

Outcomes of the Infrastructure Grant Fund

The Infrastructure Fund was provided to strengthen the capability and resilience of the community food distribution network, supporting people experiencing food insecurity, including those required to self-isolate due to COVID-19. The funding was intended to expand the capability and capacity of an existing local food hub or establish a new local food hub.

Local food hubs (Hubs) in this context are organisations that receive food in bulk from national or local sources, then sort and distribute this food to community food providers who work directly with those experiencing food insecurity. In some cases, some community food providers also picked up a food hub function in addition to their community food provider role.

In 2022, **98 organisations** received contributory grants for 18 months. The grant amounts varied from **\$5,000 to \$300,000**, with one organisation, the Student Volunteer Army, receiving \$550,000 to support their grocery distribution model. The total funding issued to organisations was **\$8,426,872**.

This report covers what infrastructure was invested in and key themes of how this impacted on food hubs capacity to distribute food.

Infrastructure investment

Hubs used the funding for a variety of operational or capital expenditure to fit out and operate their community food hubs. Most of the hubs used funding to fit out storage spaces and to move and store food safely. The key investment categories are detailed below. Some Hubs gave details of numbers of items purchased, while others gave summaries of the category of purchases, so numbers given below are indications, and likely higher than detailed.



Hubs reported **distributing over 340,000 food parcels and 4.8 million kilograms** of food over the course of the Infrastructure Fund.

Note: the total distribution of food is likely higher than what this data snapshot shows

Moving bulk food – vehicles, trailers, trolleys, freight

- **45** vehicles to pick up and transport food were purchased.
 - » This included 5 trucks, 15 vans, 8 forklifts and 3 electric vehicles.
- **5** trailers and 1 tractor were purchased.
- **31** trolleys, pallet movers, and pallet stackers were purchased.
- **11** other vehicles were leased.
- **6** Hubs also detailed freight and delivery costs.

Premises – land, warehouses, containers

- **15** shipping containers, Portacombs and storage sheds were purchased. 2 containers were leased.
- **21** premises were leased. This included land for storage containers, additional storage spaces or warehouse space.
- **4** Hubs utilised funding toward the purchase of permanent premises.

Chilled and frozen food storage

- **72** fridge, freezers or chillers of various types were purchased.
 - » **41** freezers – including free standing, chest and walk in.
 - » **16** chillers including 1 mobile chiller, and trailer chiller.
 - » **8** fridge/freezers.

Ambient Food storage

- **32** purchases of shelving, pallet racking, tables, and workbenches.
- **13** air-conditioning units and heat pumps were purchased.
- **3** Hubs installed heating, and 2 Hubs installed fans.

Information Technology

- **44** purchases of Information Technology (IT) equipment, including laptops, cell phones, GPS for vehicles, printers, and radios.
- IT support by 11 Hubs to setup a variety of systems including phone, website, delivery tracking and databases/inventory management systems.

Other fit out and general operating expenses

- Security features including cameras, lighting and locks.
- Safety equipment.
- **3** generators.
- Concreting to enable containers to be placed on site, or transport food inside.
- Costs of tradespeople.
- General operating expenses including packaging products, power, phone and insurance.

Wages and Salaries

- **19** Hubs used funding for wages and salaries to meet increased demand.

Impact of investment

This section outlines how investment impacted on the Hubs capacity to distribute food. The top ten key themes were:

Category	Count
Increased capacity and ability to store bulk food	54
Efficiency	30
Health and safety	17
Meeting the needs of community - Māori, Pasifika and ethnic communities	15
Geographic spread and rural areas	12
Capacity to store at frozen or chilled	11
COVID response	9
Greater variety and a more continuous supply for providers with storage capacity	8
Increased demand	8
Collaboration	7

The themes of impact of investment are outlined in detail below.

Increased capacity and ability to store bulk food

- Most Hubs noted an ability to scale up their operations, with a significantly increased capacity to store and distribute food due to the investment. There were examples of capacity being increased by 30-60%.
- Investment enabled Hubs the ability to store frozen and chilled food, often not available before.
- Increased and appropriate storage capacity enabled hubs to:
 - » collect and accept bulk deliveries (in pallets) from the New Zealand Food Network
 - » be able to accept local donations, previously turned away
 - » distribute a greater variety and more continuous supply of food products to community food providers
 - » store food at appropriate temperatures to meet food safety regulations
 - » improve the quality, freshness, and longevity of food
 - » reduce food waste due to the ability to store appropriately.

Efficiencies enabled increased volumes to be distributed to the community safely

- Investments in suitable premises and logistics (vehicles, trolleys, signage) to move bulk food increased efficiencies in loading, unloading, sorting, and storage. This also ensured that a physically safe working environment for staff and volunteers was created.
- Hubs who purchased or leased vehicles noted the efficiency gains of using fit for purpose vehicles. This saw a reduction in the number of trips to pick up and deliver, and shorter loading and unloading times.
- Hubs noted that these efficiencies reduced the workload on staff and volunteers, and ultimately increased the amount of food collected and distributed to the community.

Covid 19 saw the increased activity and need in the Tamaki Makaurau for kai. MUMA Whānau services implemented a fit for purpose warehousing unit to manage volumes. Investment in equipment such as racking systems, fork hoists, trucks, pallet trollies enabled MUMA to meet the demand, maximising storage and efficiency. This also improved the overall Health and Safety operations of the food hub and promoted a greater emphasis on the team's physical wellbeing.

Post-Covid, the hub now serves as the logistics centre in partnership with the Auckland City Mission to support people in South Auckland to have continued access to kai.



Investment enabled the unique needs of a community to be met, including further emergency events

- Hubs noted that the investment enabled them to meet the increased demand caused by COVID 19 and enabled them to respond to further events such as Cyclone Gabrielle.
- There were a variety of organisations with different approaches, including those who had a Kaupapa Māori approach, were iwi or Pasifika led or supported the needs of ethnic communities. These Hubs reported reaching those who may not have engaged with other providers and being able to meet the cultural needs and food types of their local community.
- Several hubs noted investment enabled Hubs to expand their geographical reach, including to deliver food to rural and isolated communities.
- A few Hubs also noted building adaptations to ensure accessibility.
- Some Hubs noted that there continued to be increased demand that was not met by their increase in donations and capacity.

“Having the warehouse, roller tables and truck available to support the distribution of food in emergencies has enhanced our food resilience in the Manawatu and adjacent regions. Thank you for the important contribution your funding has made to enhancing our food resilience in the Manawatu and beyond.”

– TSA, Palmerston North.

Collaboration and developing partnerships.

- Several Hubs noted that collaboration with other providers was key to ensuring that community needs were met.
- The fit-for purpose spaces and increased capacity enabled some Hubs to develop and strengthen their relationships with local partners and donors.
- Hubs acknowledged the holistic needs of those accessing food support and often worked in partnership with other organisations to refer to services where appropriate.

“The renovated space allows us to clean well, move well, store well, display well and gives our volunteers and customers a space to be proud of.” – Hope Hub, Levin

In summary, over the course of the Infrastructure Fund, investment significantly increased Hubs' capacity and ability to store and distribute bulk food nationwide, while ensuring that it was done in a safe and efficient way. Hubs have also been able to distribute a greater variety and more continuous supply of food products to community food providers.

While Hubs met many challenges responding to the impacts of COVID 19 and Cyclone Gabrielle it is clear that Hubs, and their staff and volunteers, worked incredibly hard to ensure that the needs of their community were met. The investment made into capital items (vehicles and equipment) will support Hubs to continue this work in the medium-long term.