



The Development of Decentralized Neighborhood Food Hubs



A Best Practices Roadmap

Table of Contents

Part 1
Who We Are **1**

Part 2
Executive Summary..... **3**

Part 3
Thesis Statement and Definitions..... **6**

Part 4
Wholesale..... **11**

Part 5
Non-profit + Cooperative Grocers..... **15**

Part 6
Community Engagement..... **20**

Part 7
Community Kitchen + Incubator..... **27**

Part 8
Retail/Cafe **32**

Part 9
Summary of Recommendations **35**

Part 10
References **38**

Part 1

Who We Are

The Visionary Weavers





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Nausher is a food equity practitioner, currently leading strategic expansion for Red Rabbit. His work focuses on providing nutritious and culturally familiar food to public school children from underserved communities. Nausher's impact to date has focused on international education and financial inclusion in Chile and Pakistan. Nausher's approach to social development leverages human-centered design with the aim of creating equitable systems.



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Diana is a Filipina immigrant and speaks fluent Tagalog. She leads the Food Access Program and is part of the Capacity Building team at City Harvest; she supports and helps increase capacity of emergency food programs in the City Harvest network and food retailers as well as recommends solutions to maximize program capacity and improve the distribution of healthy food. Diana attended National College of Business and Arts in the Philippines and majored in marketing. Diana loves gardening, collecting indoor plants and retail comp shopping.



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Ezra is a city planner and manager of the Greater East Midtown Unit at the NYC Department of City Planning. Ezra has a deep background in planning and public space design, and collaborates with developers, legal teams, architects, landscape architects and local stakeholders to deliver equitable development and a world-class public realm in Midtown Manhattan. Ezra holds an MSc in City Design and Social Science from the London School of Economics and a BA in Urban Studies from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.



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Fernando is a sustainable designer and Borough Director for NYCEDC managing Government and Community Relations. He was a city planner for the NYC Department of City Planning-Bronx Office. Fernando started his career as a Community Organizer for THE POINT Community Development Corporation, and he has worked on environmental justice in the South Bronx and studied across four continents. His experience includes collaborating with Native American tribes, and he specializes in community engagement as well as teaches sustainability management at Columbia University. Fernando holds a MSc in Sustainability Management from Columbia University, a MDes in Sustainable Design from the Boston Architectural College and a BA from Pratt Institute.



Kelvin Taitt

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Kelvin is a social entrepreneur and community organizer from Brooklyn and the co-founder of East Brooklyn Mutual Aid (EBMA), which he helped to launch in April 2020. Kelvin was also the Director of Strategic Growth and Operations at The Corbin Hill Food Project, a New York City nonprofit dedicated to distributing local, farm-fresh food, to low-income communities and communities of color. Previously, Kelvin served as the Director of Operations at Brooklyn Packers, a worker-owned and Black-led food distribution cooperative, where Kelvin built out an infrastructure that delivers farm-fresh produce to households on a weekly basis. Kelvin has an extensive background in operations and logistics management from his time in big-box consumer retail and as an entertainment producer, tour and logistics manager.

Part 2

Executive Summary

Introduction



In this report, we have explored different approaches to increase access to healthy and affordable food in neighborhoods characterized by limited choices and high-priced and unhealthy food. From our experience, we first adapted the USDA definition of a food hub for circumstances of neighborhoods like ours with few affordable and healthy food options as a result of the highly centralized food system in the United States. Our adaptation identified four crucial aspects of a neighborhood food hub:

- *Buys from small- and mid-sized Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) providers*
- *Stores and distributes food, either to other businesses or to consumers directly*
- *Sells affordable, prepared, nutritious, on-the-go food*
- *Provides services and facilities to strengthen entrepreneurship and build resilience in the community served*

For the purpose of our research, we have developed our analysis and recommendations based on a specific neighborhood archetype. The neighborhoods and affiliated communities we analyzed are geographically small, densely populated, located in urban cities, have below average purchasing power, insufficient food access and are predominantly populated by people of color. The recommendations will work to serve such an archetype most efficiently, but can also be contextualized to serve communities with differing profiles.

Furthermore, our recommendations are tailored to expand food access, affordability, availability and maximize efforts of food sovereignty amongst these communities. A core element of food sovereignty for communities of color is ensuring representation and participation of providers of color in the supply chain. Thus, we emphasize the prioritization of these providers across all functions of a neighborhood food hub. Food sovereignty serves as an intangible but indispensable element in the development of localized food solutions.

The varied elements of the neighborhood food hub we will illustrate in this report are meant to cater to multiple population segments. From those seeking social services to subsidize their grocery expenditure, to mid-sized entrepreneurs leveraging community kitchens to scale their businesses. Our recommendations are tiered to capture the needs of most segments of the population.

We will highlight several findings from the case studies conducted.

1. *The inclusion of BIPOC growers involves action in several components. Wholesalers have to commit to purchasing and investing in BIPOC providers. Nonprofit and cooperative grocers have to prioritize sourcing from BIPOC providers including revenue investment in cultivating these entrepreneurs. Retail cafes should include sources from BIPOC providers and be aware of cultural needs.*
2. *Government investment plays a role in leveling the playing field for neighborhood*

food hubs. Government investment is needed to increase the organization and operational capacity of wholesalers. Government subsidies are needed for mission-driven grocers to maximize their ability to source from BIPOC producers and also sell the goods at an affordable price.

3. Community engagement must be infused with a trauma-informed approach. The lack of access to nutritious and affordable food or living through food insecurity is a traumatic experience involving a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being and eliciting intense feelings of helplessness, terror and lack of control. Creating a trauma-informed organizational culture involves training staff and creating a trauma-informed space. Using trauma-informed principles in the design and extension of such services maximizes engagement of community members and stakeholders in the process. The improved engagement forms the foundation of effective service delivery and the ultimate success of the food hub.
4. Support entrepreneurship in the community. Community kitchen + incubators are vehicles for empowerment by working with community members to pursue their business ideas. They can provide differentiated programming and offer mentorship, financial subsidies and access to markets. Resident entrepreneurs can be drawn from vulnerable populations and prioritize their knowledge to increase product-market fit.
5. Provide affordable and healthy prepared food. The model of retail/cafes can become responsive to the community by adopting a business model that targets economically vulnerable populations. They can serve the community by offering a diversity in products and prices and accepting payment from SNAP/EBT.



Therefore, we conceive a successful neighborhood food hub as a decentralized collective of service providers aimed at addressing issues of food inequity, food access, affordability and availability through the provision of raw and finished food products and food-related wrap-around social services and economic empowerment. Such aspects will allow community members to be involved in all parts of the food hub.

