



Food Secure Communities Grant Fund: Outcomes report (Year 1)

The Food Secure Communities Grant funding is for communities to work together to develop and implement a plan to create long-term, sustainable food security in their community. Where plans are already underway, funding can enhance existing efforts.

In 2020, **49 applicants received two-year funding** in the form of contributory grants. Most grants averaged **\$10,000 per annum for two years**. Although these grants are modest, this report shows that the money has been put to great use. Ahakoa he iti he pounamu, although it is small it is a treasure.

In June 2021, providers reported on what they have achieved in their first 12 months. This report identifies themes from their reports as well as examples of good practice.

Food security plans

The majority of this funding has been used to support communities to come together, consult, collaborate, korero, talanoa, research, map and plan. At the reporting period some communities had already finalised their plans and were working on implementing them. Others were still consulting with their communities on drafts and looking to finalise plans over the coming weeks and months.

Consultation

The consultation took many forms, some organised hui, some contracted in consultants to run workshops, others took a more formal research approach, hosting focus groups and conducting interviews.

It became apparent that communities wanted true consultation, in a spirit of partnership, where organisations, people and whānau were able to have a voice and express their thoughts.

Collaboration

This consultation could only occur through collaboration. COVID-19 presented challenges to the community food sector that could only be resolved by working together. This has led to silos being broken down and relationships being formed, making the sector more resilient to future shocks.

Many of these collaborations have chosen to work together outside of COVID-19 lockdowns as they have recognised the value of working together. Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi... with your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive.

The reports have outlined the breadth of these relationships, which include: foodbanks, food rescue, Councils, Public Health Authorities, District Health Boards, iwi, hapū, mana whenua, marae, kura, schools, tertiary education providers, food producers, food distributors, social enterprise, supermarkets, community gardens, non-government organisations (NGOs), government departments, and the list goes on.

Many communities have formed food security networks in their area. Meeting regularly, to implement their food security plans, these networks have been crucial to responding to periods of temporary increases of food insecurity, such as COVID-19 resurgences. The most effective networks seem to be those that include organisations that primarily focus on food security initiatives, as well as organisations that primarily respond to food insecurity, such as foodbanks.

Advocacy

Some of these networks are using their collective voice to advocate for structural change. This includes encouraging Council's to set aside greenspace for community gardens, plant more fruit and nut trees, and find solutions to household green waste.

Food security plans

Many communities have now developed their plans and developed their localised understandings of what food security means to them. We will create an online resource to map these food security plans and make sure they can be shared widely. Here is an example from Rakau Tautoko:

Our shared vision is long-term and intergenerational and is simply that all people and whānau across our communities have meaningful access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food at all times.

To us, meaningful access is about people and whānau having the opportunity to self-determine how they get their kai and where it comes from. That might be by planting their own kai, fishing in the moana, or by having liveable incomes to have access to affordable kai which is available in their communities.



Kai Collective members and partners with Peter Gordon at Homeland.

Our shared vision is a future where transactional food support is not a solution our people need.

Māori kai sovereignty

A significant number of Māori organisations were supported in this funding round and took the opportunity to explore what food security meant for them. An example is Healthy Families Waitākere, who helped facilitate a co-design process, bringing the community together to discuss kai and the experience of Māori whānau in West Auckland. This formed a common understanding of how West Auckland Māori experience issues of food poverty and disconnect from mahinga kai. They convened a number of hui, wānanga, workshops, and surveys to contribute to a shared view of both the current and possible future scenarios. This co-owned approach draws on both Mātauranga Māori and western knowledge to bring together the initial framework for a kai future underpinned by the concept of kai sovereignty.

This formed their Food Secure Communities plan, with the working title Mana Motuhake o te Kai: Kai Sovereignty in West Auckland.

Maara Kai

Some communities have embraced Hua Parakore, the world's first indigenous verification and validation system for mahinga kai. Moko Morris (Te Aitanga a mahaki and Te Atiawa) describes the Hua Parakore system as an expression of rangatiratanga (autonomy) over Māori food systems and wellbeing, its ihi (essence) and mauri (life force). An example of this is Te Awhina Marae o Motueka who reported:



Participants of a cooking workshop at Te Awhina Marae o Motueka

Our highlights have been, seeing a full season from planting through to harvest. Attending Karioi wananga, to broaden our knowledge on maara kai, Rongoa Maori, the Maramataka and Food Sovereignty. Reconnecting whanau to the Whenua.

