

# FOOD SECURITY SUMMIT

## PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The Food Security Summit was a six-part virtual series aiming to create space for people to learn about needs and resources and explore a shared understanding and a common vision to address regional food insecurity and hunger in the greater Grand Traverse region. The goals of the Summit were to create additional public awareness through sharing data and stories of care, resiliency, and change, and to highlight a whole-community issue that is rapidly increasing in severity with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Summit series was hosted by the Northwest Food Coalition, in partnership with Food Rescue of Northern Michigan, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, and Michigan State University Extension, and with financial support from Rotary Charities of Traverse City.

Food insecurity and hunger were already-growing problems prior to the pandemic, and are now magnified. Our food system is broken and we collectively have an opportunity to improve it. These are immediate problems that need quick implementation and long-term solutions rooted in sound community-based policies, programs, and strategies.

The audiences for the Summit included those experiencing food insecurity, supporting a family member or neighbor experiencing food insecurity, working at a food pantry or at an agency providing food assistance, community members wanting to learn and support people experiencing food insecurity, those working at an organization that supports people, or a community that is experiencing food insecurity, or people simply curious about learning more about food and the future of our community.

Over 200 individuals registered for the series. Between 80-120 people participated in each session. Some people participated in one session, and some in all six. The majority of participants were from the Northwest Lower Michigan region, although there were some participants from other regions and states. A complete registration list, as well as participant lists from each session, are available from Summit hosting partner Michigan State University Extension.

## SESSION TOPICS AND FORMAT

The Summit consisted of six sessions. Each topically-focused session lasted for 1.5 hours and was hosted on Zoom using a webinar-style format.

- Session 1 - Who In Our Community Is facing Food Insecurity? (December 8, 2020)
- Session 2 - What are the Sources of Food Assistance? (January 12, 2021)
- Session 3 - How do we Make Decisions to Address Community and Individual needs? (January 26, 2021)
- Session 4 - How do People in Need get Access to Healthy Food? (February 9, 2021)

- Session 5 - What Values Drive our Solutions? (February 23, 2021)
- Session 6 - What's Next? Chartering a Path Forward for Food Security for Our Community (March 9, 2021)

Each session featured guest speakers and panelists whose experience, wisdom, stories, data, and knowledge contributed to an understanding of the featured topic. Each session was guided by a structured agenda with guiding questions and prescribed times for each speaker. Each speaker and panelist volunteered their time. Presenters used a variety of approaches to share data and information, including videos, slides, and stories. Sessions were interactive and included polls, active Chat, Q & A with panelists (featuring both alive and written responses), and external WuFoo links to generate word clouds.

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## SPEAKERS AND AFFILIATIONS

- Session 1
  - Seth Johnson, United Way of Northern Michigan
  - Sarah Eichberger, MSUE, SNAP-Ed and FoodCorps
  - Cathy O'Conner, Step-Up
  - Lisa Robishek, Meals on Wheels
  - Jane Lippert, Central United Methodist Church Pantry
  - Jody Jocks, Traverse City Area Public Schools
- Session 2
  - Meghan McDermott, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
  - Janee Moore, Food Access Public Health Consultant at MDHHS)
  - Cathy Somes, Kalkaska Area Interfaith Resources
  - Darcia Brewer, Area Agency on Aging
  - Les Hagaman, Father Fred Foundation
- Session 3
  - Erin Barrett, Northern Michigan Community Health Innovation Region
  - Taylor Moore, Food Rescue
  - Christina Barkel, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
  - Dan Buron, Goodwill Northern Michigan
  - Matt Unger and Daniel Beck, DMARC
- Session 4
  - Dr. Jean Kerver, MSU
  - Jenifer Murray, Northern Michigan Community Health Innovation Region
  - Marcia Blackford, Marvin's Garden Spot
  - Elizabeth Dunham, SEEDS, Sara Hardy Farmer's Market Manager
  - Michelle Smith, Fruit and Veggie Rx Program, Grand Traverse County MSU Extension
  - Nancy Johnson, Grace Episcopal Church Pantry
- Session 5
  - Bill Meserve, Empire Area Food Pantry
  - Amanda Romeyn, Providence Farm
  - Beth Friend, East Bay Township Supervisor
  - Kori Woodruff, MSN, NP, Cardiology, Munson Healthcare
  - Oran Hesterman, Fair Food Network
- Session 6
  - Kris Thomas, Community Volunteer

