

Outcomes of the Community Food Response Extension Fund

This report provides a review of the impacts and outcomes of the Community Food Response Extension (CFRE) Fund. This review covers provider's work distributing food parcels, rescuing food, increasing food security, and the challenges they faced along the way. Examples of good practice are included.

Background

Community Food Response Extension (CFRE) funding supported community food organisations to meet the increased demand for food support. The intention of the funding was to support community food providers as they transitioned from emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, towards longer term food security outcomes. Providers could use their contributory grants towards both operational and capital costs.

In 2022, **240 applicants** received funding totalling **\$12,800,000**. Grants varied from \$5,000 to \$700,000, with an **average grant of \$60,000**.

These grants were for a 12-month period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

CFRE funding supported a wide range of initiatives including foodbanks, community food hubs (organisations that receive food in bulk then sort and distribute to community food providers), food rescue (collecting surplus food from donors to distribute), pātaka kai (food pantry/storage), food skill workshops, vegetable gardens, and kai for whānau. A few providers delivered affordable food initiatives and some used a social supermarket model. These initiatives were led by a variety of funded service providers including community groups, Māori, Pasifica or faith based and social service providers.

Thematic analysis for this report is based on a sample of 50 of the 228 final reports produced by providers who received funding and supports the outcomes of the [Community Food Response](#) (CFR) funding review.

From August 2022 to July 2023 providers reported:

- **702,340** food parcels were provided to low-income communities.
- **7,061,449 Kgs** of food was delivered by food hubs.

There was a wide range of food rescued, from 90% in a large hub (that specialise in food rescue and distribution) to 0-5% in a remote foodbank (that relied on charitable donations).

An average of **51%** of food used by providers for food parcels was rescued from supermarkets, or food networks that distribute rescued or donated food.



Themes from provider reporting

MSD funding increased the capacity of foodbanks to provide those in need with food parcels

Most organisations used this funding to help increase the amount of free food parcels they could provide to their communities. This helped address food insecurity in the short term for over 700,000 families in low-income communities nationwide. They were meeting an increase in food demand as an impact of COVID-19 and the increasing cost of living.



Supergrans Tairawhiti preparing meals for their community

CFRE funding was mainly received by foodbanks. They increased capacity by collaborating with other organisations for financial support and donations of food. Foodbanks faced challenges as capacity increased. They had some customers that had complex needs and were facing difficult situations. They referred customers to other social services such as budgeting skills. As foodbanks faced the pressure of high demand for food and decreasing supply of donated and rescued food, they had to streamline services.

MSD funding meant food provider capacity was increased to meet food demand from both the impact of COVID 19 and cost-of-living pressures. Funding was used to hire skilled staff that

increased productivity. Equipment was purchased such as vans and trucks that increased capability to rescue or receive donated food. This investment into capital items will support this work to continue in the medium-long term.

For example, Nourished for Nil increased their capacity to provide free food parcels in the Hawkes Bay, five days a week from four locations (Hastings, Flaxmere, Camberley, Napier). They primarily operate as a food rescue, but also as a foodbank and recently added a social supermarket, with support from donations and funding. Nourished for Nil are passionate about rescuing food from cafes and supermarkets to feed local people and benefit the environment. The social supermarket is designed to offer a dignified experience for those in need, providing groceries at minimal or no cost through a points system within a traditional supermarket setting.

Food providers were supported by food hubs and community gardens that increased healthy food supply in the long term

Foodbanks are receiving rescued food from food hubs and produce from vegetable gardens in addition to donations. Food hubs were funded to support foodbanks by distributing rescued and donated food to them. Food hubs often improved their effectiveness with the purchase of new equipment, for example a chiller purchased by Christian Social Services Taranaki can mean more fresh food was rescued. CFRE funding was often used for staff, equipment, food and overhead costs.

Food hubs faced the challenge of higher demand but reduced supermarket donations. “We have noticed a change in the amount of food available for collection due to supermarkets becoming more savvy with their stock management. We have also noticed a lack of available funding has forced us to restrict our growth plans and we are only able to maintain our current level of service”.

Community gardens also supported foodbanks with vegetables to improve nutrition. They were funded along with home gardens and seedlings. These have the benefit of both increasing healthy food and enabling activity and self-sufficiency.



Refugee Orientation Centre
Trust mentoring session

Large community gardens and food skills workshops are providing food security in the long term

Large vegetable gardens and māra kai are able to provide high volumes of food to low income communities. With investment in productive equipment, volunteers are more likely to work in the gardens long term. For example, in Tolaga Bay a māra kai produced 1 tonne of kūmara that was distributed to whānau around the East Cape and as far as Wainuiomata (Wellington). This tonne of kūmara would have cost \$10,000 in the supermarket. They faced challenges with bad weather, that led to a smaller crop and had trouble with gardening equipment breakdown. MSD funding was used for a tractor that increased production and volunteering. Gardening skills workshops supported whānau with cultural connections and the ability to provide for themselves.

Community Food Response Extension funding provided emergency support for people affected by weather events

CFRE funding has contributed to a network of food hubs and foodbanks. The investment in equipment such as vans and chillers has improved the efficiency of food hubs and enabled them to support people in hardship in an emergency.

Flood support was provided in Auckland, Northland and East Coast, in the form of food and necessities. CFRE funding was available before Cyclone Gabrielle (February 2023) and food providers were able to respond very quickly to communities that were impacted. Providers noted that in Auckland the response was difficult as staff for support services were not available on the weekend and demand for assistance such as accommodation, food, emergency equipment and social services was high. Food providers faced significant demand with the limitations of existing food grants.

Collaboration was essential when Taupo Community Foodbank found a way to support the East Coast. They had contacts who were essential workers that helped with road access, and distribution to the right places. They volunteered to help supply impacted communities in Napier and Gisborne with over 5 tonnes of produce.

Volunteers appreciated funding to support those in need

Food providers were often staffed by volunteers. Volunteers found supporting others rewarding, especially when referrals to social services meant foodbank customers gained skills and independence. “Volunteers get to participate in a meaningful cause and make a positive impact on the community. Volunteering at a food bank can be an enriching experience, allowing them to connect with others and give back to society.”

Volunteer growers took pride in tonnes of produce that was donated from farms to foodbanks and those in need.

Most reports mentioned that food parcel recipients were grateful to be able to provide for their families in times of hardship. MSD would like to express our thanks to all those who have volunteered in foodbanks and food hubs, your work is appreciated.

Impact of CFRE funding

In summary, the CFRE Fund supported foodbanks to keep up with demand to support those in need due to the impacts of COVID 19 and increasing costs of living, alongside food hubs and community gardens. This means there is likely to be an ongoing supply of rescued food and fresh vegetables in low-income communities. This investment has meant foodbanks and food hubs have also been able to provide food support in emergencies, with the help of volunteers.



Checking and harvesting Kūmara



Vision West moving food in response to the weather events in Auckland.

