

# **Swift Action and Resilient Systems:**

**An Effective COVID-19 Emergency Local Food Relief Fund to Pay Farmers and Support the Fresh Produce Needs of Food Pantry Networks in Northwest Lower Michigan**

**Michigan Premier Public Health Conference 2022**

**June 16, 2022**



**groundwork**

CENTER FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

# Presenters



**Meghan** McDermott

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Food Equity Specialist,  
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CENTER FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES





# Local Food & Farming

A strong local food systems  
keeps money local,  
promotes health, and  
preserves farmland.

Farms,  
Food &  
Health

Farm to  
School

Food  
Access

Farmer  
Support





# Community Overview

- Largest city in Northern Michigan (Traverse City)
- Population: 15,570
- 21-county Regional Population: ~506,000

the TICKER

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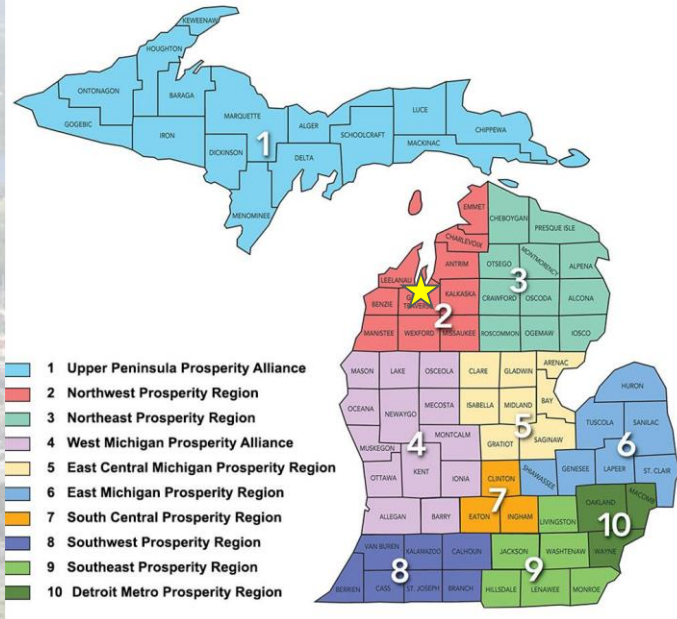
## ALICE In Wonderland: How Leelanau's Paradise Status Hides Staggering Levels Of Near-Poverty

By Craig Manning | Feb. 9, 2022

<https://www.9and10news.com> › 2022/02/25 › lack-of-a... ⋮

### Lack of Affordable Housing Affecting TC Labor Shortage

Feb 25, 2022 — Businesses in **Traverse City** continue to struggle to find workers. Housing **Affordable housing** advocates say the lack of housing is the cause ...



BI Business Insider

### Inside Traverse City, Michigan, home to wealthy millennials - Business Insider

More American millennial millionaires live in Traverse City, Michigan, than ...  
You won't find the biggest hub for wealthy millennials in a Silicon ...  
Dec 11, 2019







## Food Rescue

a program of Goodwill

- 7,000lbs per day
  - 140+ food donors
  - 3 box trucks 1 sprinter van
  - Repack facility
  - Healthy Harvest, gleaning
-



## Northwest Food Coalition

- Roughly 70 member food pantries, meal sites and baby pantries in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, & Wexford Counties
- Not formally incorporated coalition, in its 28th year
- Farm 2 Neighbor program





