Spotlight: Reimagining Funding for Healthy Eating and Active Living in Los Angeles County

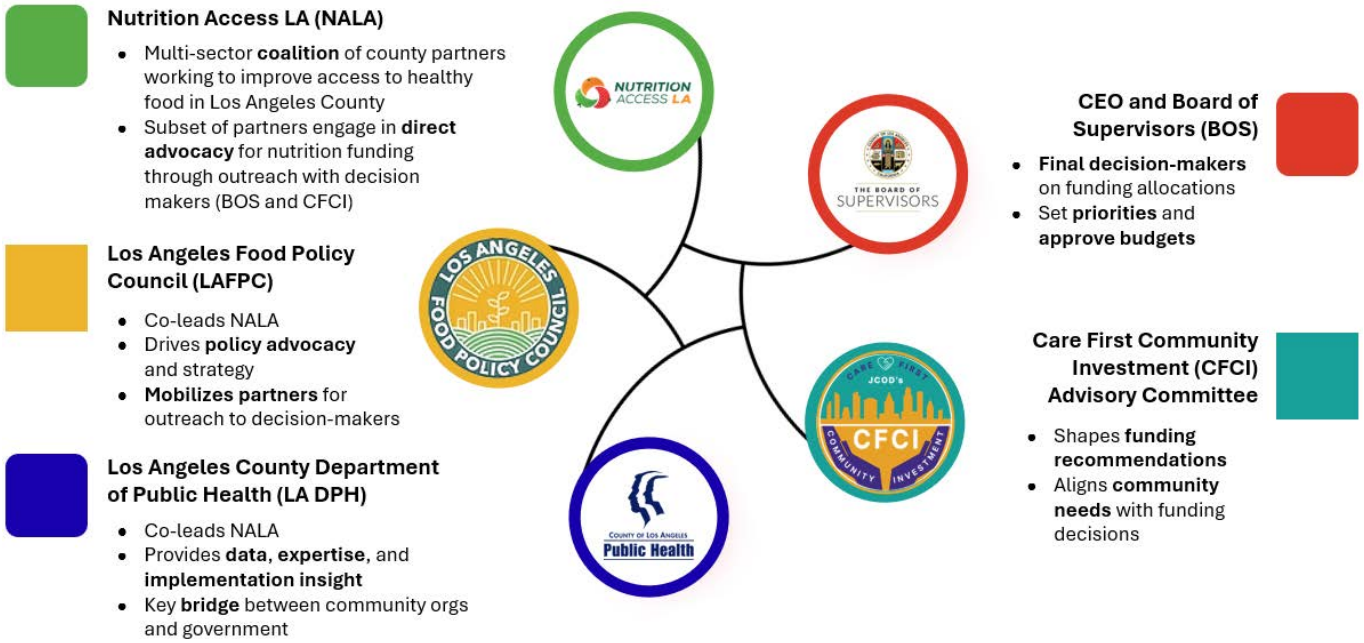
Background

Nutrition Access LA (NALA), the County Nutrition Action Partnership of LA County, is a cross-sector coalition that brings together governmental agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), school districts, advocacy groups, and others to improve access to nutritious and affordable food. Co-chaired by the LA County Department of Public Health (LA DPH) and the LA Food Policy Council (LAFPC), NALA serves as a central coordinating body for advancing equitable food access across LA county. This resource summarizes how LA DPH and LAFPC engaged NALA members to secure local funding following cuts to federal SNAP-Ed funding. New funding helped sustain critical food access and nutrition programs for high-need and justice-impacted communities throughout LA County.

Mobilizing Community Partners to Secure Local Investment

Following historic cuts to SNAP-Ed in 2025, LA DPH's Nutrition and Physical Activity Program had to identify new funding streams to sustain its core programming and its network of 18 SNAP-Ed funded partners. To accomplish this, LA DPH and LAFPC partnered to engage NALA members (many of whom were SNAP-Ed funded partners) in conducting coordinated outreach to elected officials and local leaders about the importance of addressing food and nutrition security in LA County. These partners played a critical role by bringing on-the-ground perspectives to decision makers. Through compelling testimonies and participant stories, they demonstrated how nutrition education and food access initiatives improved health, food security, and overall well-being in their communities. See Figure 1 for an overview of the organizations involved.

