

FOOD-RELATED INITIATIVES

NYC Council Discretionary Investments in FY 2020 and 2021

Food and Nutrition Are Key Elements of Resiliency that New York City Can't Afford to Neglect

COVID-19 has exacerbated food inequities, highlighting how dangerous diet-related diseases can be. New Yorkers with obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are more vulnerable to coronavirus,¹ meaning that healthy eating should be a top priority.² However, for millions of New Yorkers, healthy eating is now a lot harder. One in four NYC residents are at risk of going hungry,³ and experts predict that school closures “may exacerbate the epidemic of childhood obesity and increase disparities in obesity risk.”⁴

Food and nutrition are key elements of resiliency that New York City can't afford to neglect. The current crisis presents an opportunity to ramp up resiliency efforts like those that [Food Ed Coalition members](#) are providing. Food Ed Coalition members are serving NYC's most vulnerable populations by cooking meals, supplying groceries, adapting food education and insecurity services, and providing resources on food benefits. Many of these organizations are experiencing significant financial losses, with some expecting to lose more than \$1 million.⁵ Government funding is a key safety net for food education organizations.

NYC Council Discretionary Funds Support a Range of Food-Related Initiatives

Each year, the City Council fills gaps in City agency services and local projects through the discretionary budget, also known as Schedule C. Awards from this budget support non-profit services, including many initiatives that Food Ed Coalition partners operate. This policy brief highlights NYC Council discretionary funding for food-related initiatives for fiscal years (FYs) 2020 and 2021 *at the time of Schedule C adoption*. Given the challenging budget process in FY 2021, the Council has since designated additional money through subsequent transparency resolutions.

To determine discretionary funding for food-related initiatives, we searched through Schedule C for FYs

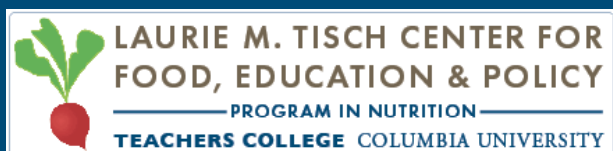
2020⁶ and 2021.⁷ We noted when an award supported one or more of the following types of initiatives: emergency food, food benefits/farm boxes, nutrition education, medically-tailored meals, senior meals, farmers markets, and urban farms/community gardens. Many awards supported more than one type of initiative, but did not list how funds would be divided among initiatives. For these awards, we listed the total dollar value under each type. For example, if a council member awarded \$10,000 for emergency food and nutrition education initiatives, we noted \$10,000 for both initiative types. This means that adding the funding listed for each initiative results in an amount greater than the total funding for food-related initiatives.

Discretionary Funding for Food Initiatives Decreased from FY 2020 to FY 2021

In FY 2021, awards that included senior meals received the most discretionary funding (\$5,087,620), while awards that included medically-tailored meals received the least (\$337,500). In contrast, in FY 2020, awards that included emergency food initiatives received the most discretionary dollars (\$9,761,306), while awards that included medically-tailored meals still received the least (\$234,500).

Members of the Food Ed Coalition saw a 23% reduction in total funding from \$3.06 million in FY 2020 to \$2.37 million in FY 2021. Notably, funding for the Food Ed Hub was reduced from \$250,000 to \$5,000 despite [advocacy from food ed organizations](#) across the city.