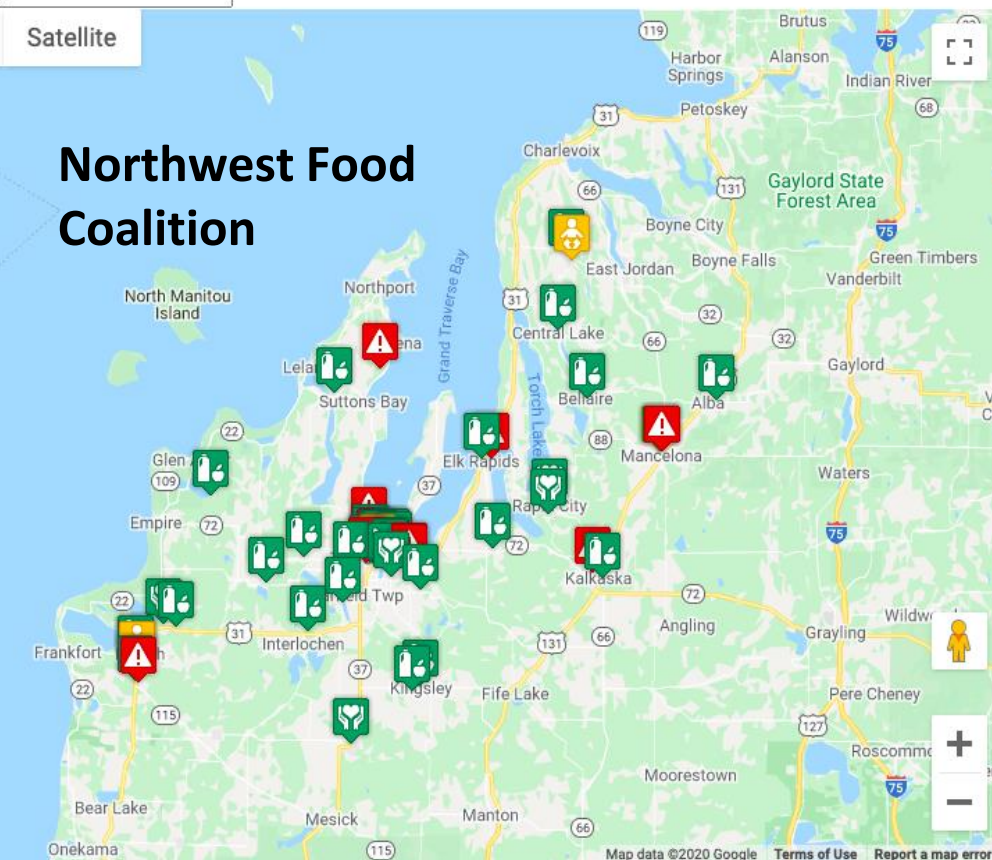
## Manna Food Project

- Food Bank serving Antrim, Charlevoix and Emmet Counties
- Feeding America Partner Distribution Organization
- Food Bank, Food Pantry, Food Rescue, Food 4 Kids, Produce for People

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Satellite

## Northwest Food Coalition



## Manna Food Project



# March 2020 Feedback from Farmers

“I am feeling **discouraged about farming this season**- should I do it?”

“At a time when many farms have the last of their storage crops lined up for **restaurant** sales and are counting on cash flow to fund spring plantings, the ability to get paid for feeding low income families in our community can be a **godsend** during the COVID-19 crisis.”

“The **farmers market** is delayed. It will be challenging.”

Worst part is the **uncertainty** - currently planting as planned but don't know what will happen.

**Not too late** to make changes to crop plan - loves the idea of getting paid upfront like a CSA, will help her keep employees.





# Northwest Michigan Local Food Relief Fund

# Fundraising Goal \$30,000

Est. \$10,000 **33%**  
to purchase food from local farms

Est. \$20,000 **66%**  
to purchase food from local farms  
with up to 6% to Food Rescue for distribution costs



WHERE YOUR  
\$100 GOES

\$33.33 TO BUY FOOD

\$62.66 TO BUY FOOD

\$4 FOR DISTRIBUTION COSTS

## OUR COMMUNITY YOUR IMPACT

### DONATE

Give a gift to the  
Local Food Relief Fund.  
**Groundwork keeps 0%**

### FOOD PANTRIES

New and existing relationships with  
small farms allows pantries to  
purchase locally-grown fruits and

### LOCAL FARMERS

These bulk purchases provide  
economic relief to farmers who rely  
on sales to restaurants, schools, and

### LOCAL FAMILIES

Families who are facing financial  
hardship due to the crisis can  
access fresh, local, healthy food.





