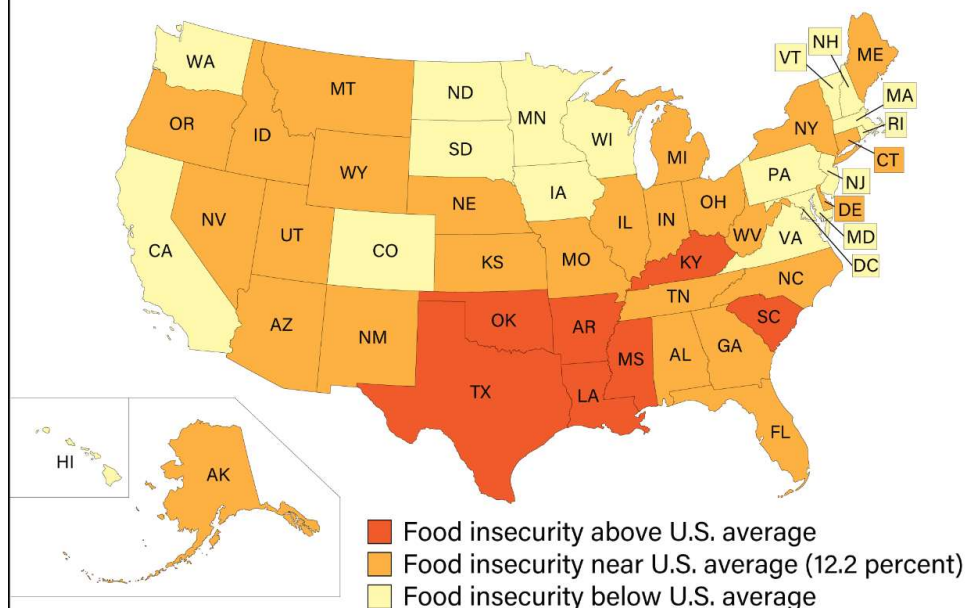


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2023 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.

According to Feeding America, *Map the Meal Gap*, one in eight people throughout Oregon (urban, rural, and remote rural) continue to face hunger or food insecurity.⁸

⁸ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/oregon>

Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2021-23



Note: States that are categorized as near U.S. average have prevalence rates not statistically significantly different from the U.S. average.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2021, 2022, and 2023 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

Nearly one in seven older adults, and those with disabilities, in Oregon reported as experiencing food insecurity in 2023. Food insecurity and lack of access to nutritious meals for this population is directly linked to health-related problems. Some of those current and long-term health-related issues can be improved by their access to SNAP.⁹

The access to food and particularly hot meals becomes more critical for youth and adults who are experiencing homelessness. The ability for individuals and families to gain access to hot or prepared meals helps to mitigate health-related and dental issues. While food banks, soup kitchens and shelters provide critical supports, the ability for SNAP participants to also use their benefits in participating retailers is another critical expansion of the safety net for Oregonians.¹⁰

The Oregon food insecurity rates continue to demonstrate that the state has experienced a slower recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹

To assess the potential supports that an Oregon RMP benefit access could provide to priority populations the following data was gathered from the Oregon SNAP RMP

⁹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/snap-is-linked-with-improved-nutritional-outcomes-and-lower-health-care-costs>

¹⁰ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10609710/>

¹¹ https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2023-12/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_2020-2022.pdf

populations for 2024. The data in the table below does have some duplication because several, and in some cases all demographic elements for RMP (elderly, with a disability, and experiencing homelessness) may be present in an individual's current circumstance.

SNAP population data (duplicated numbers) from 2024				
Month	Elderly (over 60)	Experiencing Homelessness	With Disability	Total RMP Population
January	140,946	50,386	176,851	368,183
February	141,193	51,720	176,837	369,750
March	141,418	52,667	176,950	371,035
April	141,439	53,119	176,956	371,514
May	141,125	53,705	176,474	371,304
June	140,907	54,506	176,340	371,753
July	140,380	55,368	175,705	371,453
August	140,117	56,311	175,263	371,691
September	139,493	56,862	174,313	370,668
October	139,202	57,797	173,887	370,886
November	138,504	57,863	172,333	368,700
December	138,479	57,688	171,698	367,865
			Population average	370,400

Using the population demographic with the highest potential reach, SNAP participants with disabilities, it is estimated that the Oregon SNAP RMP has the potential to improve food access to hot meals for over 170,000 individuals who are most vulnerable to food insecurity.

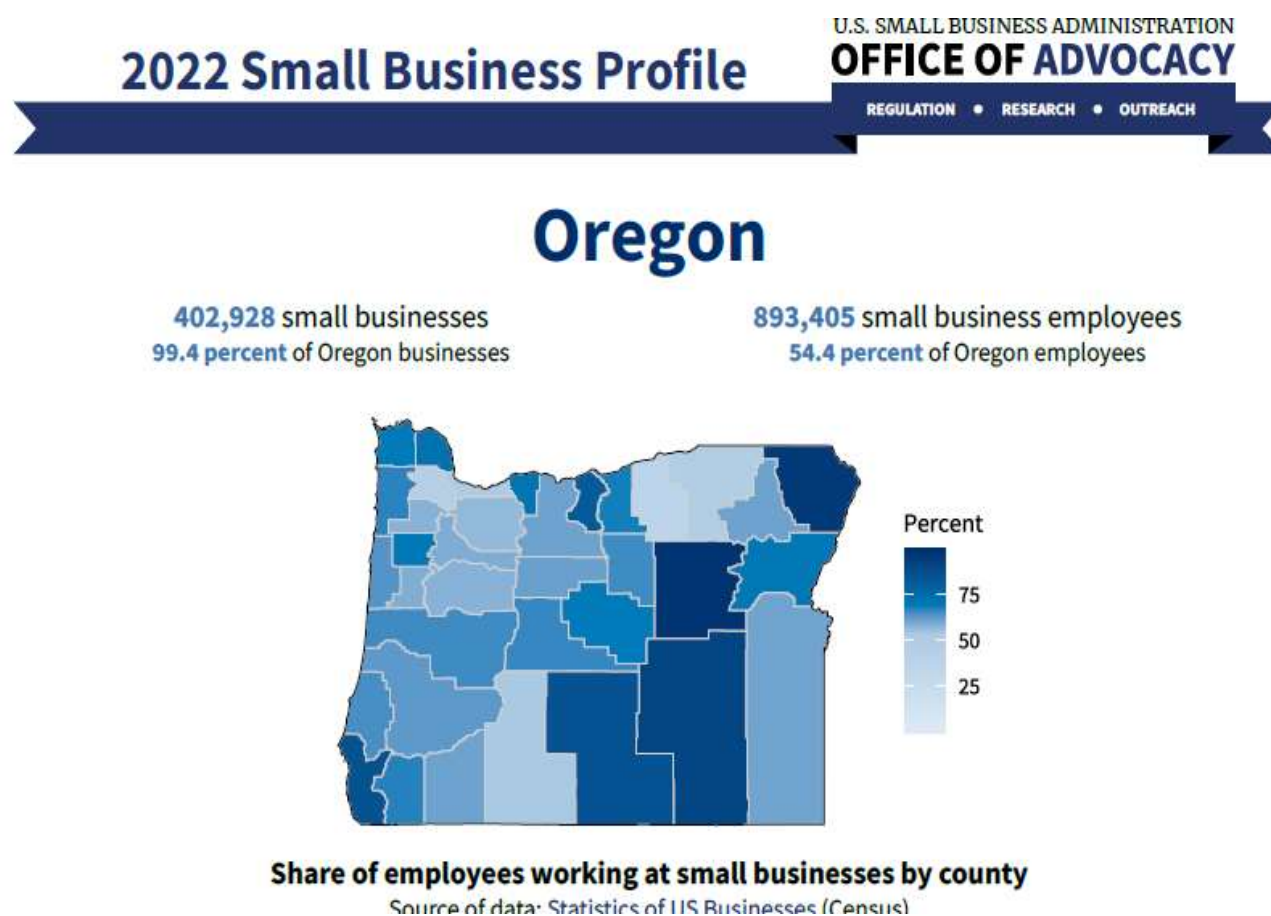
The SNAP RMP option can also support local businesses and the economy by providing businesses new potential revenue streams. The use of one SNAP dollar in the community creates an economic multiplier of \$1.50-\$1.80.¹² In addition, the use of SNAP in communities has resulted in the creation of new jobs, specifically in non-metro areas. As