- Tom Emling, Community Volunteer
- Josh Stoltz, Grow Benzie
- Meghan McDermott, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
- Dan Buron, Goodwill Northern Michigan
- Mary Clulo, Northwest Food Coalition
- Val Stone, Northwest Food Coalition and Food Rescue
- Nick Beadleston, Good Impacts

Mary Clulo and Val Stone served as welcoming speakers for each Summit session. Megan Motil Olds moderated and facilitated each session.

## SUMMIT SERIES PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The idea for the Summit was conceived and championed by Michele Worden (Northwest Food Coalition). Over the past three years, Michele was a passionate advocate for the Summit, while also promoting the idea of a Food Council. Michele wrote the grant to garner resources to host the Summit. Summit planning was coordinated and managed by Megan Motil Olds of Parallel Solutions, and was guided and supported by a dynamic and engaged Summit Planning Team comprised of Michele Worden (Northwest Food Coalition), Val Stone (Northwest Food Coalition), Mary Clulo (Northwest Food Coalition), Meghan McDermott (Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities), Taylor Moore (Goodwill Food Rescue), Christina Barkel (Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities), and Jennifer Berkey (Michigan State University Extension). This team planned each session collaboratively, identified speakers, promoted the Summit within their respective networks, responded to questions from community members, and reflected on and evaluated each session. The planning team was also supported and assisted by Nick Beadleston (Good Impacts) who managed work associated with the development of the Asset Map which was featured in Session 6. The team also received advice from Lindsey Scalera, Community Food Systems Collaboration Specialist at the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems. Lindsey was the host of the Michigan Good Food Summit in 2020. She answered questions about her experiences and provided a session planning template that the team used to outline and organize its Summit series.

## TEAM MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Megan Motil Olds hosted and coordinated planning team meetings, developed the overall plan for session content, wrote session descriptions, developed guiding questions for speakers and panelists, coordinated with and coached speakers and panelists, hosted practice Dry Runs with speakers and panelists prior to each session, wrote content for emails sent to registrants, prepared session pre-read materials, advised on communications and messaging, developed content for evaluation forms, and reviewed and co-wrote media releases. Michele Worden and Kimberly Conaghan (Taste the Local Difference) were responsible for communications and marketing, including website content management and updates, logo and brand guide development, media relations, and social media. Val Stone and Mary Clulo managed direct outreach with members of the Northwest Food Coalition. Jennifer Berkey and her team at Michigan State University Extension were responsible for all aspects of the Zoom platform, including session and Dry Run technology hosting, speaker and panelist orientation to the Zoom platform, in-session polling (including to external links), video and slide presentation launching and transition management, session recording, evaluation form administration, and session transcription. MSUE also managed registrations for the session. Several team members managed and responded to direct correspondence received from registrants and participants.

## SUMMIT OUTCOMES

The Summit series resulted in the following outcomes and deliverables:

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### WEBSITE

The Food Summit website content was guided by Michele Worden and supported by Kimberly Conaghan and Megan Motil Olds. The website is a component of the Northwest Food Coalition site and was used to promote the Summit and will remain as a resource for community members to access information and resources.

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### VIDEO RECORDINGS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Session video recordings and transcripts were prepared by Michigan State University Extension. These resources are available on the Food Summit website.

[Session 1](#): This first session seeks to refresh the lens at which we look at food insecurity and hunger. Watch this session to hear panelists and neighbors share their experiences of food security.