Part 3

Thesis Statement

And Definitions



Neighborhood Food Hub – Defined

The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) working definition of a food hub is “a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products, primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand” (Matson et al., 2015). Though this is an accurate definition, the dry and technocratic language makes it difficult to understand by most people outside the food industry.

In more simple language, we envision that a neighborhood food hub:

- *Buys from small- and mid-sized Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) providers*
- *Stores and distributes food, either to other businesses or to consumers directly*
- *Sells affordable, prepared, nutritious, on-the-go food*
- *Provides social services and shared facilities to strengthen entrepreneurship and build economic resilience in the community served*

A neighborhood food hub is a system suited to provide these services by acknowledging that food justice is community empowerment, and is scaled to a specific community, which may number in the thousands, tens of thousands, or, in the context of a large city like New York, may serve a community with a hundred thousand residents.



Food access comes down to affordability and economic empowerment. A neighborhood food hub that supports sustainably grown food should also be fair to workers and is forward-thinking in its sourcing. Wholesale practices should offer affordable food where it’s needed most. It can—and should—be a building block of community food sovereignty.

In our view, the contemporary food system has become increasingly centralized over time, largely due to shifts in both production and consumption, as well as the advantages of economies of scale. In some cases, this centralization has further increased the disparities for areas that mainstream food systems have underinvested in and underserved. For communities living in these underserved circumstances—the acknowledged gaps in the mainstream food



system—ingenuity, entrepreneurship, resilience, self-reliance, intergenerational knowledge, coalition building and collective action have all been harnessed to establish a more just and food sovereign template for the next generation’s foodscape. We aim to address the disadvantages of the centralized contemporary food system by encouraging the creation of a system of smaller, food sovereignty hubs with many centers.

Therefore, we propose the solution of a neighborhood food hub as a decentralized collective of service providers aimed at addressing issues of food inequity, food access, affordability and availability through the stable/ready/consistent provision of raw and finished food products and food-related wrap-around social services and economic empowerment.

Below we’ve outlined and defined five key components, which we believe are integral to the operation (wholesale, community engagement, retail/café, nonprofit and cooperative grocers, community kitchen + incubator) of a successful neighborhood food hub Each food hub component has been elaborated upon and analyzed in the following section.

1. Wholesale

According to the USDA definition, food wholesaling is the stage in which goods are assembled, stored, and transported to customers, retailers, food service operators or other wholesalers (Matson et al., 2015). We envision that the wholesale component of a neighborhood food hub would serve as a small-to-medium-scale food distributor that builds relationships with BIPOC producers and connects their products with other retailers or delivers it directly to consumers. Wholesalers help place BIPOC producers’ goods on shelves and in front of consumers who these producers may not otherwise reach. A neighborhood food hub with a wholesale component would seek to invest in BIPOC producers through zero-interest loans and direct investment programs.

2. Nonprofit and Cooperative Grocers

Nonprofit and cooperative grocers/marketplaces are distinct from one another. Both have a key role to play in expanding access to affordable, nutritious food. We believe that a neighborhood food hub should either house or have a close working relationship with one of these models of choice-based grocers. Nonprofit grocers aren’t typically trying to offer emergency food aid to people in extreme poverty; they aim to cater to the working poor or

those on fixed incomes, providing access and choice in neighborhoods that may lack both. Nonprofit markets or grocery stores are usually smaller than 7,000 square feet and often receive government grants, donations, volunteer time, and charge for membership to maintain operations (Ahmed, 2022).

A cooperative grocer, also known as a food co-op, is a food distribution outlet organized as a cooperative rather than a private or public company. Food cooperatives are owned and democratically governed by its members, who can be workers or customers of the business. The goal of a cooperative grocer is to meet the needs and aspirations of its members rather than accumulate a profit. Any profit generated by the business is reinvested or returned to its members based on their use and membership in the cooperative (Neighborhood Food Co-op Association, n.d.). As noted, we believe that a successful neighborhood food hub should either contain or network directly with a nonprofit or cooperative grocer (or, ideally, both) in order to: (1) improve food access and choice with dignity (by moving beyond the emergency food system), and (2) to build equity in the community through communal ownership and reinvestment in the local food system.

3. Community Engagement

Community engagement seeks to improve engagement of the community to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, decision-making or implementation. To be successful, it must encompass strategies and processes that are sensitive to the community context in which it occurs (Penn State, 2022). In easier-to-understand language, community engagement is the process of interweaving an organization, its operations and values with the community served.

For a neighborhood food hub to have a successful community engagement strategy, the organization must be trauma-informed from top to bottom. More details on what it means for an organization to be trauma-informed and cultivate a shared trauma-informed language are provided in the community engagement chapter of this roadmap.



4. Community Kitchen + Incubator

Demand for low-cost kitchen space has led to the development and proliferation of shared commercial kitchens that can be rented for hourly or monthly rates. The difference between a shared community kitchen and a community kitchen + incubator is that an incubator aims to provide an education in running a food-based business to help empower an entrepreneur to scale their idea or product. These services could be offered for free, for a low fee, or for a stake in future earnings (Danovich, 2016). A neighborhood food hub includes on-site community kitchen + incubator services or is closely networked with a nearby partner organization that combines these services with workforce development training, cold storage and similar infrastructure to support, seed, and scale micro-entrepreneurship and workforce development training.

5. Retail/Cafe

Neighborhood-scale food retail often takes the form of cafes or establishments that serve prepared food. In the context of this roadmap, we're envisioning that a neighborhood food hub would include a retail establishment that provides affordable, healthy, grab-and-go, ready-to-eat meals. These meals and ingredients would be attuned to and sensitive to the community it serves and would provide a menu emphasizing fruits, vegetables and fresh food.

Methodology

Our methodology involved in-person and internet research on regional food hubs, and interviews with the visionaries, entrepreneurs, their staff, BIPOC providers, community-based organizations, city agencies and non- and for-profit businesses.



Part 4

Wholesale

Component #1



According to the USDA definition, food wholesaling is the stage where goods are assembled, stored, and transported to customers, retailers, food service operators or other wholesalers (USDA, 2021). A wholesaler is a middleman between a manufacturer and a retail establishment. Wholesalers obtain large quantities of produce from growers at a lower price and sell them to retailers or other businesses. These businesses in turn sell from their storefronts to end consumers (Ward, 2020). Wholesalers differ from distributors because they tend to be product agnostic and work more at the behest of the retailer than the producer.

We envision that the wholesale component of a neighborhood food hub would serve as a small- to medium-scale food distributor that builds relationships with BIPOC providers and connects their products with other retailers or delivers it directly to consumers. These wholesalers would help place BIPOC providers' goods on shelves and in front of consumers, who the producers may not be able to otherwise reach. A neighborhood food hub with a wholesale component would seek to invest in BIPOC producers through zero-interest loans and direct investment programs.