Figure 1. Securing Nutrition Funding: Driving Partners and Decision-Makers



The joint effort between LA DPH, LAFPC, and NALA members demonstrated how government and community organizations can work together to accomplish shared goals, including:

Securing new funding. LA DPH, LAFPC, and NALA members secured $9 million to continue healthy food access programs through June 30, 2027. Funding came from the Care First Community Investment (CFCI), which was established through Measure J, a voter-approved measure that dedicates a portion of LA County's unrestricted funding to community-based services and alternatives to incarceration. An Advisory Committee of community representatives, individuals with lived experience, county department leaders, and labor representatives provides guidance and recommendations on the use of CFCI funds. Final CFCI funding allocations are determined by the LA County Board of Supervisors (BOS).

Highlighting nutrition as a community priority. LAFPC and NALA members made their work more visible by engaging the BOS and other county leadership and helping them understand the importance of nutrition access to goals they already championed. In addition to awarding CFCI funding, the BOS also passed several motions to streamline enrollment into nutrition benefits programs such as CalFresh and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program and to increase public awareness of these programs.

Challenges Navigating a New Funding Landscape

When SNAP-Ed funding was eliminated, LA DPH had to rapidly assess the local funding landscape and develop a new strategy to sustain critical nutrition programming. SNAP-Ed had previously offered a high degree of predictability in funding levels and program priorities. In contrast, pursuing new funding introduced significant uncertainty, complexity, and challenges that other coalitions may also experience when trying to secure new funding. These included:

Lack of predictability. LAFPC submitted a proposal for $10 million in June 2025. Over the following six months, available funding fluctuated substantially, ranging from $50 million to $245 million. During this same period, the CFCI Advisory Committee's recommended award for the proposal shifted multiple times from $1.9 million to $10 million before ultimately being finalized at $9 million. These fluctuations made it difficult for LA DPH and LAFPC to assess how much of the lost SNAP-Ed funding could realistically be replaced by CFCI funds, and how aggressively to pursue other funding sources. See the Appendix for a detailed timeline of the application process and related outreach efforts of LA DPH, LAFPC, and NALA members.

Competition and new audiences. Entering a competitive funding environment also required LA DPH and LAFPC to position nutrition programming in ways that resonated with new and unfamiliar decision makers. Early in the process, nutrition-focused proposals did not advance, as they were not initially seen as relevant to justice-impacted populations. Shifting this perception required sustained advocacy from community partners. NALA members played a critical role by submitting public comments, elevating data on food insecurity, and sharing compelling stories from people with lived experience to demonstrate the relevance and impact of nutrition programs.

Keys to Success

The success of LA DPH, LAFPC, and NALA members reflects a set of deliberate strategies used to secure funding and generate broad-based support for improving access to nutritious and affordable food:

Maintaining a strong foundation. NALA's Policy Advocacy Subcommittee tracks federal, state, and local legislation related to food and nutrition. In anticipation of federal funding cuts in 2025, this group proactively developed a strategy to identify alternative funding sources. The subcommittee met monthly and stayed in regular communication, which enabled them to respond quickly when new funding opportunities arose.

Key resource: Strategic Communications

See the *Strategic Communication for Coalitions* resource for guidance on creating compelling stories for potential funders and strategic partners.

Aligning goals with audiences. In their CFCI funding application, LAFPC highlighted how LA DPH's produce distribution program aligned with CFCI funding goals. This included highlighting services provided to CFCI priority communities and articulating the impact of healthy food access on broader community outcomes. As LA DPH, LAFPC, and NALA members continue to pursue new funding, the coalition has strengthened its ability to position nutrition as interconnected with other key priorities, such as reducing food waste and supporting individuals experiencing homelessness.

Using clear, compelling, and consistent communications. LA DPH and LAFPC used data-driven and community-informed messaging to convey both the value of nutrition programming and the risks of underinvestment. LAFPC and LA DPH equipped NALA members with practical tools, including program summaries, talking points, communication templates, and guidance on writing public comments, to promote consistent and coordinated outreach to decision-makers. The coalition also adapted its strategy to leverage timely events. For example, during the finalization of the CFCI spending plan, a federal government shutdown disrupted SNAP benefits. NALA members highlighted this disruption to underscore the risks of relying solely on federal funding and the need for sustained local investment. These efforts contributed to the LA County Board of Supervisors allocating $10 million to the LA Regional Food Bank to help address resulting gaps.

Key resource: Sample Communications

LAFPC developed an outreach toolkit that included data and reports in multiple formats including one-pagers, slides, and talking points to highlight the need for food and nutrition programs and their impact.

