



USC Public Exchange

Building New Solutions to Complex Health and Wellbeing Challenges—from Homelessness and Food Insecurity to Women’s Health Outcomes

Connecting researchers with problem solvers to build a better future

USC Dornsife Public Exchange (PX) fast-tracks collaboration between USC researchers and the public and private sectors to define, analyze and solve complex problems facing people and the planet.

Last year, your support enabled PX to make foundational investments in three projects to amplify the impact of our new [Health & Wellbeing Practice](#):

1. Preventing Homelessness with the Arizona Self-Storage Industry
2. Addressing the Impact of Unequal Household Labor on Women’s Health Outcomes
3. Providing Food Assistance to Food Insecure Families with LA County and Local Non-Profits

USC Dornsife and the Public Exchange team thank you for your ongoing generosity. Please read on to learn about the impact of your gift over the past year.

Your Impact by the Numbers

1 million food insecure households in LA County

3 LA County “Food is Medicine” and healthy food access programs being evaluated and improved by PX

10 self-storage facilities in greater Phoenix partnering with PX to prevent homelessness

23% rise in homelessness in Phoenix, AZ between 2020 and 2022

72% women in a PX study reporting higher levels of burnout, stress, depression and chronic pain when they manage all household planning

\$1.1 trillion U.S. healthcare bill for diet-related diseases—equal to the total the country spends on food itself

\$250,000 in funds from from **your gift** that supported Public Exchange projects in 2023

\$2,125,000 in external funding from partners and funders to support these three projects

160,000 LA County residents PX will help enroll in food benefits

88 participants in a PX study testing the Fair Play method to better manage the household labor burden

Preventing Homelessness with the Arizona Self-Storage Industry

Public Exchange is spearheading a partnership with the Arizona self-storage industry to run a pilot project that connects customers on the brink of becoming unhoused with vital resources.

The partnership is PX's first project in homelessness prevention and may serve as a launch pad for more work in this area.

The Challenge: Homelessness Crisis in Arizona

Between 2020 and 2022, homelessness in Arizona reached crisis levels, increasing 23% and leaving more than 13,000 Arizonans unhoused. In cities across the U.S., rising costs of living, a lack of affordable housing options and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to sharp increases in unhoused populations.

According to project lead **Dr. Jason Doctor** of the USC Price School of Public Policy, only a small number of people with mental health and financial struggles actually make their way to professional help. This emphasizes the importance of making it easy to access sources of support for community members.



An Unconventional Touchpoint

Storage facilities offer an unconventional touchpoint for interventions that could help keep people housed.

People facing housing uncertainty often use self-storage facilities to store their belongings when downsizing or moving, or even as shelter in some cases.

A recent survey conducted by USC found that self-storage facility employees estimate **10% of their customers are at risk of losing their housing**, with **82% of employees saying they have few resources** to help these customers.

Introducing needed resources that employees can make available in the normal course of their work is a fresh idea with potential to scale—but the concept needs to be tested and optimized to help as many people as possible.