We envision that the wholesale component of the food system would increase access to affordable, nutritious and usable foods in restaurants, bodegas, corner stores, supermarkets and other retailers in their communities. We envision that wholesalers would work directly with sustainable local farmers and regional producers. By selling to a wide variety of wholesale customers with smaller purchasing budgets, wholesalers can in return serve their communities with affordable foods.



The overarching issue for the wholesaling industry is that sustainable family farms and BIPOC producers are struggling for success and for market access, while institutions and other wholesale buyers of food are struggling to meet their customers' growing preference for healthy, affordable, sustainably-sourced food. As consumers become increasingly aware of the implications that their choices exert on food justice and on environmental justice, they in turn want affordable food sourced from sustainable producers that fairly treat their workers, provide a living wage and foster connections within communities served.

Today, most small- and mid-sized wholesale buyers have different needs and requirements for purchasing food than individual consumers. These obstacles between farmers and would-be wholesale purchasers are harming both groups and the region at large. This threatens land and agricultural heritage, and the freshest and healthiest food becomes unavailable to the people who would most benefit from it (The Common Market, 2018).

Case Study: The Common Market (Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Texas)

The Common Market is a forward-thinking non-profit wholesale organization with an expanding presence in the mid-Atlantic, the Southeast and Texas. Their mission is to improve food security by connecting communities with healthy food from sustainable family farms. Their approach raises the visibility of family farms and promotes community and ecological health by directly linking and showcasing these arms of the supply chain. The Common Market (2018) provides opportunities for sustainable, family farms and BIPOC providers by purchasing and delivering their food wholesale to anchor institutions like hospitals and universities, as well as community organizations, private and public schools, retailers and restaurants (NYCFPC, 2019).

Their mission is to improve food security, farm viability, and community and ecological health. Since 2008, The Common Market has distributed over \$28 million worth of local foods from more than 200 sustainable family farms and producers. They believe that improved food access and economic opportunities positively impact the health and wealth of vulnerable families and communities in regions across the United States (NYCFPC, 2019).

The Common Market is dedicated to strengthening regional food systems, developing fair wholesale markets, improving public health and food access and promoting the viability of small- and mid-scale farms. In addition to connecting consumers to farmers, they also work



to educate their audiences. They produce and publish a range of reports, expecting to leverage the impact of their work by sharing their experiences. In addition to their wholesale distribution, The Common Market runs a farm-to-workshop program. Similar to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), The Common Market Farm Share makes it easy for consumers to support family farms and eat well throughout the year. By joining the farm share program, consumers can select from bi-weekly deliveries of local produce, artisanal cheese, yogurt, fresh bread, poultry and meat. The produce is delivered to participating workplaces, schools, or places of worship, delivering to the consumers where it's most convenient (NYCFPC, 2019).

A key aspect of The Common Market's model is offering zero-interest loans to BIPOC providers to help them scale their operations. These loans are typically allocated to improving access to land and capital, which are two of the greatest systemic barriers facing BIPOC providers. In turn, these providers are able to scale and increase their market access through Common Market's wholesale arm. In the mid-Atlantic region in particular, a key challenge for the Common Market is finding and partnering with BIPOC providers, which increases the imperative to invest in and cultivate the ecosystem. This challenge is not fully explained by the lack of BIPOC producers or their visibility. The Common Market finds that BIPOC providers are reluctant to partner with wholesalers and prefer to maintain autonomy over what they sell and to whom.

Recommendations:

- **Purchase from and invest in BIPOC providers.** Support, prioritize and purchase from identified BIPOC providers across the region. Provide connection between growers and customers. Consistently invest in BIPOC growers to support growth and increase capacity to meet the demand of the community in need.
- **Sourced locally and regionally.** Cultivate relationships with local and regional producers. Offer extensive variety and seasonal products grown within 200-miles of the retail location. Champion local products and increase their market visibility and availability.
- **Government investment to increase organizational + operational capacity.** For the government to help subsidize and invest in the organizational and operational infrastructure of the food hub, such as zero or low-interest loans for operational costs, investment in warehousing and technology, plus cold storage and trucking.
- **Accessible to other small businesses + institutions in the community.** To provide a wide range of products and services to restaurants, bodegas, corner stores, supermarkets, and other anchor institutions such as hospitals, schools, and food pantries.
- **Tech-forward.** To utilize an accessible technology system to easily track inventory, product lists, prices, to create a digital pipeline direct from farm to consumer. Able to accept all kinds of payments and benefits in the system.

Part 5

Nonprofit and Cooperative Grocers

Component #2



Nonprofit and cooperative grocers/marketplaces are distinct from one another, and both have a key role to play in expanding access to affordable, nutritious food. We believe that a neighborhood food hub should either house or have a close working relationship with one of these models of choice-based grocers. Non-profit grocers do not typically offer emergency food aid to people in extreme poverty; they aim to cater to people on low or fixed incomes, providing access and choice in neighborhoods that may lack both. Non-profit markets or grocery stores are usually smaller than 7,000 square feet and often receive government grants, donations, volunteer time, and charge for membership to maintain operations (Ahmed, 2022). A cooperative grocer (also known as a food co-op) is a food distribution outlet organized as a cooperative rather than a private or public company. Food cooperatives are owned and democratically governed by its members who can be workers or customers of the business. The goal of a cooperative grocer is to meet the needs and aspirations of its members rather than accumulate a profit. Any profit generated by the business is reinvested or returned to its members based on their use of and membership in the cooperative (NFCA, n.d.).

As noted, we believe that a successful neighborhood food hub should either contain or network directly with a non-profit or cooperative grocer (or, ideally, both) in order to:

- 1. Improve food access and choice with dignity (by moving beyond the emergency food system)*
- 2. To build equity in the community through communal ownership and reinvestment in the local food system*

These types of marketplaces are a key vehicle for expanding market access and opportunities for BIPOC providers and producers, who form a key pillar of an equitable foodscape. While sourcing from BIPOC providers, neighborhood food hubs aim to create value up and down the food supply chain and build equity at both the production and retail level by housing or supporting cooperative grocers.

Case Study: Bargain Grocery (Utica, New York)

Bargain Grocery in Utica, New York, is an innovative non-profit grocer that does not rely on grants and financial donations to sustain their business, and offers a scalable model for how to turn a non-profit market into a vehicle for community investment. Bargain Grocery is the marketplace arm of a food security community-based non-profit, the Compassion Coalition that serves Utica. In turn, Bargain Grocery's model is targeted more towards food security than food sovereignty, but aims to innovate by offering choice and affordable produce at prices far lower than typical big-box stores.