¹² https://www.fcsn.gov/assets/files/docs/2023-conference-docs/K6.1_Scherpf.pdf

detailed in the 2019 report, *The Impacts of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Redemptions on County-Level Employment*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, SNAP redemptions had a positive average impact on county-level employment over the entire study period (2001-2014) in non-metro counties -- about 0.4 additional jobs per \$10,000 of additional SNAP redemptions.¹³

Information from U.S. Census Bureau demonstrates the potential impact for the small-to-medium retailer business sectors in Oregon. Nationally, one in 10 people work in the restaurant and food services industry. In Oregon, during 2024, approximately 181,265 employees worked in this sector and generated about \$7.19 billion in total labor income, including all sources of income — wages, salaries, and proprietors' income — as well as benefits.¹⁴

In recent years the Oregon small businesses sector has begun to regain momentum post-COVID-19 pandemic and continues to grow as demonstrated in the graphic below.



¹³ John Pender, Young Jo, Jessica E. Todd, and Cristina Miller, ERR-263, *The Impacts of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Redemptions on County-Level Employment*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, May 2019. <https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/laserfiche/publications/93169/ERR-263.pdf?v=27519>

¹⁴ https://restaurant.org/getmedia/b4fac6bb-f6e9-4b7f-a495-226fca22d040/or_econ_impact_study.pdf

SNAP RMP Task Force Meetings: Topics and Summaries

In response to SB 1585, in August 2024, ODHS hired one full-time and one limited duration (ends in June 2025) Policy Analyst. Subsequently, the SNAP RMP Task Force was formally launched later in August 2024. The initial meeting comprised of membership from both Hunger Advocacy partners and Oregon Business sectors.

Throughout the subsequent meetings membership was expanded to include more people with lived experience who are currently on the SNAP program or who have had recent experience of receiving SNAP across all the population sectors. ODHS posted an invitation for people with lived experience to indicate their interest in joining the newly formed Task Force.

ODHS created a “SNAP Restaurant Meals Program” webpage on the main Oregon.gov site to raise awareness of the Task Force and provide a point of contact for individuals or businesses to connect with the department in relation to implementing Oregon’s pilot initiative. The meetings and discussions at the SNAP RMP Task Force led to the development of the eight recommendations for the design, development, and implementation of an Oregon SNAP Restaurant Meal Program.

In addition to monthly Task Force meetings, there were three work streams identified to assist in formulating the recommendations. These work streams were Research and Planning, Community Engagement and Outreach and Implementation Planning.

Monthly meetings for the RMP Task Force started in late August 2024 and the work streams began meeting on October 15, 2024.

August 27, 2024: The meeting consisted of an overview of the Restaurant Meals Program as well as discussion on members of the Task Force that still needed to be recruited.

- Data was shared regarding the RMP population in Oregon compared to the general SNAP population. The Task Force member representing the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association (ORLA) agreed to provide data on restaurants in the state.

September 24, 2024: The Task Force discussed the need to appoint a chairperson and determine the voting structure.

- A brief explanation of each of the work streams was provided and it was decided these work streams would meet once per month.
- It was agreed upon that a poll would be sent out to determine the best day and time for these meetings to ensure maximum attendance.

October 15, 2024: SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) Planning and Research Workstream meeting focused on selecting a pilot site, reviewing data, and planning

phased implementation.

- The team discussed phased implementation options and next steps, including community engagement, and voting on the recommendation at an upcoming Task Force meeting.
- A pilot recommendation site was agreed upon.

October 16, 2024: SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) Community Engagement Work Stream meeting focused on finalizing engagement strategies for the program's pilot areas.

- The team discussed the need for tailored engagement approaches based on community size, (small, medium, large), with personalized interactions prioritized in smaller areas and scalable outreach like social media across all regions.
- The meeting emphasized building trust in rural areas, offering technical assistance, and maintaining regular communication with partners and businesses.
- Next steps included voting on the pilot site on October 22, 2024, and scheduling a follow-up meeting on October 30, 2024, to develop area-specific engagement plans.

October 22, 2024: The RMP Task Force met to discuss the data that was used by the Planning and Research work stream.

- A poll vote was held but due to system limitations Task Force members from outside of the agency were unable to vote using the poll, so their votes were collected through the meeting chat. There were nine Task Force members present and the votes resulted in seven yes votes for Josephine and Jackson counties. Two Task Force members abstained from the vote.
- The Task Force also discussed possible options for the phased implementation beyond the pilot area.

November 12, 2024: The Planning and Research Work Stream met to discuss the 10 proposed recommendations to be included in this report. No further recommendations were suggested at that time. (To note – the initial 10 recommendations were later condensed to the eight remaining in this report).

- Letters of support for the RMP program to be attached to the report were also discussed. A few Task Force members who had missed earlier meetings requested a status update.
- Group discussion took place regarding how to ensure all members of the Task Force, especially those with lived experience, feel comfortable. It was agreed that providing multiple ways for them to participate would assist in this.