[Session 2](#): The second session takes a look at both government and non-profit food assistance programs through the lenses of those operating the programs. Learn about the challenges these public and private programs have encountered during the pandemic and local responses to the increased community needs. This session includes representatives from government programs, food pantries, school nutrition programs, community meal sites, and organizations related to food assistance programs.

[Session 3](#): The third session focuses on how decisions are made to address the needs of those experiencing food insecurity, and who is making those decisions. The session includes a reflection in the way decisions have been made in the past, and opportunities for understanding needs and root causes and making meaningful and high impact decisions together in the future.

[Session 4](#): The fourth session focuses on how and where people in need get access to 'healthy' food. This session explores why 'healthy' food matters, and how people facing food insecurity know what type of 'healthy' food assistance is available. This session also explores how access to 'healthy' food has changed during COVID. Speakers and panelists share perspectives and insights regarding what works well about the way people learn about and get access to enough food that is 'healthy', what are the barriers to getting enough 'healthy' food, and potential solutions to address obstacles.

[Session 5](#): The fifth session explores defining what values drive community solutions surrounding food insecurity by engaging with government, nonprofit, and private food assistance providers and the persons they serve. Values impact our individual and collection motivations, and define our beliefs and behaviors. Our values drive our personal choices and also impact the way we communicate and design and implement policies, programs, and services. Speakers and panelists share values through the lenses of the organizations and communities they represent.

[Session 6](#): This session explores opportunities for next steps toward becoming a more food secure region. This session summarizes the resources, strengths, challenges, and proposed solutions shared in the first five sessions. Participants weigh in and share reflections and help prioritize ideas for action, including short and long-term solutions to address food insecurity and related issues such as housing, child care, health care, and transportation.

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## CURATED SESSION PRE-READ MATERIALS

Prior to each session, Jennifer Berkey sent pre-read materials to registrants. These links to reports, data, and videos complemented the theme for the session and were intended to provide more detailed information, references, and perspectives aligned with the respective session topic. The Summit's website includes link to all of these materials as well.

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### SESSION ONE

- **[Definition of Food Security](#)**: A good introduction to Session One is to understand the USDA definition of Food Security.
- **United Way ALICE Reports**: Lack of Food Security, insufficient money to buy food to meet nutritional needs, results from a complex relationship with other household expenses such as costs for housing, transportation, healthcare, childcare, etc. The United Way Asset Limited Income-Constrained Employed (ALICE) report by county is provided for reference and to explain the complex relationship between costs of necessities for living and ability to afford food. The full ALICE report also provides an overview of this data collection process and results.
  - [United Way ALICE reports by County](#)
  - [United Way ALICE in Michigan Report](#)
- **Michigan County Self Sufficiency Standard**: The Self Sufficiency Standard for each county in Michigan is also a new very detailed way at looking at these family costs. The Self Sufficiency Standard is being piloted in 38 states as a replacement for the Poverty Measure. Eligibility for food assistance is currently dependent upon an applicant's income measured against the Poverty Measure. The Poverty Measure is decades old and not considered a very accurate way of assessing need. Advocates hope to replace the Poverty Measure with the Self Sufficiency Standard which gives very detailed regional information on local costs of living.

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### SESSION TWO

- **[Michigan's MI Bridges Introduction Video](#)**: This video from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services describes how to use the online MI Bridges portal portal to apply for benefits, such as food assistance.
- **[Michigan Department of Health and Human Services website](#)**: This link features information about Michigan's public food assistance programs and eligibility requirements.
- **[Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs, Congressional Research Service 2019](#)**
- **[The Emergency Food Assistance Program](#)**: This 2-page document shares a high level summary of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) administered by the United States Department of Agriculture.
- **The Poverty Measure**: Eligibility for governmental food assistance and other programs are based upon the Federal Poverty Measure.
  - [Here is a one-page explanation of history and the table of values for different family size.](#)
  - [Here is a link to the Poverty Threshold tables for each year.](#)