Bargain Grocery identified a niche market in the food procurement process—buying salvage. Buying salvaged goods means purchasing produce and shelf-stable items that are near expiration but are good to sell, allowing Bargain Grocery to acquire nutritious food at a fraction of the cost and to pass those savings to customers. They purchase salvaged goods that were overproduced (i.e. bumper crops), typically from large-scale wholesalers and distributors, paying by the pallet for whatever they can acquire. They supplement their inventory with goods sourced directly from food-product companies; some of which have been so impressed with Bargain Grocery’s mission and efficacy that they’ve partnered with them on an ongoing basis. These partnerships have allowed Bargain Grocery to earn a profit without relying on donations from the mainstream emergency food system. Uniquely, this inventory model also results in a constant rotation of the types of goods, allowing their customers to try new foods. In effect, this allows Bargain Grocery to address food waste and food insecurity at the same time. Among the key amenities is a kitchen that prepares and stocks nutritious grab-and-go meals.

Currently, Bargain Grocery is unable to source from BIPOC providers under this model because purchasing from these types of providers is typically more expensive (due to numerous structural inequalities, including hurdles surrounding access to land, capital and markets). Their aim is to eventually supplement their inventory with food sourced from BIPOC producers, thereby strengthening ties within the upstate local and regional food system.

However, Bargain Grocery has been successful in generating revenue, allowing it through the Compassion Coalition to support community engagement and invest in the local food system. Pastor Mike Servello, the founder, is currently working with officials to help set up independent operations based on the Bargain Grocery model in Albany and Troy, with another project in Syracuse under consideration. We hope that the Bargain Grocery model of minimizing food waste, feeding people and supporting community initiatives will be scaled to sustain more communities in New York (Duff, 2021).

Bargain Grocery’s model results in less overhead spent on procurement and cost of goods sold, allowing more revenue into the store while offering lower price points. We believe that this model should take extra revenue and invest in BIPOC producers through zero-interest

loans, to help them market their goods at a fair rate. We believe that the grocer arm of a neighborhood food hub should help BIPOC farmers to create new markets for themselves, which fosters a more equitable supply chain.

Case Study: Greene Hill Food Co-op (Brooklyn, New York)

Greene Hill Food Co-op is a cooperative grocer located in Brooklyn that serves Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant. They aim to reflect and celebrate the racial and socio-economic diversity of the neighborhoods they serve and to remedy historic inequities around food access. Greene Hill is one of a handful of 100% “working” food cooperatives in the country. They employ a worker-membership system whereby their 500 members contribute shifts of a minimum of 2.5 hours per week in exchange for access to the market. This allows Greene Hill to keep their operating costs low, consistently staff the store and accomplish their critical committee work, all while expanding their merchandise and accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through EBT. Their prices are close to wholesale rates in order to maintain affordable access (Green Hill Food Co-Op, n.d.).

All members have a voice on decisions regarding how the business is run and managed. However, in typical owner-cooperative grocer fashion, they are dependent on membership, which provides a robust form of social and community capital, but also can limit the extent to which they can purchase from BIPOC providers at market rate. They do maintain a small selection from BIPOC providers, but price points can limit the degree to which they can source these goods. This touches on the systemic barriers that BIPOC providers face in terms of market access. Greene Hill’s worker-cooperative model underscores their commitment to democratic and equity-based values and provides for accountability to anti-racist principles of transparency and power sharing (Green Hill Food Co-Op, n.d.).

There could be debate as to whether a 100% worker-membership system could fit seamlessly within a neighborhood food hub’s operational and organizational framework. However there’s no doubt that the shared equity model and ability to keep costs low offer a model of best practices for the grocer arm of a food hub. An organization like Greene Hill would make for an ideal partner organization or coalition member for a neighborhood food hub.



Recommendations:

- **Empowerment through access and consumer choice.** Grocers offer empowerment through access and consumer choice. If a neighborhood food hub wants to move towards true food sovereignty, direct relationships with a non-profit, cooperative or choice-based affordable grocer is a must.
- **Consumer-cooperative model.** The grocer arm of a neighborhood food hub should be a consumer-cooperative as opposed to a worker-cooperative, meaning that it's open to the public and anyone can shop there. Although there are numerous benefits to the collective decision-making in a 100% worker-cooperative, membership costs (or the need to work weekly shifts) can deter users from participating in the organization and accessing the products.
- **BIPOC procurement.** The grocer arm of a neighborhood food hub must prioritize sourcing from BIPOC providers. Currently, many organizational models preclude or limit a food hub or grocer's ability to purchase from BIPOC providers. Where a neighborhood food hub or non-profit/cooperative grocer cannot source from BIPOC providers, revenues should be maximally used to invest in the cultivation of BIPOC entrepreneurs in the foodspace.
- **Government subsidies for BIPOC sourcing.** The state should provide direct and generous subsidies to mission-driven grocers in order to maximize their ability to source from BIPOC producers and sell their goods at a truly accessible and affordable price point.
- **Government investment in food-waste-forward models.** The state should also provide direct and generous subsidies for agile, food-waste-forward grocer models such as Bargain Grocery, so that they can be further scaled and replicated. We believe that this affordable, choice based model (offered by a mission-driven community-based organization) can be a key form of community empowerment. We believe that the state should help scale this model, even when such a grocer is unable to source from BIPOC providers, because it reduces food waste while expanding food access at affordable price points.

Part 6

Community Engagement

Component #3





Beyond land, hard infrastructure and similar critical overhead, community engagement may be the most complex, interdisciplinary and integral component of running a successful neighborhood food hub. The term neighborhood food hub has two components represented in the name. One is to serve as a hub and spoke model that strengthens food sovereignty by “actively managing the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified food products from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand”(Matson et al., 2015, p.). Neighborhood, the other component, means that the hub must be intimately attuned to the needs and experiences of the community served; communities in turn are composed of individuals with numerous life experiences. Living within the gaps and liminal spaces of the mainstream food system can often be a traumatic experience. In straightforward terms, the lack of access to nutritious and affordable food or living through food insecurity is a traumatic experience.

As noted in the definitions section, community engagement is the process of seeking to better engage the community to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, decision-making or implementation. To be successful, it must encompass strategies and processes that are sensitive to the community context where it occurs. In other words, a successful neighborhood food hub recognizes that the people—and by extension the community—form a singularly vital form of soft infrastructure.