October 2024: ODHS launched an initiative to recruit additional individuals with lived experience for the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) Task Force. To accomplish this, an online form was created to gather relevant information from Oregonians interested in participating. The link to this form was shared with community partners and posted on

the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) website. The results were:

- ODHS received 23 submissions of interest from individuals statewide. ODHS staff provided an orientation to the SNAP RMP Task Force which outlined the time commitment required for participation, provided an overview of the program and shared updates on decisions and progress made thus far.
- Nine individuals attended the orientation, where they learned about the SNAP RMP and were invited to participate in the upcoming Task Force meeting.

November 26, 2024: The RMP Task Force met and incorporated new Task Force members. Several of the new Task Force members with lived experience were in attendance. The following items were covered during the meeting:

- Existing RMP Task Force members were briefed on the orientation provided to the new members.
- The options for the phased implementation were presented to the members again after which Task Force members voted and the result was to create four additional phases that grouped counties together for effective implementation and technical support. The Task Force also decided to split Phase 3 for Multnomah County into two distinct parts due to the anticipated volume of businesses in need of support and to ensure that technical assistance could be supported by this approach.
- Several potential logos for SNAP RMP created by the ODHS Publishing and Design team were reviewed and voted on. The team ranked their favorite logos and requested to see them with added color and options for readability. The ODHS Publications and Creative Services team incorporated the suggestions and provided revised logos for a future vote.
- The team discussed the different options other RMP states are using regarding SNAP meal discounts. The FNS requirement that “for profit restaurants” must offer meals at a “concessional” price to be approved was reviewed. It was also confirmed that it is up to the state to determine what “concessional” means.
- The Task Force members agreed it will be important to have feedback from restaurants. They liked the idea of having extra offerings or deals on the menu but not restrict the items that can be purchased with SNAP.
- Finally, there was discussion regarding the required RMP legislative report. Task Force volunteers were identified to assist with reviewing and providing feedback as the report was drafted. Task force members reviewed the list of topics from the report and indicated which topics they would be interested in reviewing.

SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) Task Force Recommendations

Background to Recommendations

The SNAP RMP Task Force has voted to put forward the following eight recommendations for consideration for the Legislature. The recommendations are reflective of the data-informed research, system and operational discussions with agency, community and business sector experts, and the recognition that the best approach for a successful implementation for SNAP participants and the business sector will be accomplished through a coordinated phased-in approach.

Task Force members spoke clearly about the need for community and business support through the implementation of the new program and that for the delivery and ongoing support for the program, ODHS will need additional staff to implement the strategic direction developed by the membership.

There is also recognition that there remains more research, development and planning needed to successfully implement a statewide RMP program.

Recommendation 1: Pilot Site Recommendation

The Research and Planning Work Stream of the ODHS SNAP RMP Task Force convened October 15, 2024, to analyze data, discuss potential pilot locations and vote on a recommendation for the program's initial implementation site. The analysis focused on identifying a region that balances a significant eligible population, logistical feasibility and existing support infrastructure.

Data Analysis:

The work stream used comprehensive data sets to inform the decision-making process, including:

- The 10 Oregon counties with the highest populations of potentially eligible clients.
- Local unemployment rates.
- The number of restaurants and retailers in each county.
- Rates of unsheltered homelessness.
- The number of potentially eligible but currently unenrolled SNAP households taken from estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau data for Oregon.

Discussion and Key Considerations:

Key factors considered during the discussion included the size of the area that the ODHS RMP team could effectively support, and the infrastructure needed for successful implementation.

Recommendation:

Based on the data and geographic considerations, Josephine County and Jackson County were selected as the pilot site for the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program. These counties

rank among the top three in all analyzed data sets and collectively represent a mix of urban and rural communities within ODHS District 8.

Additionally, Josephine and Jackson Counties, were highlighted for the distinct mix of urban and rural communities and its existing infrastructure of community partnerships. Notably, District 8 has demonstrated success in collaborative efforts, and sharing best practices across its ODHS offices. These established networks provide a solid foundation for piloting the RMP.

Additional Supporting Context:

- **Established Partnerships:** ODHS District 8 has a strong history of collaboration with community partners, including local service providers and organizations serving vulnerable populations such as unhoused individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities. These relationships have facilitated the sharing of processes, enhanced service delivery and strengthened trust between ODHS and the community.
- **Capacity for Coordination:** The district's experience coordinating with partners across multiple locations provides an operational advantage for the pilot. Josephine County's ongoing collaboration with an inpatient drug and alcohol facility, where ODHS has supported clients through authorized representatives, exemplifies its ability to adapt processes to meet unique community needs.
- **Professional Development and Training:** District 8 has previously demonstrated a commitment to staff development and engagement, conducting in-person trainings and tailoring communication to address the unique needs of its offices. This adaptability and focus on building internal capacity are essential for scaling a program like RMP to have local-level ODHS awareness and support.

Rationale:

The selection of Josephine and Jackson Counties as the Pilot site offers:

- A significant population of eligible participants.
- Diverse community settings for assessing program scalability and impact.
- Existing collaborative networks that will streamline program implementation and outreach.

This recommendation ensures a balanced, data-informed approach to piloting the RMP while leveraging ODHS local office strengths to maximize participant success and establish a model for future statewide expansion.

Recommendation 2: Phased Implementation Schedule

County Implementation Strategy

Considering all factors for system, communication, and business readiness the

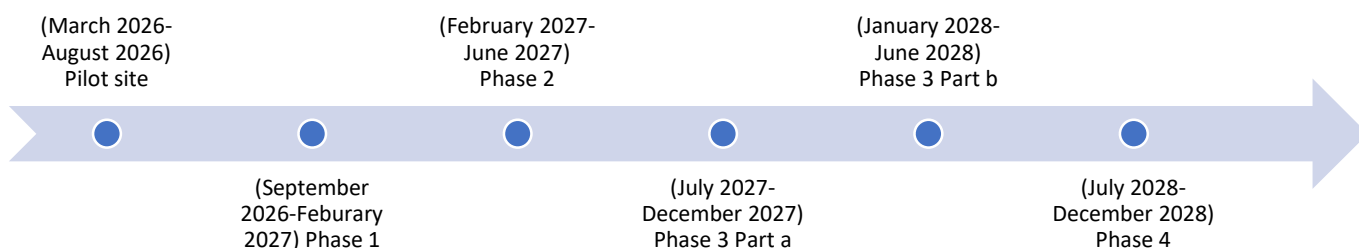
implementation schedule should be a minimum of 6 months of focused support prior to implementation.

- This time frame will be needed to onboard businesses, assess readiness and initiate contracting agreements, FNS approval, Point of Sale (POS) setup, marketing, community outreach and implementation of the restaurants who will be participating in the subsequent phase(s).

The proposed Pilot Phase RMP implementation launch schedule is March to July 2026.