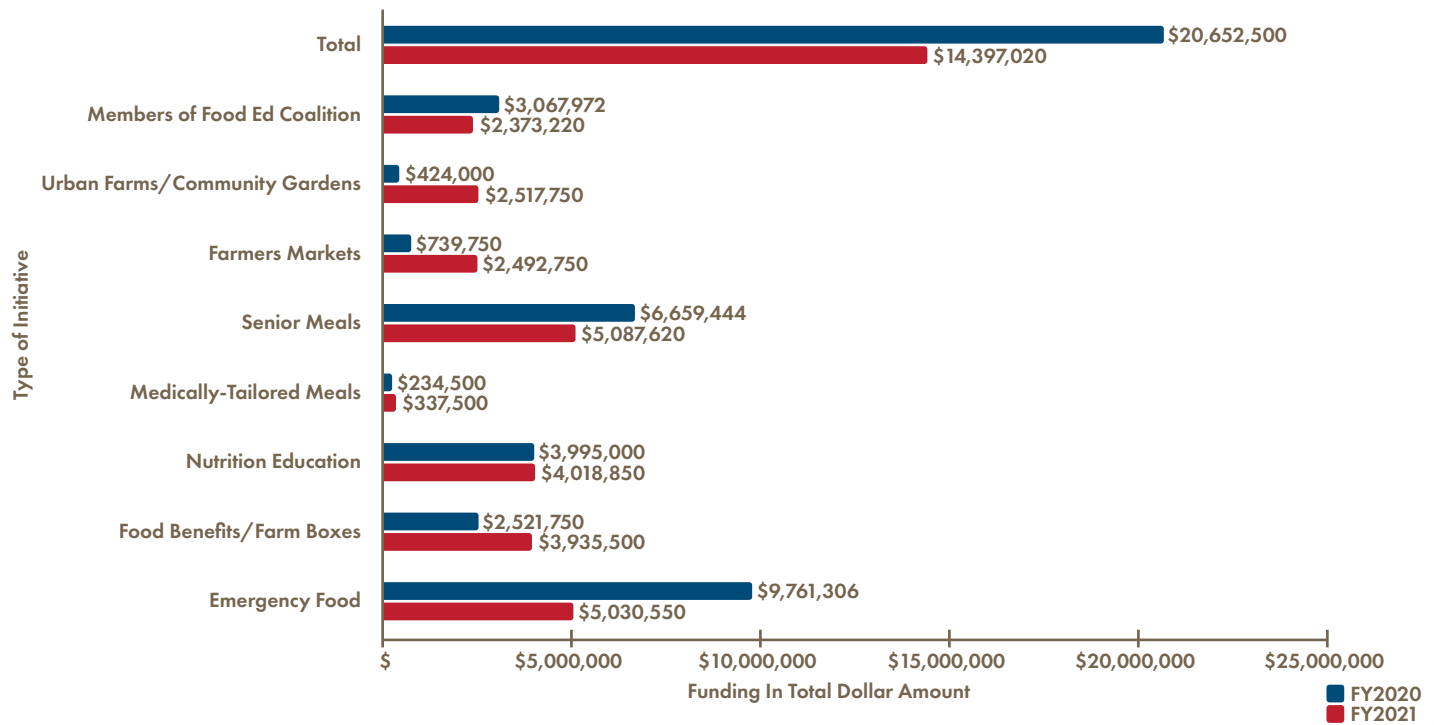
The largest drop in funding between FY 2020 and FY 2021 was for awards that included emergency food initiatives (48% decrease), which seems strange in the context of COVID-19. However, *it is important to mention that emergency food initiatives received additional funding through [Feeding New York](#), the city's \$170 million emergency food plan for the COVID-19 crisis, and potentially through subsequent transparency resolutions.*



The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, in the Program in Nutrition conducts research on food and nutrition education practice and policy. We translate our research into resources for educators, policy makers, and advocates to give people power to demand healthy, just, sustainable food. Our vision is transforming the status quo through food and nutrition education.

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Funding in Total Dollar Amount by Type of Initiative for FY2020 and FY2021



Median Funding per Award Increased for Related Initiatives Except Emergency Food and Nutrition Education

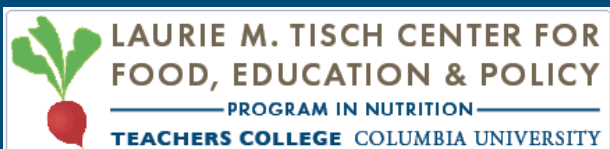
In FY 2021, median funding was greatest for awards that supported farmers markets, with a value of \$32,500 per award. This means that half of awards supporting farmers markets were less than or equal to \$32,500, while the other half were greater than or equal to \$32,500. Awards that included farmers markets also saw the largest increase in funding (306%), which may reflect a greater focus on fresh food access during COVID-19.

Notably, median funding for awards that included nutrition education was \$10,000 in both FY 2020 and FY 2021. The average award for Food Ed Coalition members, who had the advantage of multiple Food Ed Hub funding and advocacy trainings in FY 2020, rose by 30% from \$5,000 in FY 2020 to \$6,500 in FY 2021.