Leveraging each coalition member's strengths. Each NALA member organization brought unique capabilities and limitations to its role. As a government entity, LA DPH was restricted from engaging in direct advocacy with the LA County Board of Supervisors, but provided essential data and institutional expertise to inform messaging and strategy. As a non-profit organization, LAFPC was able to engage policymakers directly, advocate for specific funding requests and maintain a visible presence in community settings. Together, these coordinated efforts strengthened the coalition's overall effectiveness and impact.

Acknowledgments

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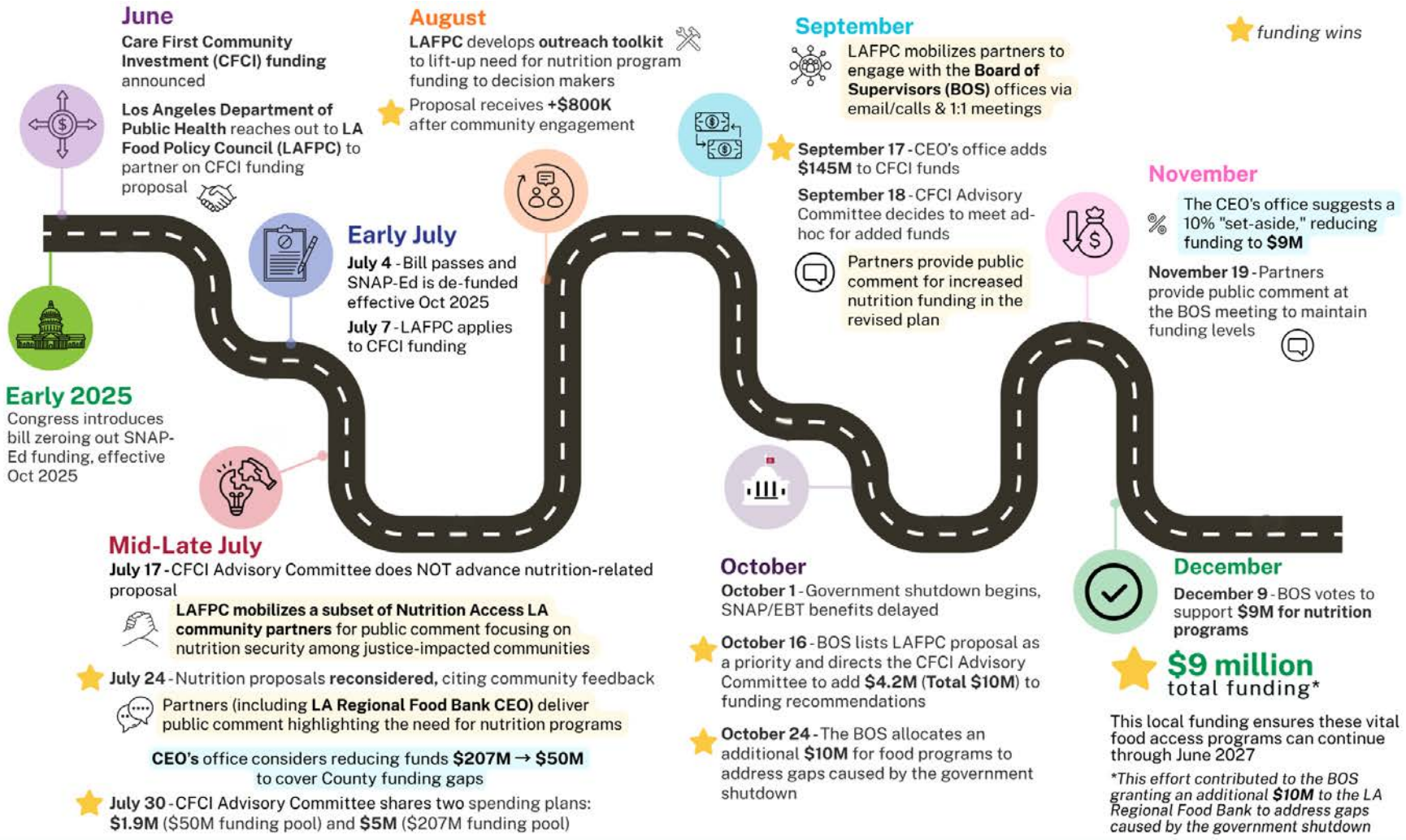
Appendix: Community Engagement Efforts and Campaign Timeline to Secure Local Investment in LA County Food Access Programs