

Panelist Resources

District of Columbia

[Get Help Hotline](#)

Mayor Muriel Bowser launched the District's COVID-19 needs hotline and web portal to streamline the ability for residents to access a variety of critical resources. Residents who have been directed to self-quarantine by a medical provider can call 1-888-349-8323 or visit gethelp.dc.gov to have food and other essential items delivered to their homes.

[Update on Department of Aging and Community Living Operating Status during COVID-19 Emergency](#)

The DC Department of Aging and Community Living released an update that informs the public of service adjustments for senior centers and other resources that can be accessed by caretakers and individuals in need.

[Department of Human Services Apply for Public Benefits](#)

This page provides information and application instructions regarding public benefit programs such as TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid.

[DC WIC COVID-19 Response](#)

DC WIC is a food assistance and nutrition education program for women, infants and children. DC WIC and USDA are working quickly to ensure both new and current WIC families are able to receive their WIC benefits and all program services during the COVID-19 emergency. DC WIC sites are providing all services over the phone, including certifications, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support.

Lansing, Michigan

[Guidelines For Volunteers & Volunteer Organizations](#)

Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) has a first priority of keeping all volunteers and their families' safe during this National Emergency. These are general guidelines designed to keep you safe so you can help others and so we all get through this crisis together.

Panelists



Ona Balkus
Food Policy Director
District of Columbia

Ona Balkus was appointed by Mayor Muriel Bowser in August 2018 as the DC Food Policy Director to promote food access and equity, sustainability, and the local food economy here in the District. Before being appointed Director, Ona served District residents as the Legislative Counsel for the DC Council's Committee on Transportation and the Environment since August 2016. Her portfolio included food and nutrition policy, parks and recreation, clean water, and public works. In this role, Ona drafted several significant pieces of food-related legislation, including the Women, Infants, and Children Program Expansion Act of 2018 and the Healthy Parks Act of 2018. Previously, Ona was a Senior Clinical Fellow at the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, where she provided guidance to food policy councils from across the country working to improve their communities' food systems. Ona grew up in the DMV and currently lives in Ward 6.



Ben Cares
City Planner
City of Chelsea, Massachusetts

Ben Cares is a City Planner of Chelsea, Massachusetts. Ben's role encompasses a broad portfolio of city services, including; Infrastructure Planning, Transportation Planning, Climate Resiliency, Food Systems, and Environmental Planning. An average day for Ben involves analyzing data, pushing paperwork through City Hall to secure financial, political, and public buy in for new infrastructure projects around the City, site visits, and interfacing with a diverse group of planners, engineers, contractors, and city officials. Now that efforts are focused on COVID-19, Ben's days include equal parts logistical management of the Food Distribution site at PORT Park in Chelsea, Massachusetts and processing data, intake requests, emails, and the many volunteers and workers to ensure that food arrives to Chelsea's residents in need.



Andi Crawford
Chief Innovation Officer and Director of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement
City of Lansing, Michigan

Andi Crawford serves as the Chief Innovation Officer and first Director of the Department of Neighborhoods + Citizen Engagement for the City of Lansing, MI. In this role, she oversees the Office of Financial Empowerment, leads the Data & Evidence Team in the Harvard Bloomberg City Leadership Initiative, and oversees community outreach efforts including the Mayor's participatory budgeting process. Prior to returning to her hometown of Lansing, she served the YMCA of Broward County in Ft. Lauderdale, FL as the Vice President of Health Innovation. She led the Pioneering Healthy Communities coalition, and served on the Broward County Community Transformation Grant team. Andi also worked in South Florida with Urban Health Partnerships, LLC where she led a project to design Healthy Community Zones, focusing resources into specific neighborhoods to address health disparities. This work was part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Partners in Community Health (PICH) grant. She is particularly interested in building multi-sector, community-based teams to advance communities through equitable, sustainable strategies that connect economic development, public wealth building, transportation, education, and health.



Patrick Hain
Program Manager, Economic Opportunity and Financial Empowerment
National League of Cities

Patrick Hain is the Program Manager for the Economic Opportunity and Financial Empowerment team in the Institute for Youth Education and Families at the National League of Cities. In his role, he works with city leaders to address residents' needs by supporting the implementation of innovative programs and the advancement of policies. Before his position at NLC, Patrick advanced evidence-based programs and pay-for-success financing at the Social Innovation Fund at the Corporation for National and Community Service. He started his career as an AmeriCorps VISTA in Chicago.