Rongoā Māori

He kai he rongoā, he rongoā he kai means literally food is medicine, medicine is food. This recognises the potential healing power of reconnecting whānau with traditional foods and the whenua. An example is Centre 401 Trust which is partnering with Ake Innovations to design and create a rongoā garden for their rohe.

Pā to Plate

An example of social enterprise that is giving agency to whānau is Pā to Plate, which is centred in Tai Tokerau/Northland. It focuses on growing produce and resources in lands or 'pā/marae landscapes' – inclusive of Māori lands, neighbouring farms. They are interested in the meaningful growth of food that strengthens connectedness between home lands and people. Te Riingi Marae report:

We are working closely with Pā to Plate and are sharing their visions of rebuilding māra and reconnecting whānau are also important. Pā to Plate has helped us connect with an even wider community and we have participated in farmers' markets under their banner.



Kamo Kamo grown at Te Riingi Marae for sale on Pā to Plate.

Gardening

Many of these food security plans, or initiatives focus on enabling people to grow their own kai. It was often noted that 50 years ago, many Kiwis had vegetable gardens and grew a lot of their own produce, shared it with friends and neighbours, meaning that whole communities were less reliant on supermarkets.

Some providers aimed to support whānau to return to these practices. They range from small scale projects to help people grow food in planter boxes on their sections, through to large-scale market gardens run through social enterprises.

Home gardens

One of the simplest solutions for helping whānau to become food secure, is to help people grow their own food at their place, and provide education programmes for those with no experience.

Some organisations, such as South Alive, have been working with their local Menzshed to develop backyard garden planters. These portable planters are appropriate for people living in rental accommodation. South Alive also runs gardening classes and provides seedlings, tools, etc to set up their own home gardens.

Community gardens

There were many examples of communities trying to re-instate or expand existing community gardens as well as some starting new ones. Often these gardens had multiple and overlapping positive outcomes. Here is an example from the Taumarunui Whakaarotahi Trust:

Our approach to solving the problem has involved establishing a community garden and setting up a meat koha system that rewards volunteers who assist regularly in the garden with a meat pack at the end of the week. We aim to get local farmers, hunters and fishers to donate meat and through the meat koha system to encourage regular commitment and good work habits in the volunteers. This will also help people make a good transition into paid employment. We also plan to setup a community farm next to the garden where donated livestock can be raised and support the meat koha system. The farm will trial regenerative agricultural practices such as multi species pastures and be a place to connect rural and urban dwellers and to teach/learn agricultural skills.



Taumarunui Whakaarotahi volunteers building a tunnel house for the maara.

Other community gardens have recognised the importance of cross-planting of species and ensuring good regenerative processes are used. Sometimes this includes fruit and nut trees and can be based on the food forest format. Other communities have been mapping their local fruit and nut trees to ensure they are looked after, pruned and then harvested at the appropriate time.

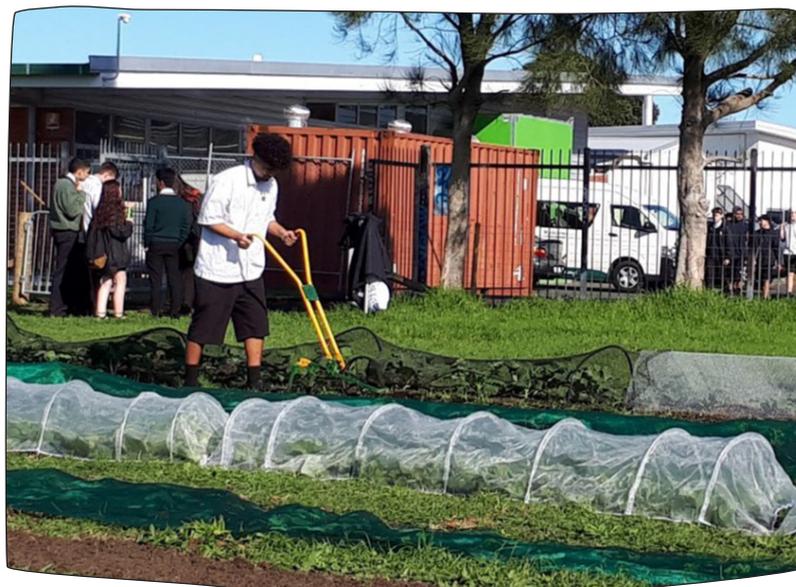
Urban farms and non-profit market gardens