A neighborhood food hub interweaves itself with the fabric of the community, allowing for a two-way participatory experience. It capitalizes on the community’s resilience and cultural assets to advance food justice and, ideally, food sovereignty. A neighborhood food hub should overwhelmingly employ people from the community it serves, particularly members viewed by some as more vulnerable, such as youth, those experiencing reentry or those directly experiencing the welfare system.

In our research, we’ve come to understand that ending hunger has nothing to do with giving people free food. For a neighborhood food hub, this means providing access to affordable

food for the community it serves, and by prioritizing employees (themselves an extension of the community) through paying a living wage and providing full benefits. It also means expanding market access and opportunities for BIPOC providers, who form a key pillar of an equitable foodscape. Food is the ultimate way to build community, and a neighborhood food hub aims to forge coalitions between diverse stakeholders across the foodscape in order to put the power of choice in people's hands.

If you're centering a neighborhood food hub around equity and food sovereignty, it has to be community-driven, and that means constant dialogue, collaborative action and investment in the community. This includes accountability, seeking feedback and having the humility and adaptability to listen and to change your program accordingly. It entails the active creation of safe spaces—physically, emotionally and culturally. Sometimes that also means recognizing the hierarchy of immediate needs for your stakeholders and working with social services when necessary. It means understanding the profound interconnectedness and intersectionality of social, economic, legal and health challenges facing your stakeholders.



Our most overarching key takeaway is that, in order to have a successful community engagement strategy that truly advances food justice, a neighborhood food hub must employ a trauma-informed culture to create a safe space for all stakeholders. A trauma-informed organizational culture empowers everyone involved to realize their full potential. It's not a one-way or two-way street, but an iterative, multi-way conversation.

Moreover, a neighborhood food hub must provide wrap-around services, recognizing the complex intersectionality of access to food, living wages, secure housing and access to available services such as childcare, homelessness, tenant and labor rights and others.

What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

According to the American Psychiatric Association, a traumatic experience involves a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being and elicits intense feelings of helplessness, terror and lack of control. A traumatic experience can change a person's view of themselves, their surroundings and the people around them (Martin, 2021).

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a program, organization or system that is trauma informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to

actively resist re-traumatization. When an organization is trauma-informed, it creates a safe space for people as they heal from the impact of difficult life experiences (Martin, 2021).

Organizational practices may unintentionally compound trauma, and trauma-informed programming avoids this re-traumatization. In order to accomplish this at an organizational level, leaders have to be willing to acknowledge mistakes, make adjustments to policies, procedures, and practices that may re-traumatize people served and are willing to address situations that may re-traumatize people served (Martin, 2021).

Trauma Informed Approach and the Scarcity Mentality

As Katie S. Martin (2021) asserts in her groundbreaking new text, *Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries: New Tools to End Hunger*, a key issue holding back the effort to tackle and end hunger and food security is the focus on not having enough. Within charitable food work, and in other nonprofit sectors too, this concept is known as the “scarcity mentality.” This mindset affects both people living in poverty and people working in the emergency food system (and organizations that address food access). In her words, “scarcity mentality is the concern that there isn’t enough—food, money, support, time, and resources. And when you’re worried that there isn’t enough, you make tough choices and create various coping mechanisms. You don’t try new opportunities. You lose hope. You stay in your comfort zone” (Martin, 2021, pp. 46-47). She continues, “Trauma impacts how people access services. People who have experienced ongoing trauma may view the world and other people as unsafe. Those who have repeatedly been hurt by others may come to believe that people cannot be trusted. This lack of trust makes it difficult for families to ask for help, trust providers, or form relationships” (Martin, 2021, p. 61).

Structuring an organization around trauma-informed principles is extremely new in the foodspace, especially in the realm of emergency food, despite the obvious centrality of trauma stemming from food insecurity. Martin contends that the opposite of a scarcity mentality is a “strength-based approach and a feeling of abundance.” She notes that the term strength-based can be used to describe both a way of seeing others and how services are delivered: “recognizing the inherent strengths in others, providing services without judgment, believing there is enough food for everyone, trusting that if you allow clients to choose their food they will take what they need but not more.” (Martin, 2021, p. 50). She notes astutely that many organizations conduct needs assessments to understand weaknesses in a community, whereas more forward-thinking organizations conduct asset mapping to identify the various resources and opportunities within a community.





Case Study: CUMAC (Paterson, New Jersey)*

CUMAC is an innovative food hub serving Paterson, New Jersey and is helmed by visionary Executive Director, Mark Dinglasan, who strives to weave a trauma-informed approach into all aspects of CUMAC's culture and operations. According to Dinglasan, CUMAC's food justice work is a public health issue, first and foremost, and ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) represent "the single biggest public health issue facing society." He's often asked, "How do you find time to do both food justice and trauma work?" He believes that it's the same work—"I think the trauma work was always supposed to be the food justice work, and food is medicine." In Dinglasan's view, building community culture, shared ownership, accountability and capacity-building can diminish the consequences wrought by ACEs; "[we're] building a culture to create a common voice and language, so that everyone is rolling in the same direction. My forklift operators, my market staff, everyone, it has to be personal to them." A key aspiration and measure of success for Dinglasan is if everybody at CUMAC has a living wage and full benefits. He explains, "Anybody gets to call me out if I'm not providing economic power and living wages to my team. And balance in their lives. [We] act our way into thinking rather than thinking our way into acting. And I hope that means empowerment."

As a regional food hub, CUMAC secures, stores and distributes nutritious food and high-quality, shelf-stable products. Food insecurity data and client surveys are employed to determine what foods to source and where it is deployed. Beyond being a hub-and-spoke purveyor, CUMAC provides nutritious and affordable food through its trauma-informed choice marketplace where customers can select foods while being assisted by volunteers who've attended training sessions in ACEs, trauma and resilience. The marketplace is appointment-based and uses iPads to handle customers' orders. CUMAC also uses partner organizations and community volunteers to distribute food, since clients sometimes feel too self-conscious to come to CUMAC in person, associating the services with traumatic experiences around emergency food. CUMAC also has trauma-informed services for assisting customers with enrolling in benefits, an invaluable service because many people's experiences with social services have been negative and traumatizing (CUMAC, n.d.).

* All quotes in this section are from the following interview and forum with Mark Dinglasan: M. Dinglasan, personal communication, May 3, 2022; Dinglasan, M., Meaders, L., Williams, A., & Rivera, A. (2022, March 31). The development of decentralized community food hubs [Forum presentation]. Urban Design Forum, Forefront Fellowship Event Series. New York, NY.