# Northwest Michigan Local Food Relief Fund

## GOAL EXCEEDED!

~~\$30k~~ ~~\$50k~~ ~~\$100k~~

TOTAL RAISED  
**\$193,050**

### 33%

to purchase food from local farms



Serving Antrim, Charlevoix,  
and Emmet Counties

### 66%

to purchase food from local farms with up to 6% to Food Rescue for distribution costs



Serving Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska, Leelanau,  
Grand Traverse, and Wexford Counties



WHERE YOUR  
\$100 GOES

\$33.33 TO BUY FOOD

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## OUR COMMUNITY

## YOUR IMPACT

### DONATE

Give a gift to the  
Local Food Relief Fund.  
**Groundwork keeps 0%**

### FOOD PANTRIES

New and existing relationships with  
small farms allows pantries to  
purchase locally-grown fruits and  
vegetables in bulk and distribute to  
their members.

### LOCAL FARMERS

These bulk purchases provide  
economic relief to farmers who rely  
on sales to restaurants, schools, and  
farmers markets.

### LOCAL FAMILIES

Families who are facing financial  
hardship due to the crisis can  
access fresh, local, healthy food.

# Connecting Farmers and Food Pantries

## Local Food Relief Fund Farmer Survey

Thank you for your interest in selling food to local food pantries. This is the first phase of our initiative as our organization and partners navigate uncharted territory. If there is a match between your products and the pantries' needs, someone will be contacting you in the coming weeks. We will continue to explore ways we can be of help and stay in touch as things unfold. Our hearts are with you and your families.

if you have questions or more to share, contact us at [info@groundworkcenter.org](mailto:info@groundworkcenter.org) or (231) 941-6584.  
Thanks!

\* 1. Farm Name:

\* 2. Preferred Contact Person

\* 3. Address:



- Established farmer survey to collect market data, available crops, and price points
- Called every market manager and farmer who attends farmers markets in Traverse City, Petoskey, Boyne City, etc and asked farmers to spread the word
- Shared link with local grower groups, Food and Farming Network, guilds, and everyone else we could think of

# Northwest Food Coalition Purchasing Committee

- Groundwork facilitates and participates in the committee
- Representatives from each constituent category within the coalition: **large and small pantries, meal site, baby pantry, school pantry, tribal pantry, mental health center, purchasing, distribution and operating committee**



Decisions about how to spend the Local Food Relief Fund money are made collectively by members of the coalition

# Empowering Purchasing Coordinator

**Criteria for consideration:** product type, pack size, price range, Food Rescue's ability to distribute, demand for product at pantries