The Solution: A New Intervention at Self-Storage Facilities

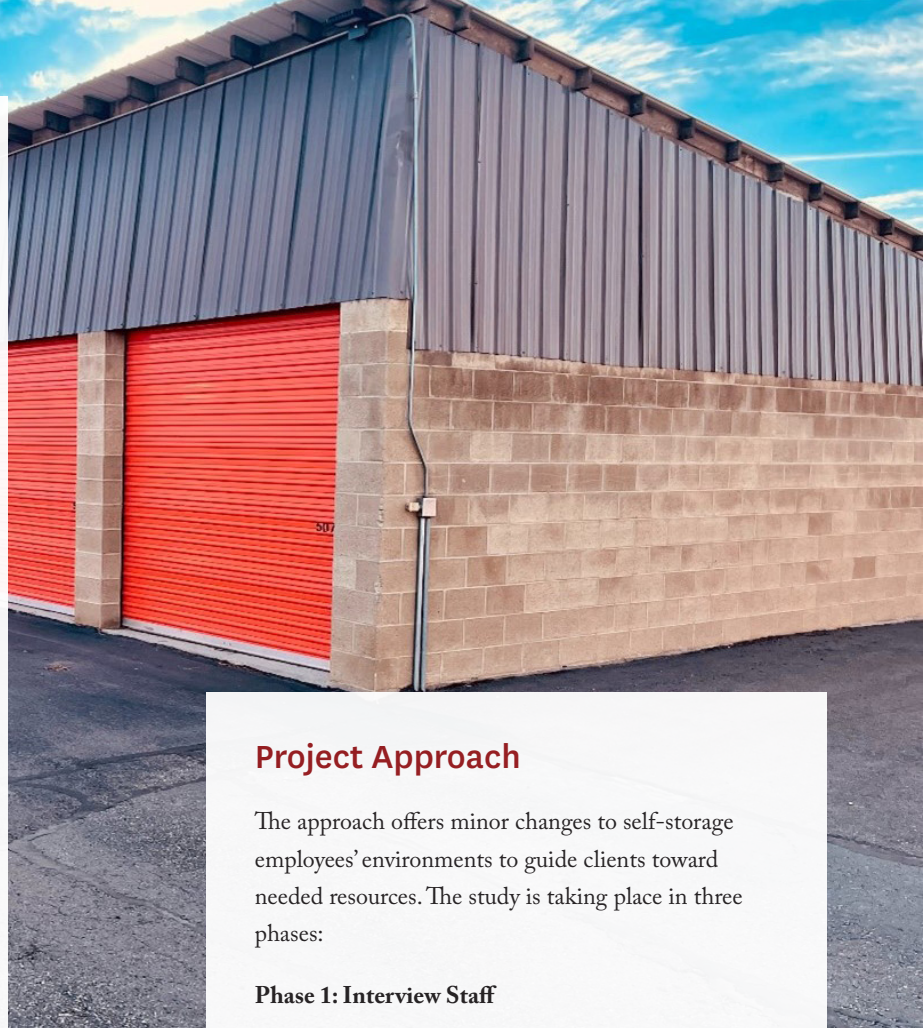
Led by USC faculty with expertise in health, behavioral science and psychology, this project will create and test interventions that support self-storage facilities and staff, while also connecting Arizona residents with needed resources.

The Public Exchange-led study partners with the [Arizona Self-Storage Association \(AZSA\)](#), [Arizona State University's \(ASU\) Action Nexus on Housing and Homelessness](#), and a team of researchers from [USC Price School of Public Policy](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work](#) and [USC Viterbi Institute for Creative Technologies](#).

USC's expertise in developing effective, low-lift interventions is coupled in this collaboration with ASU's extensive grassroots knowledge of the local landscape of resource providers and AZSA members' unusually high levels of engagement with customers in need of these services.

"By providing resources and support, we are not only helping individuals in the self-storage industry, but also tenants who may be experiencing challenging life transitions. This partnership is a testament to our commitment to making a positive impact in communities across the state."

—Amy Amideo, Executive Director, Arizona Self-Storage Association



Project Approach

The approach offers minor changes to self-storage employees' environments to guide clients toward needed resources. The study is taking place in three phases:

Phase 1: Interview Staff

Researchers interviewed storage facility staff in parts of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area with high numbers of at-risk residents (Central Phoenix, Tempe, Scottsdale, and East Mesa) to determine the most effective and appropriate ways to identify customers who may need help and to deploy resources.

Phase 2: Test Intervention Strategies

Researchers are currently testing the intervention in 10 self-storage facilities, directing at-risk individuals to a list of resource providers curated by ASU's Action Nexus on Housing and Homelessness.

Phase 3: Gather Feedback for Future Models

Researchers will analyze staff feedback on the experience, count the number of provider connections, and use other relevant data to create a publicly available report and recommendations for AZSA leadership and other stakeholders.