The initial statewide implementation schedule is as follows:

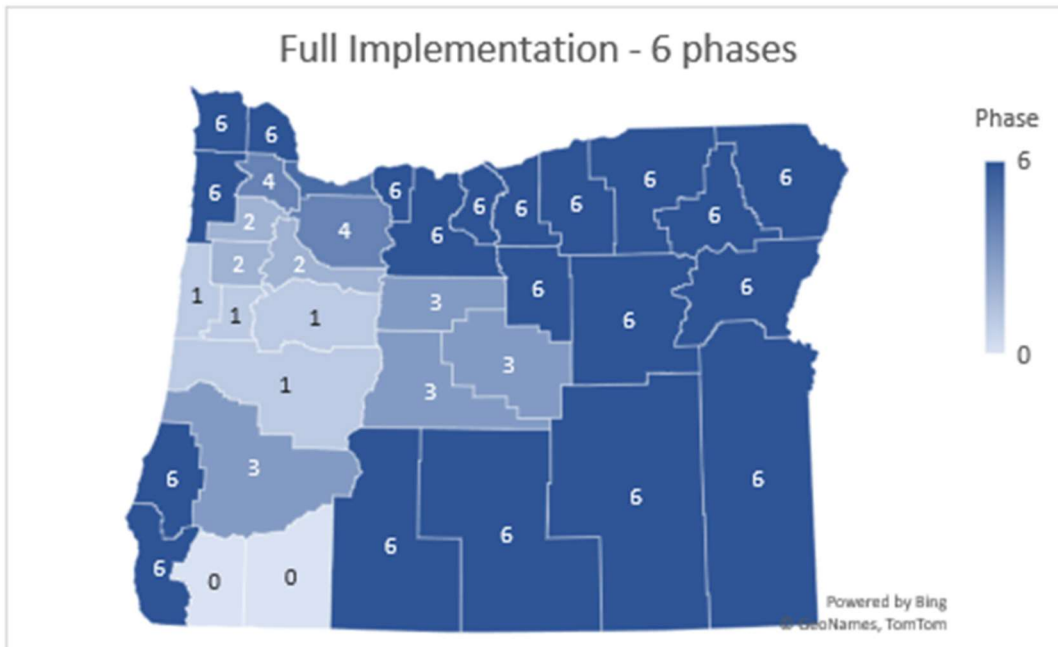
- **Pilot Phase:** Jackson/Josphine counties; August 2026-January 2027.
- **Phase 1:** Douglas, Lane, Linn, and Marion/Polk counties; February 2027-July 2027.
- **Phase 2:** Deschutes, Washington, and Clackamas counties; August 2027- January 2028.
- **Phase 3 (a):** Multnomah County; February 2028 - July 2028.
- **Phase 3 (b):** Multnomah County; August 2028 - January 2029.
- **Phase 4:** Remaining counties in Oregon; February 2029 - July 2029.



Note:

- Additional research is required for the two parts to Phase 3 implementation for Multnomah County and should consider the workload of engaging with business and community partners during this part of the expansion.
- The implementation schedule will be based on successful ONE eligibility system and vendor POS device enhancements outlined above.

Option 1 – Full statewide Implementation



Recommendation 3: Oregon Business Technical Support

The Task Force focused on the importance of providing the most supportive environment for engagement with Oregon businesses. Members from the business community and those with direct restaurant and retail experience stressed the importance of technical support in the crucial initial months that a business engages with the RMP program.

Task Force members recommended the following approach to support the success of businesses engaging with the Oregon program.

1. ODHS contract and FNS Retailer Division application support

ODHS staff will be available to assist each business through the process of completing the contract with ODHS and through the completion of the FNS 252-2 application.

2. Branding and marketing support

ODHS will develop a local-level engagement campaign to recruit new businesses, engage with existing business partners and develop new partnerships through the targeted campaign.

Development of Oregon RMP branded marketing tools is recommended by the Task Force to provide essential support for small businesses so that SNAP participants can easily recognize participating restaurants. The initial branding materials were developed through Task Force consultation and feedback. (See *Recommendation 4 below for more details*).

Recommendation 4: Oregon Community Communication Support

The SNAP RMP Task Force determined that it is essential to begin a clear and consistent communication plan from the very beginning of this project. Initial requests from Task Force members included the development of clear branding for Oregon RMP that will assist the department and community partners in building awareness for the program.

The Task Force worked closely with ODHS Publications and Creative Solutions to create a clear brand that can be used in a variety of ways such as signage, menus, door clings and mailers.

- The logo should be simple, relevant, easy to recognize, and different from the USDA SNAP logo.
- The Task Force was provided with a variety of logos with different designs and color options. Those examples were presented to and voted on by the Task Force during several meetings.
- The below two logos have been selected as the final two for consideration:



The SNAP RMP Task Force created a Communication and Planning Work Stream that met separately from the main group. Before indicating a pilot area, the group discussed general communication strategies and formed the following recommendations for consideration:

- Engagement strategies must be tailored to the size and needs of different areas, as scalability is crucial, what works in larger areas may not suit smaller, rural communities.
- Small areas often benefit from personal, face-to-face interaction, while pilot programs are effective in small to medium-sized areas to manage workload.
- A strong social media presence is vital for all regions and including multiple languages, as relevant, to the areas.

- Community, advocate, and business engagement requires customized training, technical assistance for restaurants, and promotional materials like flyers for community events.
- Readiness varies between areas, necessitating flexible strategies.
- Effective engagement includes starting outreach a year in advance with general information, increasing targeted efforts three months before implementation, and maintaining regular office hours and support post-launch.
- Lessons from past projects emphasize avoiding overwhelming businesses, building trust in rural communities, engaging partners early, and incorporating feedback from commissions and councils.
- Social media and personalized outreach are key tools to enhance visibility, accessibility, and relationship-building.

Overall, the Task Force recommends the continuation of this work stream to help identify the most effective strategies for engagement and to incorporate them into a community toolkit that assists community partners with awareness and messaging of the SNAP Restaurant Meal Program.

Recommendation 5: Contract Recommendations

The Task Force recommends ODHS develop a contract to serve as the state-level agreement between ODHS and restaurants interested in participating in the Oregon Restaurant Meals Program.

The contract should include the obligations of the restaurant, the requirements of ODHS, and it must be signed by all parties. The FNS federal regulations for SNAP RMP require that private for-profit restaurants that contract with an appropriate state or local agency **must** offer meals at concessional prices to individuals who are experiencing homelessness, have a disability, or who are elderly persons and their spouses.

The contract is required by FNS prior to the restaurant submitting the required FNS 252-2 application to USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Retailer Division.¹⁵

The Task Force recommends that ODHS develop additional criteria for two primary considerations that require further analysis and discussion prior to the development of the final Oregon SNAP RMP contract for retailers.

- **Consideration 1:** The Task Force has had preliminary discussions regarding what the “concessional” price could be for the state standard. More research is needed to develop this element of the program over the next six months. There are federal restrictions that do not allow restaurants to charge tax or tips to SNAP RMP

¹⁵ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/fns-252-2>

participants. The Task Force has requested that ODHS develop this aspect of the plan with consideration for the effect on the restaurant businesses and service staff.