**Green** purchase opportunities meet all of the pre approved criteria from the committee

**Yellow** purchases meet some criteria, but not all

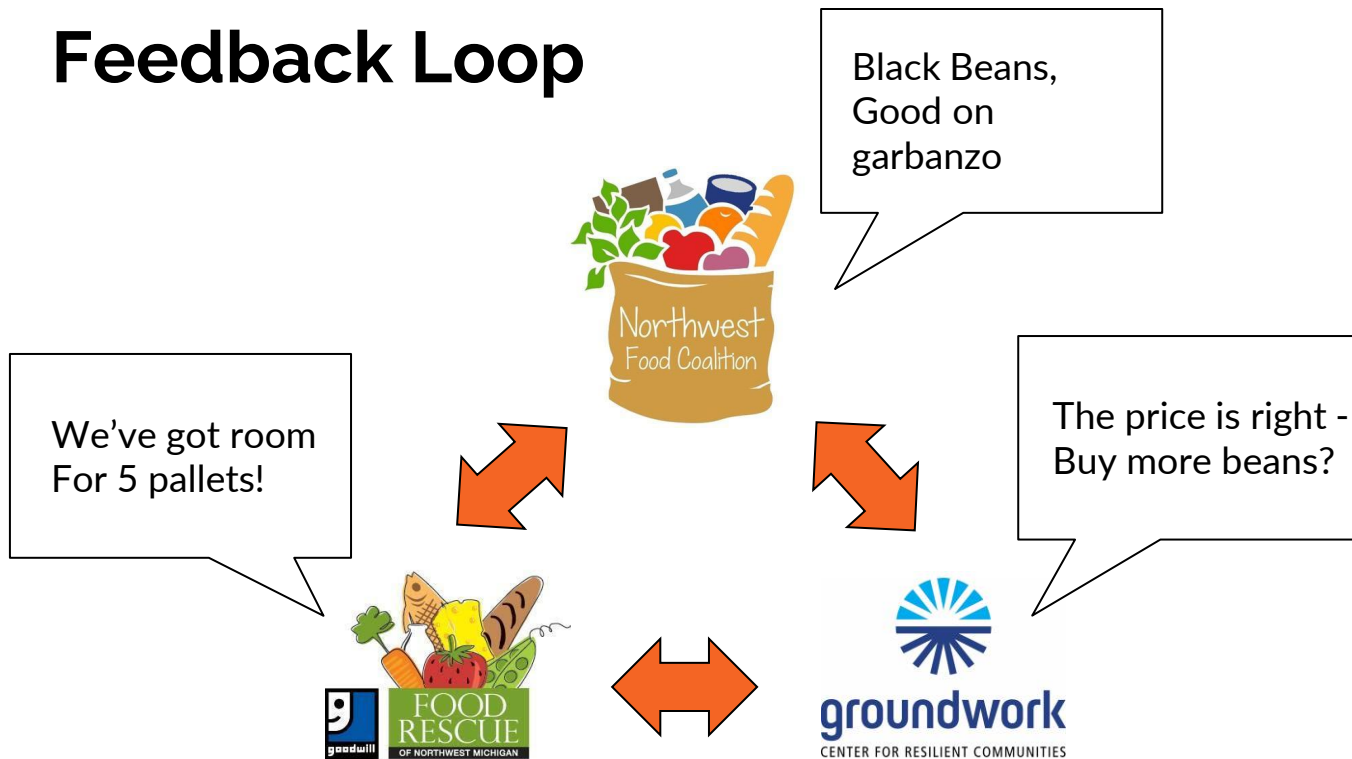
**Red** purchases meet one or more, but not all of our criteria







# Feedback Loop





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# Locally Grown Food Purchased by Northwest Food Coalition

- Apples
  - Beets
  - Berries
  - Broccoli
  - Cabbage
  - Carrots
  - Cauliflower
  - Corn
  - Green Beans
  - Onions
  - Potatoes
  - Sweet Potatoes
  - Squash
  - Garlic
  - Dried Cherries
  - Cucumbers
  - Scallions
  - Sweet peppers
  - Watermelon
  - Local beef, chicken, pork, lamb and eggs
  - Locally processed food like canned beans and dried fruit
-

# Northwest Food Coalition Local Food Purchasing

2018:	2019:	2020:	2021:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 7,911 pounds</li><li>● 8 farms,</li><li>● \$7,240.40</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 14,991.80 pounds</li><li>● 6 farms</li><li>● \$18,370.45</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 72,011.70 pounds</li><li>● 21 farms</li><li>● \$100,610</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 94,312 pounds</li><li>● 17 farms</li><li>● \$175,427.85</li></ul>
	2022:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● \$110,00 overall budget</li><li>● \$75,000 in pre-planned purchases for 47,200 pounds from 6 farms</li></ul>		