## SESSION THREE

- **[MiThrive Outcomes Framework](#)**: Over 100 cross-sector community partners have come together to unite around a shared vision for Northwest Michigan where everyone has equitable opportunities to live healthy and thriving lives. A Shared Outcomes Framework is a best practice tool to communicate our shared community priorities and to track our progress toward our goals, allowing for continuous improvement in the pursuit of equity. The framework includes time-bound targets for six priority areas, themed within three system elements, and specifies metrics we can use to determine whether we're on track for meeting our goals. These six priority areas emerged from numerous community datasets, including a shared data collection process that elevated the voice of thousands of residents and service providers in Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse, Benzie, Leelanau, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Antrim counties. By clarifying our shared priorities and desired outcomes in this framework, we aim to help answer the questions: what are we collectively working toward as a Northwest Michigan community, and how will we know if we're making progress?
- **[2019 MiThrive Community Health Assessment Report \(pdf\)](#)**: These are the findings from the 2019 Community Health Assessment. The Northern Michigan Community Health Innovation Region (NMCHIR) aligned with MiThrive to complete a comprehensive assessment of needs in Northern Michigan communities. This report pinpoints the most pressing health issues in our communities and describes what more can be done to improve the well-being and health equity in the 10-county region. Over 150 organizations participated in some aspect of the Community Health Assessment process. Data were collected by gathering existing statistics, listening to residents, learning from groups of community organizations, and surveying healthcare providers. The goals for the planning process include Cross-Sector Collaboration and Community Voice.
- **[MiThrive Outcomes Framework Webisode #1](#)**: This video describes the process and strategic goals of the MiThrive Outcomes Framework.
- **[DMARC Annual Report](#)**: Des Moines Area Religious Council's (DMARC's) most recent annual report, which shares more about them and who they are.
- **DMARC's Data Use**: Two articles about DMARC's use of data:
  - **[In a local business publication.](#)**
  - **[In one of its subsidiaries.](#)**

## SESSION FOUR

- **[Shape Up North Fruit and Vegetable Rx Program – Impact Report](#)**: Healthy Food available through Rx.
- **Community Connections**: For information on how Northern Michigan Community Health Innovation Region's (NMCHIR's) Community Connections helps clients access food and other services read these documents:
  - **[Community Connections – Informational Flyer](#)**
  - **[Community Connections – Clients' Food Assistance Success Stories](#)**
- **[Double Up Food Bucks Michigan – Location Finder](#)**: Healthy Food available through Farmers Markets.
- **[Des Moines Area Religious Council – Food Pantry 2.0 Program](#)**: Pantry Programs to promote healthy eating for clients.

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## SESSION FIVE

**[Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Examining the Evidence to Define Benefit Adequacy](#)**: This article provides an overview of the book, including the history, background, and goals of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps). The article describes the values and motivations behind the program's inception, and highlights changes over time, including to eligibility criteria.

**[Food & Agriculture Policy Collaborative Report](#)**: The Food and Agriculture Collaborative, funded through the national Convergence Partnership, works closely with local partners to advance healthy food production, supply chains, and consumer access and equity priorities. Through this partnership with the Food Research Action Center (FRAC), National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), and Policy Link, Fair Food Network has succeeded in increasing understanding of the components of healthy and fair food systems. The 2014 Farm Bill provided communities tools to improve access to healthy, affordable food while also stimulating local economic activity. This Building Healthy Communities guide provides practical and actionable information about USDA programs you can use to develop strong projects. The Guide explains how USDA food policy and programs fit together and collectively can:

- Protect and strengthen the structure, eligibility rules and benefit levels in the SNAP program
- Start and increase produce incentive programs for SNAP participants
- Build and improve healthy food stores and supply chains through Healthy Food Financing Initiatives
- Strengthen marketing opportunities and supply chain infrastructure that connects growers and eaters

The Convergence Partnership is a collaborative of national foundations and health care institutions catalyzing joint investments and action to advance equitable policies and practices at the federal, regional and local level.