- **Consideration 2:** Each state can also determine how many restaurants and which types of restaurants can participate in the state program. Additional research is needed to explore additional recommendations more fully for this part of the program and some of this will be impacted by the staffing levels needed to implement and administer the program. The Task Force has asked that ODHS consider the nutrition and accessibility of restaurants and retailers in communities both metro and rural as the state seeks participating restaurants and retailers in Oregon.

Recommendation 6: ODHS Staff Training

The Task Force recognized the need for and recommended that ODHS staff receive training and ongoing awareness of the SNAP RMP project as the team moves towards Pilot and phased-roll out statewide.

Training needs were identified for different ODHS staff roles:

- **Support Staff** will be given information about how the program works, flyers and information on how to answer the questions as they are contacted by RMP participants.
- **Eligibility workers** will be given information about how the program works, flyers, and defined eligibility requirements for the program and information on how to answer the questions as they are contacted by RMP participants.
- **Managers** will be given information about how the program works, flyers and information on how they can support both their staff and RMP participants.
- **Community Resource Coordinators** are the first line of contacts within their respective communities for engagement with community partners who are seeking information regarding the RMP program. It is recommended these staff receive a more in-depth training to ensure they can answer questions and support community businesses who wish to participate as a restaurant in the RMP program and need support with the application requirements, etc.

In preparation for the RMP implementation the Task Force recommends the RMP project team reinforce elements captured in the training such as the need for eligibility staff to accurately capture in the eligibility system the demographic information for the RMP eligible populations. This will help ensure the implementation is successful with limited impacts to ongoing workload.

The full fiscal impact for training support for ODHS staff is not known currently. Assumptions for training costs are being calculated based on similar projects occurring at the time of this report. Considerations include virtual versus in-person training, the staff required to develop the training and any printed materials that may be needed. Some of

these costs will be covered with federal funding. Final amounts may vary once implementation dates are finalized.

Recommendation 7: RMP Communication Strategy

The Task Force recommends a communication strategy is developed in conjunction with each of the key groups impacted by the RMP, inclusive of multiple language options. It is recommended ODHS develop separate communication plans for businesses, community partners and ODHS staff because each of the groups will have different needs. The Task Force identified the following needs:

- Develop Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document for each group.
- Develop “How to” documents to support businesses outlining the requirements to be a participating restaurant.
- Develop one-page documents describing the program which can be shared with SNAP participants.
- Use social media and already existing communication channels to provide additional information about the program.

The fiscal impact for the development of these communication supports is dependent on the final recommendations for materials that are developed for the project. It will be important to seek federal financial support for part of the development costs, assuming current federal RMP processes do not change in any reauthorization of the Farm Bill. At this time, printed materials may have printing costs covered by federal dollars up to 50 percent.

Recommendation 8: Budget Recommendations

Senate Bill (SB)1585 allocated \$481,371 from Oregon's General Fund and increased federal fund expenditure limits by \$698,970 for implementing the Oregon Restaurant Meals Program. The funding has also supported reimbursements for community members to have funding to cover time spent on the Task Force.

The Oregon RMP Task Force recommends that the additional system, staffing and business and community toolkits are supported in the additional request for ongoing funding.

While some components are funded as one-time set-up costs, there are staffing and operational recommendations that should be considered for the successful implementation of the statewide program.

SNAP Restaurant Meal Program (RMP) – Fiscal request for SFY 2025-27						
Line Item	Cost per item or Hourly Cost	Qty of items	Number of Hours (if applicable)	Total General Fund (\$)	Total Federal Fund match (\$)	Total cost for line item
Operations & Policy Analyst 3 (Permanent)	N/A	1	Full Time (24 months)	138,336	138,336	\$276, 672
Program Analyst 3 (Permanent)	N/A	1	Full Time (21 months)	116,784	116,784	\$233, 568
ONE system updates	N/A	1	1,500	170, 326	170,326	\$340,652
Legacy System updates	N/A	1	150			\$15,312
FIS Vendor (one time)	\$66,973.20	1	One Time Set-Up Costs	33,486.60	33,486.60	\$66,973.20
FIS Vendor (ongoing monthly)	\$2,261.41	12	Monthly costs	13,568.46	13,568.46	\$27,136.92
Total of Estimated Costs				\$480,157.06	\$480,157.06	\$960, 314.12

The following sections explain in more detail the SFY 2025-27 budget request for the proposed recommendations:

1) Staffing costs needed for implementation and ongoing technical supports (ODHS)

After consultation with multiple states that currently implement a SNAP RMP, the biggest issue for each state consulted was having adequate staffing available to provide the technical assistance that local businesses and communities needed. The states underscored the need to have staff available to help prepare businesses for the required federal processes and to provide support at the local level when issues arise post-implementation. Task Force members representing local businesses also emphasized the importance of having ODHS help with local level support as the program is implemented and for ongoing technical support needs.

The Task Force recommends that in addition to the permanent Operations and Policy Analyst 3 (OPA3) position already in place, the Legislature support two additional permanent positions for the implementation of the Pilot program in Oregon. Given the scale of the work required and the local level support needed, the Task Force recommends increasing the ODHS staffing level. As the program expands beyond the initial pilot areas, the Task Force recommends considering adding additional positions to support the phased roll-out to larger counties in Oregon.

Staffing recommendations:

- **One Operations and Policy Analyst 3 (OPA3)** – The position will research and develop the policies and rules for the new program. They will provide technical assistance to new and ongoing system development or system updates, develop and review materials with businesses, and monitor sites so that federal requirements are being met. This is a new program, and it will be critical that it is structured in a way that does not impact other federal and state programs. \$276,672 (24 months).
- **One Program Analyst 3 (PA3)** - The position will work with community partners and contracted partners to support the program delivery. They will develop program deliverables and track outcomes for priority program populations. They will also develop materials that can support the successful outreach and coordination work with the RMP analyst positions. \$233,568 (21 months).

2: System enhancements and Technical Supports

ODHS identified three different system changes required to implement the SNAP RMP.

a) The ODHS ONE eligibility system will require the following changes to fully implement the program.

- The ONE eligibility system changes will use existing SNAP demographic data to create an interface with the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system.
- The ONE eligibility system will also be updated to display the eligible population for staff to provide information and customer service about the program. This system change will require 1,500 hours of total development time.

The anticipated cost is \$340,652.

b) Legacy System (SNAP benefit issuance system) changes will receive the identified SNAP RMP population from ONE eligibility system.

- This new demographic file will be transmitted to FIS (EBT vendor), to mark each “Head of Household” on the EBT card eligible to be used at participating restaurants. This system change will require 150 hours of total development time.