# What does Fresh Food Access Mean to Emergency Food Providers?

- **Access to fresh food is a challenge.** Farmers need to be fairly compensated for their work, unfortunately the price of local food is out of reach for many people in the region. Many of our neighbours work more than two jobs, but unfortunately they are not making a living wage to be able to live well. **People have to make hard choices about paying bills or buying nutritious food.**
- **When local food is at the food pantry: Wow!** is a common response from neighbors. We arrange the food as a grocery store, so when someone comes in, the food is displayed attractively with information on which farm the food came from. Before neighbors come in the door we have prepared the volunteers with information on what the identity of the vegetable is, and a few ways to prepare it. We often have recipes available, or pair veggies with a dip like hummus or a vinaigrette. **The result is a presentation of fresh food that conveys dignity and care about their food needs.**





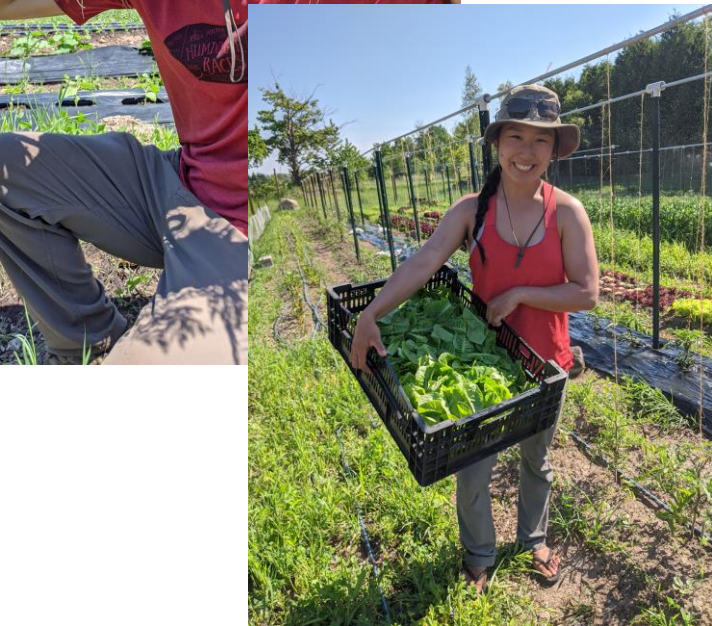
## What did selling to food pantries mean to our farm partners?

“It meant making our first year farming profitable. “

“We moved to a Home-Delivery CSA model and planted 300 additional feet of tomatoes”

“Selling to Manna and Northwest Food Coalition meant that we had a buffer to make mistakes and over-plant crops to plan for the worst. “

**“This partnership meant that we had the opportunity to over-plant, make mistakes, and learn our land without jeopardizing the financial stability of our farm. We believe much of our first year success was due to these partnerships and we are so, SO grateful for the work that these nonprofits do!”**



# Lessons Learned: Emergency Food Providers

- Win/Win is a possibility!
- Systems can be developed that benefit both the vendor (farmers) and the consumer (meal sites/food pantries)





# Lessons Learned: Farmers

- Most farms agreed that Local Food Relief Funds made them feel more capable of using food pantries as a market outlet, and agreed that they will continue to sell products to food pantries over the next few years
- Farmers developed new market strategies and wholesale growing capacities

*"The relationship with the food coalition has literally been a life saver for Second Spring Farm and I am grateful and honored to work with you all."* - Reid Johnston, Owner/Operator, Second Spring Farm

# Lessons Learned: Groundwork

- Flexibility, patience and persistence are key
- Relationships are everything

What do farmers and emergency food providers have in common?