For Dinglasan, the community is 100% in charge of what CUMAC does. He says that “after a month of being in Paterson I was like ‘I see why you rep it so hard, I have no business telling Paterson what it needs.’ So we do quarterly client surveys, food surveys, phone interviews, asking clients to tell us what we’re doing right or wrong. They can share in a safe space, and then we can implement improvements based on what they’re saying. Then we’re continually asking who’s at the table and who’s not.” This level of dialogue would not be feasible without a trauma-informed organizational culture and shared language.

CUMAC’s work is grounded in the ACE interface, which creates a common language and understanding of what helps and what hurts. The aim is to create a change-moment for clients and stakeholders, which allows CUMAC to build a culture of community within its organization and Paterson. CUMAC’s Community Coordination trainer leads weekly conversations about historical and generational trauma with all staff and volunteers. Dinglasan notes that “if you put on your trauma lens, you realize that the people we’re hiring, serving or working with, if they lash out, they aren’t lashing out because of us. What systems have they experienced before they’ve waked into your facility for that appointment?” He explains that sometimes employees experiencing re-entry lash out because, paradoxically, “now they’re safe. When you provide a safe space, it’s not always ‘thank you for this, I’m safe now’... it can be an ‘f-you guys, when’s the next shoe going to drop?’”

A key component of CUMAC’s trauma informed approach is to recognize individual capability and competency by developing caring and competent relationships before building community. As he terms it, “self-regulation before community building”. He says that CUMAC concentrates on individual capabilities through organizational culture and programs, creating a space where people can “have hope” and “recognize that they’re empowered to make choices that will make changes in their lives and their kids’ lives. Only then can you tell somebody to think about it before you lash out.” He refers to Father Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles—“help the individual recognize that they are entitled to feelings of success, of being ‘favored’ and [of being] safe. This goes for clients and team members—any environment where you’re trying to improve productivity and efficacy. Can you use this knowledge... to create a common language?” He puts a spin on an adage: “caring is to try to help the person. Competence is the power to give the person the power to realize that fishing is a thing. Our organizational culture is based on this knowledge. It gives us a little more street cred.”

Creating a trauma-informed, safe space for staff, the community and all stakeholders necessarily extends to the details of the physical space and how stakeholders experience it. CUMAC employs a common-sense space design with attention to detail. Dinglasan asks, “When clients come to you for services, are they overstimulated? Are there sharp edges? Loud music? When people are coming to you for help, is your space a space where people feel safe, or is it triggering? If you want to change behavior, change the environment.” When the community comes to CUMAC, everything is orderly and done by appointment. Customers can punch in grocery orders on an iPad, and there are no limits on fruits and vegetables (Dinglasan notes that “if we’re going to be trauma informed, we have to always have fruits and vegetables, we can’t run out”). To better inform their spatial operations and the experience of their facility, CUMAC conducted focus groups in English and Spanish to ascertain what they were doing right, what they were doing wrong and how could their space be better designed to feel safer. The results were that respondents tended to feel positive about their CUMAC experience. But community members came to CUMAC saying that they had neighbors who were in need, but

were too ashamed to come in, asking “Can I bring extra food to bring to them?” Dinglasan attests that community members want the opportunity to give back. He explains, “In our new space, we’re never going to fully eliminate the line, but we want to minimize the need for people to come into CUMAC. We want to go out to [the community]... [and] our community wants to give back.”

Dinglasan also notes that a key, and under-considered component of the community is the farmer. CUMAC buys from local farms and meat purveyors, noting that a truly equitable food system requires buying from BIPOC farmers. Sometimes BIPOC providers are surprised and confused when CUMAC approaches them looking to purchase at market prices. He emphasizes that “it’s important that everyone has equity and opportunity and can be seen. It’s not perfect, it will never be perfect. But the community is 100% in charge of what we do.”

CUMAC makes for a superlative case study of a neighborhood-scale food hub that successfully employs a trauma-informed organizational culture, wraparound services, and has built and scaled itself with ingenuity and integrity, and puts the community it serves first.

Recommendations:

- **Trauma-informed approach.** *A neighborhood food hub must be trauma-informed as an organization if it wants to properly serve its community. This means that leaders have to be willing to acknowledge mistakes, make adjustments to policies, procedures, and practices that may re-traumatize the people served, and must be willing to address situations that may be re-traumatizing. Creating a trauma-informed organizational culture is hard work, but fosters a shared language, understanding, personal buy-in and accountability for all stakeholders—employees, volunteers, leadership, customers and the community. It creates a culture of shared ownership, mutual respect and shared language.*
- **Trauma-informed space.** *Being trauma-informed extends to the physical, environmental and experiential aspects of the food hub space.*
- **Accountability.** *Be accountable—assess not just the needs of your community, but map its resources and assets and leverage its resilience. Organizational accountability is a multi-way dialogue and requires the humility to listen to your community and adapt accordingly.*
- **Wrap-around Services + culturally-informed educational programs.** *A neighborhood food hub must provide wraparound services for the community, especially those related to enrollment in health, food and nutrition-related benefits.*
- **Empower with dignity, choice and capacity.** *Empower your clients and community with dignity and choice. When operating in a trauma-informed environment, it’s critical to recognize individual capability and competency by developing caring and competent relationships before building community. Self-regulation comes before community building.*

Part 7

Community Kitchen + Incubator

Component #4



A community kitchen often fulfills multiple roles within a micro-entrepreneurial ecosystem. It serves as a physical space for a congregation of like-minded people who are able to gather, discuss and learn from each other and leverage collective expertise and resources. In addition, in its capacity as an incubator, it is an educational complex, where beginning entrepreneurs can learn the fundamentals of food entrepreneurship, and established ones can reduce costs by only paying for space/equipment when needed, thus minimizing fiscal waste. The community kitchen has two major functions:

1. *To provide communal commercial physical kitchen infrastructure to members to use for professional purposes*
 - a. *This infrastructure generally includes commercial ovens, refrigeration, prep stations, baking equipment and can include sophisticated packaging, pasteurization and processing lines*
 - b. *The equipment is generally managed by the kitchen administration and is rented or provided under short-term leases to micro- or small-sized food entrepreneurs*
2. *Culinary business incubation*
 - a. *Educational programming and collective marketing support can be given to community members who desire to establish their own autonomous food business*
 - b. *Upscaling support can be provided to established entrepreneurs so they may increase the scale and reach of their production and distribution capacities*

Community kitchens + incubators significantly lower the barriers to entry for individual food entrepreneurs, both from the perspectives of knowledge disparity and access to physical space. Over the last decade, such kitchens have increased globally and have expanded the number of successful food entrepreneurs in our foodspace.



A neighborhood food hub should include a community kitchen + incubator as a central service. These infrastructure and services are wanted in BIPOC communities throughout the U.S. and can serve as major catalysts in the economic empowerment of individuals and entire communities.