Given the scale, reach, and interconnectedness of the self-storage industry in Arizona and nationwide, this pilot could serve as a model for interventions in cities throughout the U.S. struggling to address this critical challenge.



Addressing the Impact of Unequal Household Labor on Women's Health Outcomes

Public Exchange is nearing the end of a partnership focused on quantifying the impact of unequal division of household labor on women's health outcomes and testing a solution designed to address this problem.

The Challenge: Unequal Burden of Household Labor & Poorer Health Outcomes for Women

The division of household labor is an important but often overlooked driver of global gender inequality. There is evidence that **women carry a disproportionate burden of domestic tasks**, and that this burden may be linked with their health and wellbeing.

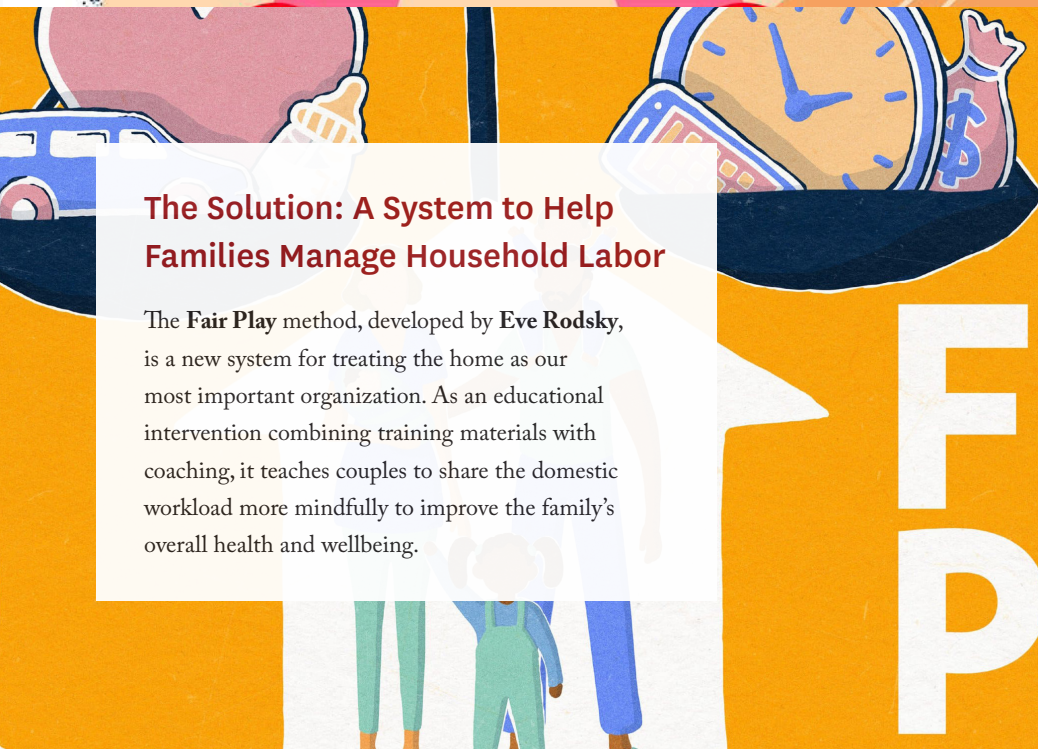
In particular, the dimension of **cognitive household labor**—planning tasks, anticipating needs, and delegating responsibilities—tends to fall particularly frequently to women. Cognitive household labor, also called the **“mental load”** of home management, can be draining and distracting, and often goes unrecognized and undervalued.



The Solution: A System to Help Families Manage Household Labor

The **Fair Play** method, developed by **Eve Rodsky**, is a new system for treating the home as our most important organization. As an educational intervention combining training materials with coaching, it teaches couples to share the domestic workload more mindfully to improve the family's overall health and wellbeing.

FAIR PLAY



Project Approach

PX utilized the FairPlay method as part of a two-phase project.