**They both work extremely hard, often under less than ideal circumstances, with limited or no resources, but achieve great things in service to the community because of their creativity, attitude and faith.**





# How will this work be sustained?



# Future of Local Food Purchasing

- Northwest Food Coalition continues to prioritize local purchasing
  - Purchasing Committee meets bi-weekly
  - NFC working on fundraising to meet purchasing goals
  - NFC also working on strategic planning process
- Manna Food Project
  - New Executive Director Carrie Klingelsmith affirmed commitment to fresh produce and local purchasing



## Spring 2021 Feedback from Farmers and Emergency Food Providers

“There are farmers and others willing to donate food that has to be either refrigerated or frozen to the pantry, but we need additional refrigerator and freezer space in order to handle those donations.”

- *Family Care Network of Manton Food Pantry*

“There is no large capacity cold storage rental in northwest Michigan. This will allow our farm to distribute approximately 80,000# between October-April.”

- *Providence Organic Farm*

“We would like to provide cook books and possibly classes for families to incorporate this produce and protein into their diets for improved health.”

- *Baby Pantry at St. Philip's Episcopal Church*





# Building Resilient Communities

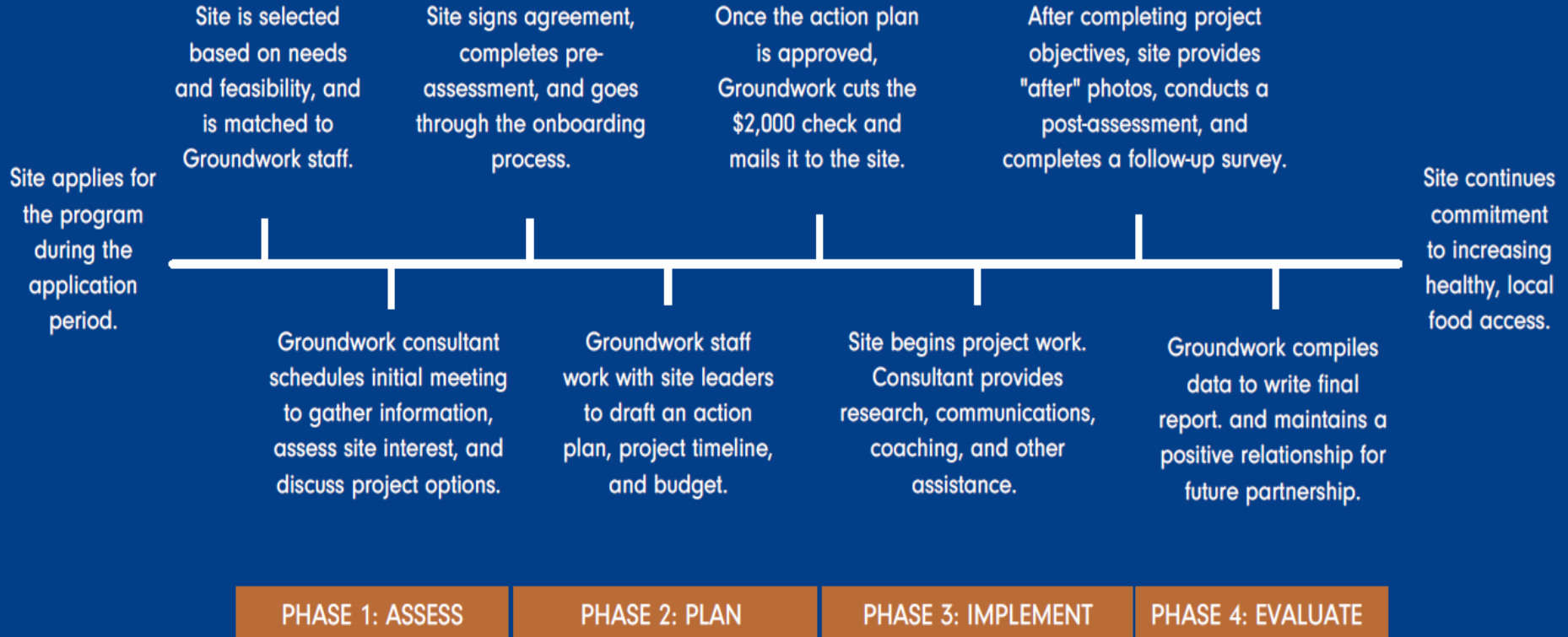


# Building Resilient Communities

- Launched in 2021, Building Resilient Communities (BRC) is a pilot program at Groundwork that connects resources to community needs in northwest Michigan. Through small grants and staff consultation, we collaborate with food pantries, churches, farms, schools, and other community-focused sites to grow their capacities to positively impact their communities from the ground up.
- Each site receives a mini-grant (\$2,000) for investment in infrastructure, outreach and/or education initiatives.
- Program participants also receive support/consultation from Groundwork staff about education, program development, and strategy for long-term impact and success.

**In the long run, BRC aims to promote consumption of healthy, local foods; build agency of food service workers; lower the incidence of chronic diseases; contribute to strong local economies; and establish cross-sector relationships for vibrant, livable communities.**

# BRC Site Timelines at a Glance

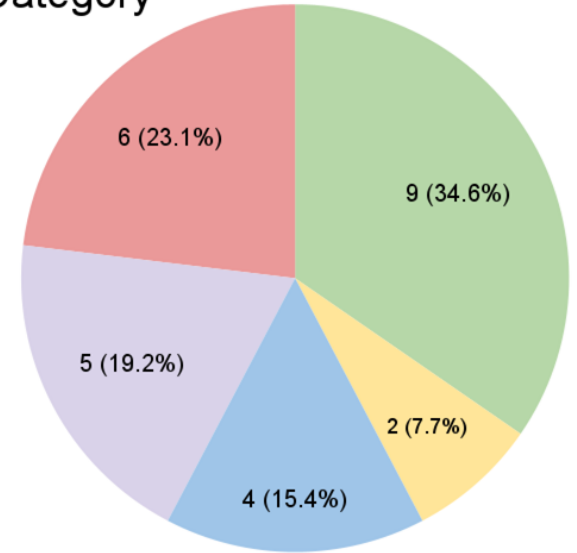