Some communities are exploring ways to make their community growing initiatives more sustainable by increasing scale and using social enterprise to generate revenue which is then reinvested in the project. This include urban farm models and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

Here is an example from Middlemore Foundation for Health Innovation:

We started selling through our social enterprise, Maara Fresh, in September 2020. We achieve average sales per month of \$200.

In 2021, Manurewa High School became a recipient of the School Lunches Programme. We have been scaling up production to be able to provide the programme. We achieve average sales of \$300 per month to the programme. We are still learning how to be a large-scale provider. There is a lot more potential in sales to the School as First Customer.



Student volunteers working in the Middlemore Foundation maara.

Social enterprise

Other communities have been exploring how social enterprise can be used to sustainably feed their people as well as support local business, rather than compete with it. An example is the Roimata Commons Trust who developed Toha Kai, a locally-produced, seasonal, sustainable food box which is also affordable.

They have partnered directly with schools, playcentres and social agencies based in their community to deliver this service. They also supplement it with free food redistribution by rescuing organic produce from their suppliers, which can no longer be sold, and making it available for free on a Pataka Kai at Roimata Food Commons.

Re-imagining community kai distribution

Many communities are taking the opportunity to re-imagine what community kai could look like in their areas. They have recognised that traditional foodbanks are not a long-term solution to food insecurity and are innovating new approaches. This is often happening through relationship building and korero at food security network meetings.

Some providers have taken the opportunity to refine and review their processes, trying to make their services more accessible and more culturally-appropriate. The Mana to Mana Practice resource produced by Kore Hiakai is one example of helping communities rethink their approach.

Some communities have trialled social supermarkets, community fridges, kai hubs, crop swaps, seed banking, garden tool exchanges, free stores, edible gardens etc as alternative ways of supporting the food needs of their communities.

Education

Many communities have recognised the importance of sharing knowledge. And so, we have seen examples of workshops covering gardening, pruning, seed-saving, composting, Maramataka, preserving, cooking, waste-reduction, and much more to help people become more self-reliant.

Some groups have taken the learnings from these workshops to create online resources, such as the Richmond Community Garden:

The next stage of our plan is to set up seasonal resources on our website and printed at our sustainability hub that guide people who cannot attend our workshops on where and what to do with the food that is available locally.



Cathy from Richmond Community Garden with volunteers from Linwood High.

Schools

Often schools are de-facto community hubs and so are important players in the food security sector. Many communities have recognised this and included them as a part of their food security plans and initiatives.

School gardens

Edible gardens in educational settings produce a wide range of benefits. They improve knowledge of and consumption of nutritious food, they improve access to fresh produce and they also tend to be community oriented.

Edible gardens have also been shown to:

- increase food security for individuals/whānau
- increase environmental awareness
- keep participants physically active
- promote motivation to learn
- enhance psychosocial development (e.g. self-esteem, working and problem solving with peers)
- create a sense of pride in, and ownership of, the education setting.

These benefits have been recognised by food security organisations such as *Our Food Network Dunedin*, who have engaged an experienced gardener/former teacher to work in two low-decile primary schools for four hours a week, over the course of two school years to establish sustainable edible gardens. They have also previously developed and published a written gardening resource specifically for low decile schools, which is the key resource for this work.

School lunches

The governments Ka Ora, Ka Ako, healthy school lunches programme has increased the amount of food in communities. Often schools receive more food than is consumed by their pupils and so there is an opportunity for this surplus food to be rescued and redistributed to whānau in need.

Some communities have also taken the opportunity to partner with schools and create their own school lunch social enterprises. These enterprises aim to be healthier, fresher, and lower waste than more commercial operations, and often looking to keep more of the funding in the community.

Conclusion

We hope that you might be inspired by reading some of the examples in this report about what other communities are doing to work towards food security. We recognise that this mahi has not always been easy or straight-forward, especially with COVID-19 resurgences. We look forward to working with you over the next 12 months as you continue to finalise plans and implement these plans.