They are force multipliers as the creation of successful food entrepreneurs, who either are incubated within the kitchen or utilize the space, will result in the creation of good-paying food jobs and the subsequent hiring of community members. The provision of such an economic mobility further strengthens the value proposition of a decentralized food hub which focuses on community empowerment.



Currently, a majority of community kitchens, also known as co-production kitchens, are operated by for-profit entities. However, a few notable examples exist of non-profit community kitchens throughout the country, which highlight the efficacy and impact generation potential of such kitchens on community uplift and economic empowerment. Spaces, such as La Cocina in San Francisco, Union Kitchen in DC and The Hatchery in Chicago, all offer community kitchen spaces.

Case Study: Spice Kitchen Incubator (Salt Lake City, Utah)

S.P.I.C.E (Supporting the Pursuit of Community Entrepreneurs), is a community incubator based out of Salt Lake City, Utah. It has partnered with the International Rescue Committee to provide first generation immigrants and refugees with a robust education and community incubation curriculum, along with physical kitchen space.

The program works in two main phases. The pre-incubation phase consists of providing individuals with technical guidance and one-on-one support, seeing them through the business modules of building business and marketing plans, product and menu development including focus groups, credit building and loan counseling, and receiving kitchen and food safety certifications.

The second phase of incubation allows the entrepreneur to rent the commercial kitchen and begin selling their food through various venues such as farmer's markets, festivals, catering events, boxed lunches, and a weekly hot meal pick up service called Spice To Go.¹

The entire program length is expected to be between 2-5 years with the expectation that the entrepreneur is financially and operationally self-sufficient by the end of it and can graduate to their own facilities. S.P.I.C.E's targeting of extremely vulnerable populations and prioritization of technical guidance and business education provides their programming with the necessary depth required to properly help individuals incubate successful food businesses from scratch (Spice Kitchen Incubator, n.d).

Case Study: CommonWealth Kitchen (Boston, Massachusetts)

CommonWealth Kitchen (CWC) is an established and nationally recognized organization, which provides various tracts of education programming/incubation based on the type and maturity level of the food enterprise. CWC serves as a community incubator, which provides five different programs for budding and establish entrepreneurs:

1. *Ready to Launch: a 14-week program which covers the fundamentals of food entrepreneurship, localized for the city of Boston*
2. *Shift Fellowship: a partnership with a renowned distributor, allows CommonWealth kitchen to identify BIPOC-owned businesses and further facilitate their go-to-market strategy and subsidize their costs of operations*
3. *Retail accelerator: the program provides those who already have a food truck or catering business, the business acumen and support to establish a stand-alone retail restaurant*
4. *Cultivate small businesses: a virtual program offered in conjunction with Babson College, which provides budding entrepreneurs from under-invested communities with the opportunity to learn business fundamentals at absolutely no cost*
5. *Restaurant resiliency initiative: funding and production support provided to BIPOC-owned restaurants to help them weather the impact of COVID*

CWC's prioritization of BIPOC-owned businesses and Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBES) in their community incubation programming as a model seeks to infuse equity in the enterprise generation process. Particularly, in a city rife with economic and racial disparity, it becomes an important institution in the creation of community wealth and opportunity for minority households.

Additionally, CWC possesses a co-packing/co-production facility. This arm of the organization allows entrepreneurs working with consumer packaged goods, such as juices, jams, granola bars, to outsource their production and packaging. This facility is available to small- to mid-



sized enterprises, who are looking to secure and fulfill large purchasing orders for retailers, such as grocery stores, bodegas, and online fulfillments.

The ability to learn business fundamentals, germinate the business idea and beta test using the kitchen facilities, then invest in small batch preparations using the shared equipment and then scale to a point where you require a co-packer, all under one roof is a tremendous value proposition. When paired with marketing, distribution, supply chain management and production support that CWC offers, it truly allows these entrepreneurs to expedite their pace of development and simultaneously form an impactful community.

Recommendations:

- ***Differentiated educational programming.*** Provision of differentiated education programming is important in catering to the nuances of respective food enterprise verticals.
- ***Collaborate with larger co-production kitchens.*** Community kitchens can compound their impact by pairing with larger co-production kitchens in order to provide resident entrepreneurs with sufficient upscaling support
- ***Strategic partnerships.*** Community kitchens should form strategic partnerships with financiers, retailers, distributors, educators and producers in order to provide the resident entrepreneurs with mentorship, financial subsidies and sufficient product markets.
- ***Vehicle for empowerment.*** By leveraging a trauma informed approach, community kitchens can be instrumental in identifying vulnerable populations and prioritizing their knowledge and enterprise development whilst ensuring that their cultural and other sensibilities are not only accounted for but can serve as strengths in product/ service differentiation.

Part 8

Retail/Cafe

Component #5



Retail/Cafes are found throughout neighborhood food hubs and can take many forms and shapes such as sit-in cafes, grocery stores, food stands, restaurants. Retail is typically a large percentage of the communities first and sometimes only interaction with food in their neighborhoods as it is the typical point of purchase. Retail/Cafes are the local vendors who interact directly with customers and the community and sell food to them. These spaces also act as public spaces in neighborhood food hubs: places to purchase food, to disseminate information, and to gather. Their role in neighborhood food hubs is to interact with the community and participate in the exchange of goods and as providers. Part of their role is to provide communities with food and goods. There can be many or few retail sources in a neighborhood food hub, and they can range from small, medium to large in size. They can be culturally focused or centered around certain types of food such as vegan.

Case Study: La Marqueta (East Harlem, New York)

La Marqueta is a public market managed by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC)- NYC Public Markets program. Opened in 1936 by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, it is located on Park Avenue between 111th Street-116th Street under the Metro-North railway in the East Harlem neighborhood of Upper Manhattan. It began as an informal gathering space with street cart vendors and stalls where customers could purchase food, medicine and other kinds of goods. In 2009, NYCEDC assumed control of the space, and small businesses were brought in to sell different kinds of foods and goods.

Currently, there are several vendors in La Marqueta selling different varieties of goods such as a bakery, Puerto-Rican food, West-African food and a French-themed restaurant. La Marqueta exemplifies retail/cafe in a neighborhood food hub because not only does it offer various retail options and cafes for the community, it also offers space for community kitchens and has public spaces that can be used by community members for events and programming. They offer programming tailored to the local community and participate in local initiatives such as the annual Halloween parade organized by the Museo del Barrio.