# Fast Facts

- 26 sites funded for 2021-2022
- All sites focused on food access initiatives
- Secured at least 1 site in each county (10)
- Most in **Grand Traverse (7)** & **Emmet (8)**
- Secured sites with **diverse client bases** (youth, seniors, people with disabilities, Indigenous individuals)
- **Need for infrastructure** is high: common purchases are industrial refrigerators, freezers, & shelving

BRC Sites by Category

- Farms & Farmers Markets
- Community Gardens
- Community & Health Centers
- Schools
- Emergency Food Providers



# PROJECT SNAPSHOT: Buckley Food Pantry

Before photo: wash sink area



## Stipend spent on:

- Installing a steel, 3-tub wash sink for the food prep/sorting room.
- Assembling “gift baskets” so pantry clients can take home kitchen tools, like cutting boards, knives, etc.
- Display racks to increase storage and attractiveness of fresh produce.
- Nutrition education materials, including posters and cookbooks.

## GW staff also helped with:

- Contacting local growers to develop new relationships & fresh produce opportunities.
- Nutrition education materials and collaboration with NES.



# PROJECT SNAPSHOT: Buckley Food Pantry



# PROJECT SNAPSHOT: Buckley Food Pantry



## **Tena Otto, Buckley Food Pantry Coordinator:**

“At our pantry, the BRC program enabled us to install a wash sink and displays for fresh, local produce right at the door to the pantry, where clients first walk in. Several times I have observed people consider the fresh produce, and as soon as they understand that it came from a local farm, they grab it. People are just so excited about local food, and knowing that we offer local items motivates people to take more than they might otherwise.”



A top-down view of various fresh vegetables including tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and dill arranged along the top edge of a rustic wooden table. The table's surface is made of dark, weathered wooden planks with visible grain and some staining. The word "Questions?" is centered on the table in a large, black, sans-serif font.

Questions?



# Contact Us

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