Cornegy and Koslowitz Were Among the Top Five in Funding in 2020 and 2021

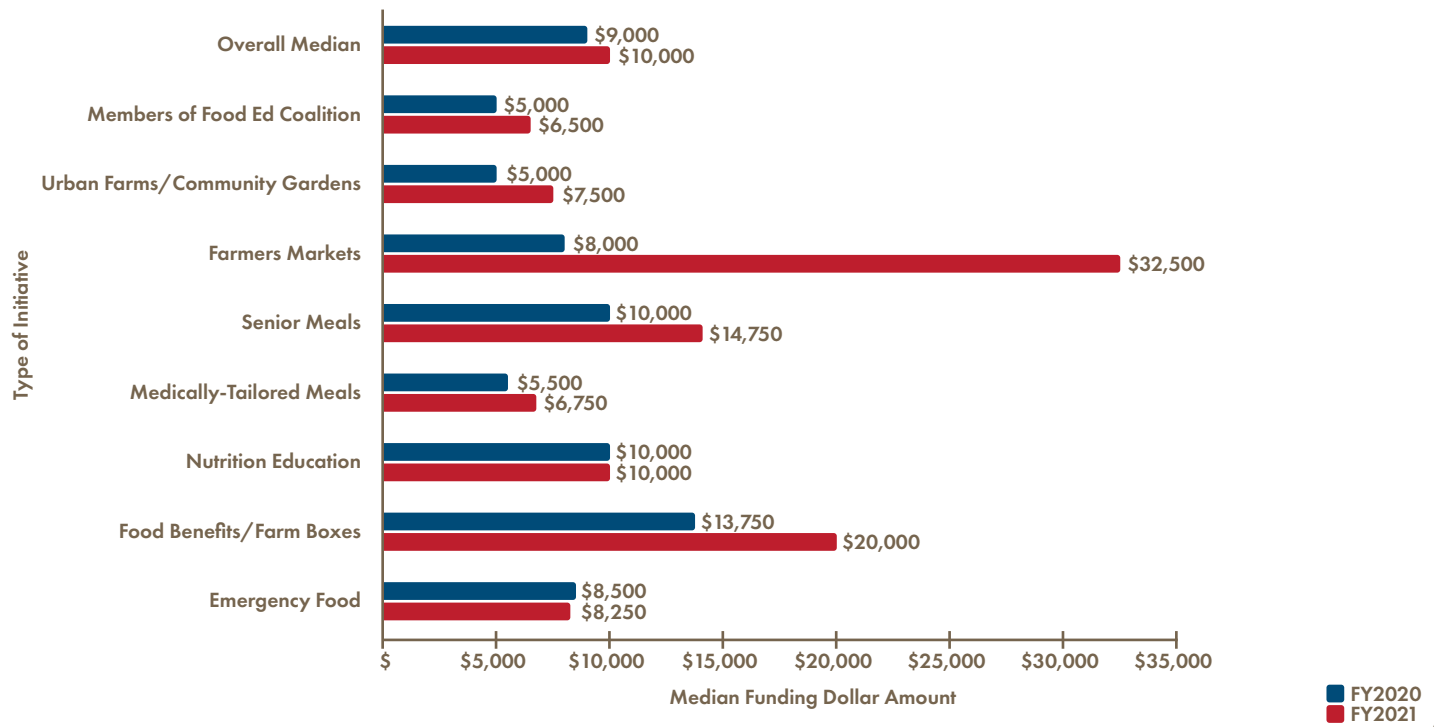
We also searched through Schedule C to determine how much money each council member awarded food-related initiatives. We did not include funds that involved more than one council member in this analysis. Council-wide initiatives and those funded by the Speaker were also excluded.

The five councilmembers who approved the most funds for food-related initiatives in 2021 were Deutsch (\$200,000), Koslowitz (\$199,500), Lander (\$188,000), Cornegy (\$153,500), and Torres (\$152,000). In 2020, the top five consisted of Adams (\$211,000), Cornegy (\$210,000), Koslowitz (\$195,500), Lancman (\$195,000), and Levin (\$143,500). Koslowitz represents neighborhoods in Queens and Cornegy neighborhoods in Brooklyn where food insecurity is prevalent.⁸



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Median Funding in Dollar Amount by Type of Initiative for FY2020 and FY2021

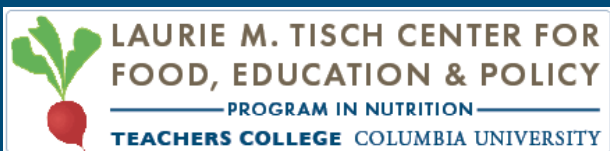


We Need More Research to Ensure All NYC Residents Have Healthy, Just, Sustainable Food

The findings presented in this policy brief show a decrease in total funding for food-related initiatives from FY 2020 to FY 2021. For all initiatives except emergency food and nutrition education, median discretionary funding increased, meaning the Council gave out fewer, but slightly larger discretionary awards. More research is needed to understand why this is the case. Research is also needed to identify where funding is most needed. Councilmembers’ support for food initiatives varies; additional research could evaluate whether award patterns match needs. Councilmembers’ funding should help ensure that all NYC residents have the opportunity to enjoy healthy, just, sustainable food.

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