The anticipated cost is \$15,312.

c) FIS-Government Solutions (EBT Vendor) system changes will require modification of the existing demographic interface to accept the new information coming from Oregon’s Legacy EBT file.

- The new data file will identify eligible SNAP participants and allow the EBT card to be identified for use at participating SNAP RMP restaurants.

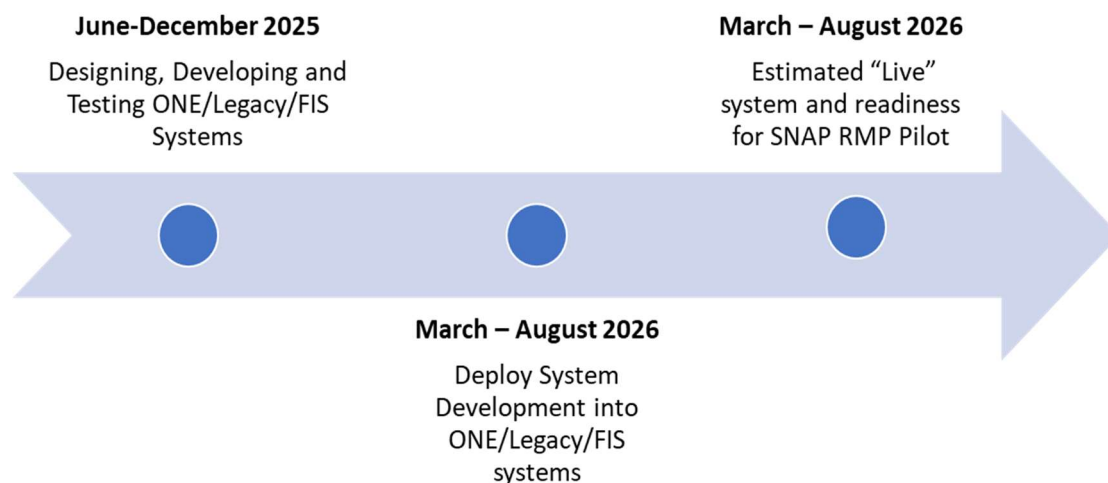
- **The anticipated cost includes** initial one-time set up costs of **\$66,973.20** and then an **ongoing monthly operational cost of \$2,261.41**, based on the estimated total number of RMP eligible participants each month.

The ODHS timeline for building, developing, and testing the new functionality in the three systems will vary depending on other agency priorities for the ONE system Strategic Roadmap and the Legacy system priority projects. These systems have a unique and separate governance structure that prioritizes ODHS, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) system changes and requests for the departments. As legislative and federal changes are mandated and prioritized, these new requirements can impact the timeline for when technology projects are completed.

Based on the recommendations of the Task Force and the initial system Level of Effort (LOE) requested by the SNAP RMP Team the following project areas have been prioritized in the agency systems with “placeholders” which are conditional on the approval to proceed.

Building the SNAP RMP Eligibility Systems timeline:

- **June – December 2025:** Designing, developing, and testing the ONE/Legacy/FIS systems.
- **March -August 2026:** Deploy system development into ONE/Legacy/FIS systems.
- **March - August 2026:** Estimated “live” system and readiness for SNAP RMP Pilot areas.



Additional future budget considerations:

Development of staff training, community and business toolkits and any participant direct mailer communications will require research and development with the understanding that 50 percent of the General Fund dollars invested may be reimbursed by the federal funder FNS, for the administration of the program. A full budget will need to be developed and approved with FNS at a future point closer to implementation of the approved new Pilot program.

Overall, the Oregon SNAP RMP Task Force recommends the initial allocation of state General Funds dollars for the **SFY 2025-27 biennium of \$480,157.06** for the ongoing implementation of the Oregon SNAP Restaurant Meal Program.

Closing Summary

The Oregon SNAP Restaurant Meal Program (RMP) has the potential to bring valuable and necessary supports for access to hot meals for vulnerable people in Oregon. Equally, the program has the capacity to support and build new business opportunities for Oregon restaurants and retailers.

Oregon SNAP RMP has the potential to improve food access to hot meals for over 170,000 individuals who are most vulnerable to food insecurity.

It is the recommendation of the Task Force to transition this work to an ongoing SNAP RMP Advisory Board structure. Membership of the board will include current members and upon vacancy of key representation, ODHS will ensure that new members are recruited to fill any vacancy.

Oregon ODHS has informed FNS of its intent to implement an Oregon SNAP RMP and confirmation of recommendations and timelines for the program in this report will finalize remaining aspects prior to the final submission with the Oregon SNAP State Plan of Operations anticipated to be sent to FNS by August 15, 2025.

Appendix 1: Acronyms

APD	Aging and People with Disabilities
CSFP	Commodity Supplemental Food Program
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer
FIS	Federal Information System
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
HB	House Bill
ODHS	Oregon Department of Human Services
OEP	Oregon Eligibility Partnership
ONE	OregONEligibility System
ONE Eligibility	See ONE
OREM	Office of Resilience and Emergency Management
ORLA	Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association
POS	Point of Sale
RMP	Restaurant Meals Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SSP	Self-Sufficiency Programs
TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

Appendix 2: ODHS SNAP Restaurant Meals Program Task Force

Active Members:

Amanda Cross – Oregon Farmers Market Association

Amber Ferguson – Rogue Food Unites

Brooke Johnson – Person with Lived Experience

Chris Baker – Oregon Hunger Task Force

Dustin Melton – Oregon Department of Education: Child Nutrition Programs

Eric Gibson – Person with Lived Experience/Houseless Advocate

Gabby Valdes – 211 Info

Jason Brandt – Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association

John Merrick-Russell – Person with Lived Experience/Disability Advocate

Lauren Armony – Sisters of the Road

Mickey Pollizatto – Outside In

Rachael Ward – Farmer's Market Fund

Sammi Teo – Oregon Food Bank

Sarah Weber–Ogden – Partners for Hunger-Free Oregon

Scott Youngblood – Hotel Management Group

Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS):

Adam Hansen – Aging and People with Disabilities (APD) Policy

Christy Jo Williams – Oregon Eligibility Partnership (OEP)

Jeff Gilbert – Office of Resource and Emergency Management (OREM)

Lucy Huffman – Food Programs Policy Analyst – Self Sufficiency Programs (SSP)

Matt Rasmussen – Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (YEHP) Manager

Mel Keller – YEHP Policy Analyst

ODHS Restaurant Meals Program Team

Heather Miles, Policy, Planning and Development Manager, SNAP, CSFP & TEFAP

Tiara McElyea, Operations & Policy Analyst, SNAP Restaurant Meals Program

Traci Miller, Operations & Policy Analyst, SNAP Restaurant Meals Program

Prior Members:

Angelita Morillo – Partners for Hunger Free Oregon

Kat Mahoney – Sisters of the Road

Margaret May – APD Policy

Monica Conley – Grants Pass Gospel Mission

With gratitude the following entities have provided invaluable information, consultation, and insight that informed the recommendations in this report.