**[Food Security in the Time of Covid: It's Not Charity, It's Justice](#)**: An article by Christine Grillo published by Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. March 30, 2020.

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## SESSION SIX

The final session's pre-read handouts included a copy of the December 2014 Food Security Report for Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau Counties prepared by the Benzie Sunrise Rotary Club, as well as the Asset Map survey link, and a copy of the Next Steps survey, both discussed below.

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## ASSET MAP

The Summit Team used an Asset Map survey tool developed by Nick Beadleston (Good Impacts) to assess resources and connections between resources. The survey can be found [here](#). At Session Six, Nick and Mary Clulo shared a [presentation](#) summarizing the Asset Map survey findings. Responses are available [here](#). The Summit Planning Team intends to share this information with the Coalition and will explore ways to use it as future planning and resource-sharing endeavors are explored.

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## PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

After each Summit session, participants were sent a link to an evaluation form. PDFs of each evaluation summary are available. Participants consistently rated the Summit highly by stating they "agree" or "agree a great deal" with the following statements:

- The speakers and panelists communicated their ideas clearly.

- The speakers and panelists held my interest.
- The facilitator(s) encouraged participation.
- I was introduced to ideas and concepts that were new to me.
- I am inspired to learn more about this topic.
- I would recommend this session to others.
- The technology and virtual learning format worked well for me.

Summit Planning Team members reflected on evaluation form feedback, other written feedback received by email, and phone calls in order to identify needs and inform future session planning.

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## PLANNING TEAM SELF-ASSESSMENT

Following the final Summit session, Planning Team members met to reflect and discuss:

- Key takeaways and “aha” moments
- What worked well about the Summit, or what they appreciated most
- Missed opportunities
- Lessons learned and insights to apply

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Engagement – people wanted this, as evidenced by feedback received.
- How much there is to share and learn.
- The number of resources and service in our region; how well-resourced we are as a community, but not always coordinated.
- Seeing DMARC’s process for data collection and analysis.
- When Oran Hesterman called on us to address the root causes.
- Community readiness to engage in addressing root causes.

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## WHAT WORKED WELL

- We pivoted (due to COVID) and worked with what we had.
- All of you (the team).
- Everyone did a lift; good division of labor.
- Good teamwork by Megan and Jen.
- MSU’s Zoom platform.
- Learned a lot; a Zoom stretch moment.
- Megan’s outline for the sessions; the flow worked nicely.
- Use of MSU’s handout for session planning.
- Team planning and engagement – so much critical thought and discussion about perspectives and data to share.
- Megan’s team meeting facilitation.
- The number of sessions and engaging people over time.
- Dry Runs were helpful and gave presenters confidence.
- Smooth transitions between speakers and slides, and videos.



- Variety of speakers and subjects.
- Helped locals see food assistance is not just about school lunches.
- Survey engagement, including the Asset Map.
- Essential questions asked.
- Heard from a participant they thought this series as the “gold standard for online learning.”
- Everyone participated because of passion and not obligation.
- Everyone who spoke, spoke from the heart.

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## MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Presentation and impact of Asset Map: “We weren’t ready” “Needed more time.” “Felt incomplete.” “Hard to explain use, usefulness, maintenance in a short amount of time.”
- Checking in with Coalition members to see if, why, and how they were engaged.
- Addressing impact of climate change in food security.
- Addressing food sovereignty.
- Some speakers didn’t always say the same thing at the Dry Run as they shared at the Summit. This inconsistency impacted content and some core messages.
- Didn’t call in grocery stores, processors, distributors.
- Exploring advocacy more; engaging with Diane Conners (10 Cents).
- Engaging more farmers to learn more about their business models and experiences selling products to pantries and other food assistance providers.
- Engaging with Crosshatch/Small Farms Conference leaders.
- Not taking more time to plan each session in a more fleshed out way before scheduling and promoting the sessions.