Recommendations:

- **Have a target audience.** Identifying and being aware of vulnerable populations in your community and having a business model that is targeted towards your desired audience.
- **Diversity in products and prices.** Cultural attunement. Understanding the financial and cultural diversity in your neighborhood and meeting those demands at an affordable price point. Offering variety and options.
- **Accessibility + Convenience.** Being accessible in your organizational and spatial ethos. Whether it's payment methods (SNAP/EBT), being accessible in your location (central, safe, accessible to everyone in the community). Accessibility in your practices and operations.
- **Be adaptable/resilient/flexible.** Being able to adapt to the demands and circumstances that your community may be experiencing, and being flexible to meet them where they're at. This could extend to hours of operation, food deliveries, pop-ups and mobility.
- **Social and environmental responsibility.** Sourcing from local, regional and BIPOC providers. Being sensitive to, and aware of other social and environmental needs in your community such as waste diversion and goodwill initiatives. Solidarity with disadvantaged or underserved populations.

Part 9

Summary

Recommendations



Wholesale

- **Purchase and invest in BIPOC providers.** Support, prioritize and purchase from identified BIPOC providers across the region. Provide connection between growers and customers. Consistently invest in BIPOC growers to support growth and increase capacity to meet the demand of the community in need.
- **Sourced locally and regionally.** Cultivate relationships with local and regional producers. Offer extensive variety and seasonal products grown within 200 miles of New York City. Championing local products and increasing their market visibility and availability.
- **Government investment to increase organizational + operational capacity.** For the government to help subsidize and invest in the organizational and operational infrastructure of the food hub, such as zero- or low-interest loans for operational costs, investment in warehouse and technology, plus cold storage and trucking.
- **Accessible to other small businesses + institutions in the community.** To provide a wide range of products and services to restaurants, bodegas, corner stores, supermarkets and other anchor institutions such as hospitals, schools, and food pantries.
- **Tech-forward.** To utilize an accessible technology system to easily track inventory, product lists, prices, to create a digital pipeline direct from farm to consumer. Able to accept all kinds of payments and benefits in the system.

Non-profit + Cooperative Grocer

- **Empowerment through access and consumer choice.** Grocers offer empowerment through access and consumer choice. If a neighborhood food hub wants to move towards true food sovereignty, direct relationships with a non-profit, cooperative or choice-based affordable grocer is required.
- **Consumer-cooperative model.** The grocer arm of a neighborhood food hub should be a consumer cooperative as opposed to a worker cooperative, meaning that it's open to public and anyone can shop there. Although there are numerous benefits to the collective decision-making in a 100% worker cooperative, membership costs (or the need to work weekly shifts) can deter users from participating in the organization and accessing the products.
- **BIPOC procurement.** The grocer arm of a neighborhood food hub must prioritize sourcing from BIPOC providers. Currently, many organizational models preclude or limit a food hub or grocer's ability to purchase from BIPOC providers. Where a neighborhood food hub or non-profit/cooperative grocer cannot source from BIPOC providers, revenues should be maximally used to invest in the cultivation of BIPOC entrepreneurs in the foodspace.
- **Government subsidies for BIPOC sourcing.** The state should provide direct and generous subsidies to mission-driven grocers in order to maximize their ability to source from BIPOC producers and sell their goods at a truly accessible and affordable price point.

- **Government investment in food-waste-forward models.** *The state should also provide direct and generous subsidies for agile, food-waste-forward grocer models such as Bargain Grocery, so that they can be further scaled and replicated. We believe that this affordable, choice-based model (offered by a mission-driven community-based organization) can be a key form of community empowerment. We believe that the state should help scale this model even when such a grocer is unable to source from BIPOC providers, because it reduces food waste while expanding food access at affordable price points.*

Community Engagement

- **Trauma-informed approach.** *A neighborhood food hub must be trauma-informed as an organization if it wants to properly serve its community. This means that leaders have to be willing to acknowledge mistakes; make adjustments to policies, procedures, and practices that may re-traumatize the people served; and must be willing to address situations that may be re-traumatizing. Creating a trauma-informed organizational culture is hard work, but fosters a shared language, understanding, personal buy-in and accountability for all stakeholders—employees, volunteers, leadership, customers and the community. It creates a culture of shared ownership, mutual respect and shared language.*
- **Trauma-informed space.** *Being trauma-informed extends to the physical, environmental and experiential aspects of your food hub space.*
- **Accountability.** *Being accountable involves assessing not just the needs of your community, but mapping its resources and assets and leveraging its resilience. Organizational accountability is a multi-way dialogue and requires the humility to listen to your community and adapt accordingly.*
- **Wraparound Services + culturally-informed educational programs.** *A neighborhood food hub must provide wraparound services for the community, especially those related to enrollment in health, food and nutrition-related benefits.*
- **Empower with dignity, choice and capacity.** *Empower your clients and community with dignity and choice. When operating in a trauma-informed environment, it's critical to recognize individual capability and competency by developing caring and competent relationships before building community. Self-regulation comes before community building.*

Community Kitchen + Incubator

- **Differentiated educational programming.** *Provision of differentiated education programming is important in catering to the nuances of respective food enterprise verticals.*
- **Collaborate with larger co-production kitchens.** *Community kitchens can compound their impact by pairing with larger co-production kitchens in order to*

provide resident entrepreneurs with sufficient upscaling support

- **Strategic partnerships.** *Community kitchens should form strategic partnerships with financiers, retailers, distributors, educators and producers in order to provide the resident entrepreneurs with mentorship, financial subsidies and sufficient product markets.*
- **Vehicle for empowerment.** *By leveraging a trauma informed approach, community kitchens can be instrumental in identifying vulnerable populations and prioritizing their knowledge and enterprise development whilst ensuring that their cultural and other sensibilities are not only accounted for but can serve as strengths in product/service differentiation.*

Retail/Cafe

- **Have a target audience.** *Identifying and being aware of vulnerable populations in your community and having a business model that is targeted towards your desired audience.*
- **Diversity in products and prices.** *Cultural attunement. Understanding the financial and cultural diversity in your neighborhood and meeting those demands at an affordable price point. Offering variety and options.*
- **Accessibility + Convenience.** *Being accessible in your organizational and spatial ethos. Whether it's payment methods (SNAP/EBT), being accessible in your location (central, safe, accessible to everyone in the community). Accessibility in your practices and operations.*
- **Be adaptable/resilient/flexible.** *Being able to adapt to the demands and circumstances that your community may be experiencing, and being flexible to meet them where they're at. This could extend to hours of operation, food deliveries, pop-ups and mobility.*
- **Social and environmental responsibility.** *Sourcing from local, regional and BIPOC providers. Being sensitive to, and aware of other social and environmental needs in your community such as waste diversion and goodwill initiatives. Solidarity with disadvantaged or underserved populations.*

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