California RMP Program

Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) – Western Regional Office (WRO)

FIS-Government Solutions (EBT Vendor)

Massachusetts RMP Program

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555

Appendix 3: Letters of Support

- 1) Oregon Hunger Task Force
- 2) Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
- 3) 211 Info
- 4) Sisters of the Road – two letters
- 5) Meals on Wheels
- 6) Rogue Food Unites

OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon

My name is Chris Baker, and I am the Administrator of the [Oregon Hunger Task Force](#). I am writing to express my full support for the implementation and expansion of the Restaurant Meal Program (RMP) in Oregon. As the Administrator of the Oregon Hunger Task Force and a participant in the Restaurant Meal Program Task Force, I am deeply committed to the mission of addressing hunger in our state and ensuring that all Oregonians have access to nutritious and culturally appropriate meals.

The Restaurant Meal Program offers a unique opportunity to provide warm, ready-to-eat meals to individuals and families who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For many of these individuals, preparing meals can be difficult due to limited resources, mobility challenges, or the need to balance work and caregiving responsibilities. The RMP would address these challenges by offering the option of using SNAP benefits to purchase a hot meal from local restaurants, or grocery stores which in turn strengthens community partnerships and supports Oregon's business industry.

The benefits of the RMP are multifaceted. First and foremost, it directly improves the quality of life for SNAP participants, who will have access to hot, nutritious meals at a time when many are struggling with food insecurity. Additionally, the program offers a clear return on investment for the state by stimulating the local economy, supporting small businesses, and creating new jobs within the hospitality industry. As Oregon continues to recover and rebuild in the wake of the pandemic and ongoing economic challenges, initiatives like the RMP are essential in strengthening both our social safety net and local economy.

As outlined in ORS [458.530](#), *"All persons have the right to be free from hunger,"* the RMP is a crucial step toward realizing that right for many of our most vulnerable neighbors. By ensuring that everyone—regardless of circumstances—can access healthy, nutritious food, we are making significant progress toward ending hunger in our state.

However, for the RMP to be successfully rolled out and effectively administered, it is clear that the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) will need adequate staffing. Based on my

involvement in the RMP Task Force and lessons learned from other states with similar programs, it is my strong recommendation that DHS be allocated at least 2 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff positions to oversee the program's operations. While more staff would certainly be beneficial—particularly given the complexity of restaurant partnerships, navigating the Federal Nutrition Services (FNS) hurdles, and managing community communications—a baseline of 2 FTEs will ensure that the program can function smoothly and serve the needs of both program participants and restaurant/business partners. California, for example, utilizes 4 FTEs to manage its RMP, and while Oregon's scale may differ, the complexity of coordinating a statewide program requires adequate staffing and resources.

I am confident that with thoughtful planning, adequate staffing, and strong community partnerships, Oregon can build a Restaurant Meal Program that not only addresses immediate food insecurity but also fosters long-term economic recovery and community resilience. The Oregon Hunger Task Force fully supports this initiative and stands ready to collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure its success.

Chris Baker
Administrator
Oregon Hunger Task Force



On behalf of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO), we are proud to submit this Letter of Support advocating for the implementation of a Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) in Oregon. This vital program has the potential to transform food access for families facing hunger across the state, addressing critical gaps in our food system while empowering local businesses to play a direct role in solving food insecurity.

Every day, we hear stories from families navigating impossible choices—whether to heat their homes or purchase a meal, or where to find food when traditional grocery access is out of reach. For seniors, individuals with disabilities, and unhoused community members, preparing meals isn’t always feasible. An RMP could provide life-changing access to warm, nutritious meals, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Nonprofits like ours are at capacity, working tirelessly to meet the growing need. Yet, we cannot keep up with the rising demand for food assistance alone. We need sustainable solutions, and an RMP is a forward-thinking strategy that benefits families and local economies alike. By enabling small businesses, particularly in rural Oregon, to participate in the program, we can generate income during their slower seasons—especially in winter, when demand for hot meals peaks. An RMP can be a job creator, not merely a benefit spender, ensuring more Oregonians thrive together.

This is an opportunity for Oregon to lead the way. Several states, including California and Arizona, have successfully implemented RMPs. Their success stories beg the question: Why not Oregon? As a state committed to innovation and equity, we can craft an RMP that reflects our unique needs while drawing from proven models.

For families in food deserts, a hot meal isn’t a luxury—it’s survival. A program like this wouldn’t just fill plates; it would fill hearts with dignity and hope.

We urge the legislature to support this transformative initiative, which addresses food deserts, strengthens small communities, and sets Oregon apart as a leader in food justice. Together, we can ensure every Oregonian has access to the meals they need to live healthy, dignified lives. Sincerely,

Sarah Weber-Ogden
Co-Executive Director
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

January 16, 2025

Re: Oregon Restaurant Meals Program

To whom it may concern,

My name is Gabby Valdes, and I am the Bilingual SNAP Program Coordinator at 211info. I am writing to express strong support for the implementation and expansion of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) in Oregon.

As a member of the RMP Task Force and someone who regularly hears from individuals facing food insecurity through 211info, I am committed to the RMP mission of ensuring access to nutritious and culturally appropriate meals for all Oregonians.

RMP provides a critical opportunity to address hunger by enabling SNAP participants to purchase hot, ready-to-eat meals. This program is especially valuable for individuals with limited resources, mobility challenges, or demanding caregiving and work responsibilities. It also strengthens community partnerships and supports Oregon's business industry by allowing local restaurants and grocery stores to participate.

By giving SNAP participants access to hot meals, RMP would directly improve their quality of life while stimulating the local economy, supporting small businesses, and creating jobs in the hospitality sector. As Oregon recovers from the pandemic and economic challenges, RMP also represents a meaningful investment in our social safety net and economic recovery.

To ensure the program's success, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) should allocate at least two Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff positions to oversee its operations. Based on my involvement in the taskforce and lessons learned from other states, such as California's use of four FTEs for RMP, even a baseline of two FTEs would allow Oregon to navigate restaurant partnerships, federal requirements, and community outreach effectively.

With proper planning, staffing, and partnerships, Oregon can implement an RMP that addresses food insecurity while fostering long-term economic recovery and community resilience. The Oregon Hunger Task Force supports this initiative and is ready to collaborate to ensure its success.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gabby Valdes

Gabby Valdes
Bilingual SNAP Program Coordinator
211info



Kathleen Mahoney, Attorney At Law 630 NE Killingworth St #11183

Portland, OR 97211 503-545-3067 kat@kmahoneylaw.com

January 29, 2025

My name is Kathleen Mahoney and I am an attorney in Portland, Oregon and the former Executive Director of Sisters of the Road. I am submitting this letter in full support of the implementation of the Restaurant Meal Program in Oregon. This initiative represents a crucial step forward in ensuring that everyone in our community, regardless of economic status, has access to nutritious and dignified meals in a welcoming environment. It aligns closely with the values of equity, inclusion, and community that are at the heart of the work done by organizations like Sisters of the Road.