Phase 1 sought to quantify the division of labor in households and to test associations between domestic workload and wellbeing through a baseline survey with over 350 parents of preschoolers. The study also took cortisol measurements from a select group of participants—cortisol levels have been proven to have a direct correlation with stress levels. The study is only the second ever to be completed in this domain.

Phase 2 delivered the Fair Play method as an intervention to test its efficacy in helping families achieve a more equal burden of labor in the home. After participants completed the intervention, PX conducted a follow-up survey and collected cortisol measurements to measure against data collected in Phase 1.

Findings to Date

Phase 1 of the project demonstrated that a majority of mothers not only consistently **hold more household responsibilities** than their partners, but that these mothers report:

- higher **depression** and overall worse mental health
- greater personal **burnout**
- greater likelihood of **chronic pain**
- worse **relationship satisfaction**

Mothers who carried a greater mental load for household tasks showed the same negative outcomes, plus:

- higher perceived **stress**
- a greater number of **mental health conditions**
- greater use of **alcohol and cannabis** use to relieve stress

Data from Phase 2 is currently being analyzed to determine any changes in wellbeing compared to baseline data from Phase 1. Findings from the full study are expected in Summer 2024.

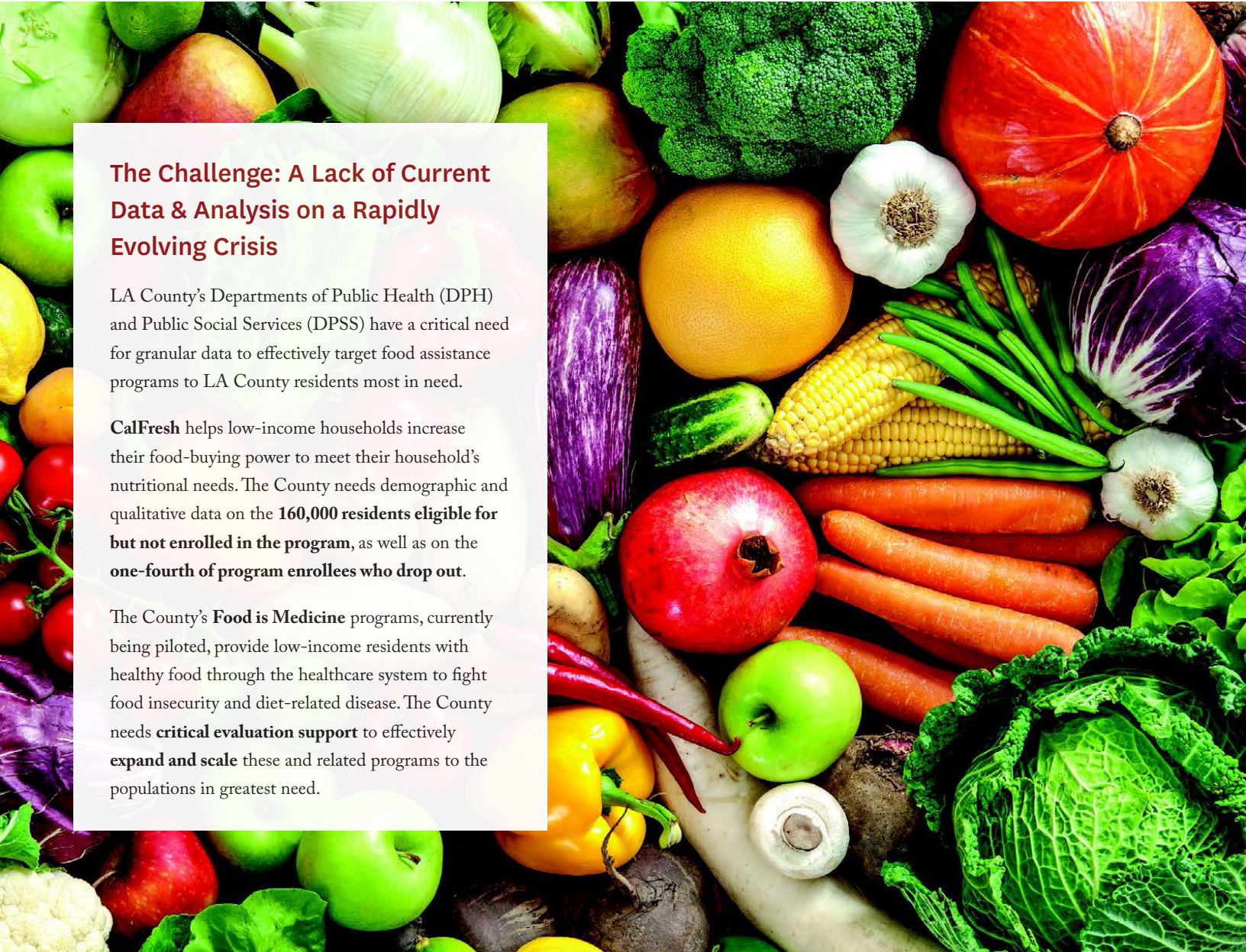


Providing Food Assistance to Food Insecure Families with LA County and Local Non-Profits

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Public Exchange has led a critical collaboration with **Los Angeles County** to address food and nutrition insecurity among its 10M residents. As of July 2023, **30% of LA County residents** and **44% of low-income residents were food insecure**.

Public Exchange has provided some of the only current data available on this crisis, which the County has used to provide people with the help they need. The team has led unique efforts from monitoring County-wide food insecurity levels to building a data dashboard of the LA County food system.

In 2023, your gift helped PX invest staff time in strategic planning and partnership development to design a new **food insecurity technical assistance hub** to expand its efforts and help a wider number of organizations and residents.