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## LESSONS LEARNED + INSIGHTS TO APPLY

- Coalition has an opportunity to define its role in addressing root causes and its role in policy and advocacy.
- The supply chain problem can be solved.
- Transportation is a significant barrier to food security.
- Space out session more in order to better incorporate feedback for next sessions.
- Data collection: We learned about a great model. How do we get people on board with something like this here?
- Reach out to engage with and learn from a Food Council(s).
- Can’t imagine us not having another Summit.

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## NEXT STEPS

In addition to completing an evaluation form for each session, participants from all Summit sessions were invited to share their thoughts on next steps for the community and partners following the Summit. Ten people chose to complete the survey and shared their perspectives.

**“Summit speakers shared ideas for programs and activities, and approaches to affect change. Some of the ideas are listed below. From your perspective, rate the level of impact you think each idea would have on creating conditions for food security in our community.”**

	MINIMAL IMPACT	SHORT-TERM IMPACT	SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	MAJOR SHORT-TERM IMPACT	MAJOR LONG-TERM IMPACT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Continue to share information and resources in order to connect more people to sources of food assistance.	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	45.45% 5	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	11	3.73
Continue to coordinate food purchasing collaboratively across pantries and meal sites, focusing particularly healthy fresh food from local farms.	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	63.64% 7	11	4.09
Offer and promote food preparation, menu planning, and cooking classes that focus on easy and affordable healthy foods.	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	63.64% 7	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	11	3.36
Advocate for changes to SNAP, Double-Up Food Bucks, and WIC in order to increase access and purchases of fresh and healthy foods by those receiving benefits.	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	11	3.45
Advocate for changes to federal policy in order to expand who qualifies for public food assistance benefits.	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	18.18% 2	18.18% 2	45.45% 5	11	3.82
Create a standard "intake" form and/or a community-based data gathering system across public and private entities in order to assess needs, plan, and provide food assistance more effectively. (Like the tool presented by DMARC.)	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	50.00% 5	0.00% 0	40.00% 4	10	3.70
Work with those in the communities who are responsible for addressing needs related to affordable housing.	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	54.55% 6	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	11	3.45
Work with those in the communities who are responsible for addressing needs related to affordable child care.	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	11	3.45
Work with those in the communities who are responsible for addressing needs related to transportation options.	18.18% 2	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	11	3.18
Work with those in the communities who are responsible for addressing needs related to wages.	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	45.45% 5	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	11	3.45
Increase the number of community gardens.	20.00% 2	20.00% 2	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	40.00% 4	10	3.20
Connect with restaurants to explore ways to partner.	9.09% 1	36.36% 4	45.45% 5	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	11	2.64
Work together to communicate and market the resources that are available to those in need of food assistance support.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	27.27% 3	9.09% 1	63.64% 7	11	4.36
Help individuals navigate the food assistance service network.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	18.18% 2	45.45% 5	11	4.09
Develop a food security plan for the community.	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	27.27% 3	18.18% 2	45.45% 5	11	4.00
Address the stigma associated with seeking assistance.	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	63.64% 7	11	4.09
Create a food policy or food security council.	18.18% 2	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	0.00% 0	45.45% 5	11	3.55
Increase education about health and nutrition.	0.00% 0	9.09% 1	54.55% 6	0.00% 0	36.36% 4	11	3.64

**“How do you want to stay involved?”**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Volunteer	54.55% 6
Advocate on behalf of the community and community members' needs	45.45% 5
Continue to provide direct food assistance to those experiencing food insecurity	81.82% 9
Fill a gap in the system (informed by Asset Map)	27.27% 3
Participate in collaborative data collection and analysis to inform decision-making	18.18% 2
Be involved in collaborative decision-making across entities	18.18% 2
Provide funding	9.09% 1
Provide non-financial resources (food, materials, facilities, services)	45.45% 5
Stay informed (receive emails and updates, follow Northwest Food Coalition and partners on social media)	72.73% 8
Other (please specify)	18.18% 2
Total Respondents: 11	

**“Are you currently a member of the Northwest Food Coalition?”**