Sisters of the Road championed that all people, no matter their circumstances, deserve respect, compassion, and to be treated with dignity. The focus on dignity and its dedication to address hunger and systemic change made a significant impact in demonstrating that not only is food a basic human right, but a right that connects us all. For those who rely on SNAP benefits, access to quality hot meals is transformative. This program would provide not only a source of nourishment but also chance to experience community and normalcy. Something that can often feel denied to those who struggle financially.

For the Restaurant Meal Program to be successful, it must be fully funded, fully staffed, and adequately managed and monitored. That means DHS should allocate at least two full-time staff positions and look ahead to expanding in the following fiscal year budgets. There must also be outreach and community partnerships to ensure it not only provides basic needs but also builds community and hope.

As a community member who has worked and connected with some of our most vulnerable neighbors, I fully support this initiative.


Kathleen Mahoney

January 29th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lauren Armony and I served as the Systemic Change Program Director at Sisters of the Road, and as a member of the RMP task force, until December 2024. I am submitting this letter to support the full implementation and expansion of the SNAP Restaurant Meal Program in Oregon.

Access to hot foods is a longstanding equity barrier to SNAP. Sisters of the Road serves some of our most vulnerable and marginalized residents in the Portland Metro area and was the first nonprofit restaurant to accept food stamps for hot foods. While working there, I witnessed the transformative power of dignity, nutrition, and community that purchasing food at a normal restaurant with SNAP can provide.

I also witnessed the limitations that poverty, homelessness, and affordable housing programs imposed on our community member's ability to access nourishing food. Most do not have the cooking equipment necessary to cook raw foods or have health problems that complicate cooking and/or eating raw foods. For many, their meal at Sisters was the only one they had that day.

Everyone deserves a seat at the table, with this in mind I urge you to support the thoughtful planning and full implementation of the RMP in Oregon. To accomplish this you must support adequate budget allocations, adequate staffing with at least two full FTE positions, consistent education and outreach to meet people where they are at, and exemplary support for the small businesses that want to participate.

This program will strengthen our communities, our local economies, and our social safety net. I fully support this program and the team bringing forth the legislative report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lauren Armony
Former Systemic Change Program Director at Sisters of the Road
B.S. Liberal Studies, "Food Justice," student at Oregon State University



January 29, 2025

Letter of Support for Oregon Restaurant Meal Program

My name is Jessica Morris, I am the Chief People and Strategy Officer at Meals on Wheels People and member of the Oregon Hunger Taskforce Steering Committee. I have worked in hunger relief for fifteen years and am deeply committed to ending hunger for all. I am writing to express my strong support for the implementation and expansion of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) in Oregon. This initiative is more than just a policy – it is a beacon of hope for those who struggle daily to access warm, nutritious meals.

Throughout my work with families and seniors, I have seen the stark reality of hunger and the barriers many individuals face in preparing their own meals. I have met elderly individuals who live alone, unable to stand long enough to cook, and parents who skip meals so their children can eat. RMPs can make a tangible difference in these lives, ensuring that those who need it most have access to fresh, nourishing food that provides both sustenance and dignity. Additionally, the opportunity to dine in a restaurant setting helps combat social isolation, particularly for seniors and individuals with disabilities who may otherwise eat alone. The ability to share a meal in a welcoming environment fosters community connections, improves mental well-being, and enhances overall quality of life.

Our organization has been piloting a similar program for seniors. We have partnered with local restaurants in rural and urban communities to offer more choice and access to those we serve. We work tirelessly to combat food insecurity and social isolation for seniors and people with disabilities, but we simply cannot fill the gap alone. We face limitations in funding, volunteer availability, and the ability to serve every individual in need. The RMP will provide a vital supplement to these efforts, ensuring that people facing the most severe barriers to nutrition have a reliable source of hot, prepared meals.

This program is not just about feeding people—it is about restoring hope, dignity, and strength to those who need it most. For many, a warm meal at a restaurant is not a luxury but a necessity due to physical limitations, lack of kitchen facilities, or overwhelming financial struggles. By allowing authorized restaurants to accept SNAP benefits, we can provide an essential service that fosters community, health, and stability.

Additionally, RMPs have the power to uplift our local economy, supporting restaurants and food service workers who continue to rebuild from the challenges of recent years. By

Jessica Morris

including local eateries in the program, we foster a spirit of communal support, ensuring that everyone—regardless of their circumstances—has a seat at the table.

I urge you to champion this initiative and bring it to Oregon to help ensure no person in Oregon goes hungry. Sincerely,

Jessica Morris
Chief People & Strategy Officer
Meals on Wheels People



567 Walker Ave
Ashland, OR 97520

INFO@ROGUEFOODUNITES.ORG

January 29, 2025

Re: Oregon Restaurant Meals Program

To whom it may concern,

My name is Amber Ferguson, and I am the Executive Director and CEO at Rogue Food Unites. I am writing to express strong support for the implementation and expansion of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) in Oregon.

As a member of the RMP Task Force and someone who regularly hears from individuals facing food insecurity through our community programs, I am committed to the RMP mission of ensuring access to nutritious and culturally appropriate meals for all Oregonians.

RMP provides a critical opportunity to address hunger by enabling SNAP participants to purchase hot, ready to-eat meals. This program is especially valuable for individuals with limited resources, mobility challenges, or demanding caregiving and work responsibilities. It also strengthens community partnerships and supports Oregon's business industry by allowing local restaurants and grocery stores to participate.

By giving SNAP participants access to hot meals, RMP would directly improve their quality of life while stimulating the local economy, supporting small businesses, and creating jobs in the hospitality sector. As Oregon recovers from the pandemic, fire recovery, and economic challenges, RMP also represents a meaningful investment in our social safety net and economic recovery.

To ensure the program's success, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) should allocate at least two Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff positions to oversee its operations. Based on my involvement on this Task Force and lessons learned from other states, even a baseline of two FTEs would allow Oregon to navigate restaurant partnerships, federal requirements, and community outreach effectively.

With proper planning, staffing, and partnerships, Oregon can implement an RMP that addresses food insecurity while fostering long-term economic recovery and community resilience.

The Oregon Hunger Task Force supports this initiative and is ready to collaborate to ensure its success.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AF' or 'Amber Ferguson'.

Amber Ferguson
Executive Director

Rogue Food Unites is a tax-exempt 501 c 3 organization per IRS guidelines, EIN #85-3168023.
No goods or services were provided by Rogue Food Unites in exchange for this contribution.