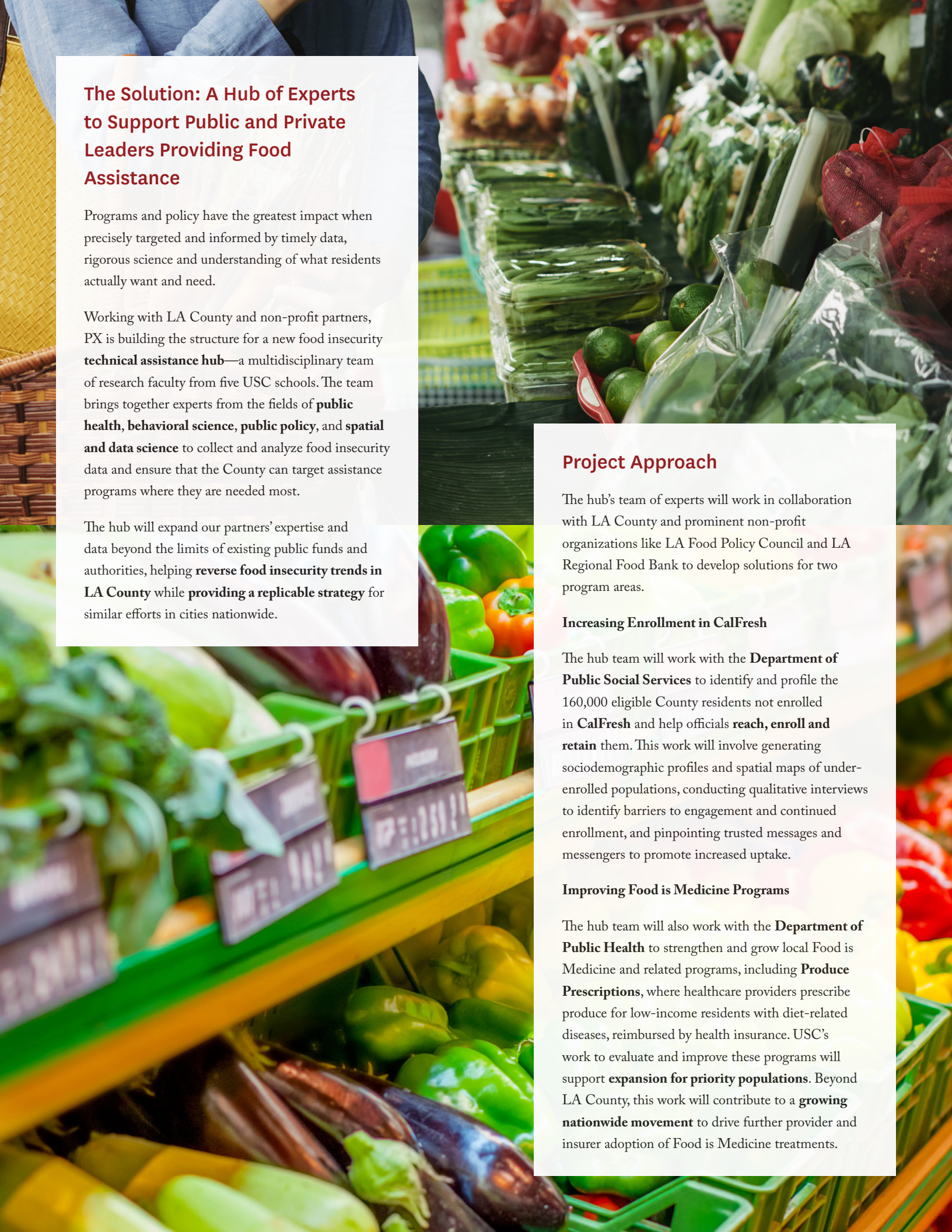


The Challenge: A Lack of Current Data & Analysis on a Rapidly Evolving Crisis

LA County's Departments of Public Health (DPH) and Public Social Services (DPSS) have a critical need for granular data to effectively target food assistance programs to LA County residents most in need.

CalFresh helps low-income households increase their food-buying power to meet their household's nutritional needs. The County needs demographic and qualitative data on the **160,000 residents eligible for but not enrolled in the program**, as well as on the **one-fourth of program enrollees who drop out**.

The County's **Food is Medicine** programs, currently being piloted, provide low-income residents with healthy food through the healthcare system to fight food insecurity and diet-related disease. The County needs **critical evaluation support** to effectively **expand and scale** these and related programs to the populations in greatest need.



The Solution: A Hub of Experts to Support Public and Private Leaders Providing Food Assistance

Programs and policy have the greatest impact when precisely targeted and informed by timely data, rigorous science and understanding of what residents actually want and need.

Working with LA County and non-profit partners, PX is building the structure for a new food insecurity **technical assistance hub**—a multidisciplinary team of research faculty from five USC schools. The team brings together experts from the fields of **public health, behavioral science, public policy, and spatial and data science** to collect and analyze food insecurity data and ensure that the County can target assistance programs where they are needed most.

The hub will expand our partners' expertise and data beyond the limits of existing public funds and authorities, helping **reverse food insecurity trends in LA County** while **providing a replicable strategy** for similar efforts in cities nationwide.

Project Approach

The hub's team of experts will work in collaboration with LA County and prominent non-profit organizations like LA Food Policy Council and LA Regional Food Bank to develop solutions for two program areas.

Increasing Enrollment in CalFresh

The hub team will work with the **Department of Public Social Services** to identify and profile the 160,000 eligible County residents not enrolled in CalFresh and help officials **reach, enroll and retain** them. This work will involve generating sociodemographic profiles and spatial maps of under-enrolled populations, conducting qualitative interviews to identify barriers to engagement and continued enrollment, and pinpointing trusted messages and messengers to promote increased uptake.

Improving Food is Medicine Programs

The hub team will also work with the **Department of Public Health** to strengthen and grow local Food is Medicine and related programs, including **Produce Prescriptions**, where healthcare providers prescribe produce for low-income residents with diet-related diseases, reimbursed by health insurance. USC's work to evaluate and improve these programs will support **expansion for priority populations**. Beyond LA County, this work will contribute to a **growing nationwide movement** to drive further provider and insurer adoption of Food is Medicine treatments.

Unprecedented access to academic expertise






```
mirror_mod.use_x = false
mirror_mod.use_y = True
mirror_mod.use_z = False
elif_operation == "MIRROR_Z":
    mirror_mod.use_x = False
    mirror_mod.use_y = False
    mirror_mod.use_z = True

#selection at the end -add back the deselected mirror modifiers
mirror_ob.select= 1
modifier_ob.select=1
hwy context scope objects active modifiers
```

The Bigger Picture at Public Exchange

In 2023, Public Exchange saw its greatest period of expansion to date. In the three years since it launched, Public Exchange’s staff has increased from three to 14, and PX faculty teams now represent **nine USC schools** and **seven universities**. The initiative’s project impact continues to grow, with research in diverse areas across the globe.

Research Impact Across the Globe

 <p>Testing novel interventions that address the unequal division of household labor on health outcomes.</p>	 <p>Informing a roadmap to scale 4000 miles of solar-over-canal in CA.</p>	 <p>Improving tools to combat the spread of child sex abuse materials online.</p>
 <p>Creating standard operating procedures for clinician wellbeing programs in U.S. health systems.</p>	 <p>Guiding the planting of 700 shade trees (and counting) in underserved areas of Los Angeles.</p>	 <p>Developing a more accurate method for the U.S. government to track food insecurity rates.</p>

Most significantly, year Public Exchange launched two dedicated practices in 2023 to support areas of urgent global need: Climate & Sustainability and Health & Wellbeing.

Health & Wellbeing Practice

USC Dornsife is home to faculty who are tackling some of the most pressing issues in human health.

Public Exchange's Health & Wellbeing practice connects USC experts with partners across the public and private sector to understand and explore the impact that environmental and social factors have on human health.

The new practice is led by **Sujeet Rao**.



Sujeet Rao is PX's Health and Wellbeing Practice Director. He has more than a decade of leadership and entrepreneurial experience in government innovation, R&D and health and education policy. Sujeet recently served in the Biden Administration as Senior Policy Advisor on the White House COVID-19 Response Team, coordinating various federal emergency response efforts to the pandemic in areas ranging from therapeutics to managing COVID surges. Sujeet previously was Chief Operating Officer of Elucid, a Y-Combinator-backed govtech startup that was acquired in 2021, and served as Deputy Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Education during the Obama Administration. Sujeet is a graduate of the University of Michigan and Yale Law School.

Climate & Sustainability Practice

The clean technology and sustainability market is booming; it's expected to more than triple in size over the next seven years.

To meet the growing demand for research related to climate resilience and "green" initiatives, Public Exchange's climate and sustainability practice provides expert research and project management services to government, industry and nonprofit partners in the fast-growing clean technology and sustainability market.

The new practice is led by **Monica Dean**.



Monica Dean is PX's Climate and Sustainability Practice Director. She brings more than a decade of experience to USC from across the climate, energy and environment field. Most recently, Monica served as an expert senior advisor to the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and Assistant Secretary for Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Monica Medina, leading negotiations and international policy on climate and biodiversity. Before joining the Biden Administration, Monica worked for the United Nations Foundation, the Energy Future Coalition, the American Public Power Association and the Maryland Clean Energy Center. She is a graduate of Tel Aviv University and California State University, Sacramento.

Thank You

Thank you for your ongoing support of Public Exchange as USC Dornsife makes academic expertise more easily accessible.

Your generosity allows the USC Dornsife community of scholars to continue to produce innovations that underpin our modern way of living and solve problems of tremendous complexity—ultimately benefiting the greater good.

A link to a modified version of the microsite report is available here:

<https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/6merMGYspDolA>

Some information has been edited or removed for donor and partner confidentiality.