



Tasmanian Food Security Coalition – Budget Priority Statement

As a Coalition of nine community organisations (and our respective members), we are pleased to contribute to the community consultation for the 2022/23 Tasmanian State Budget. Our Coalition has a clear shared vision and mission for addressing community food insecurity issues in Tasmania. (Please see Appendix 1 for a Coalition overview.) This submission outlines a proposal to address food insecurity in Tasmania. Our proposal will also support the Tasmania Government to deliver two key commitments to support community food security:

- **PESRAC recommendations 31 and 32 to address food insecurity and create place-based solutions**
 - Expand on recent trials of school lunch provision to include greater school and community provision
 - Adopt a place-based approach to community food security models and not a 'one size fits all' approach.
 - Include strong links to local agricultural and hospitality businesses including training opportunities for program participants.
 - Scaleable in design so that any potential increase in demand for emergency food relief can be managed in a rapid and effective manner.

- **Food relief to Food Security Strategy – Tasmanian Food Security Strategy 2021-2024**

Our proposal and framework is designed to assist communities across Tasmania to initiate or strengthen place-based responses to improving community level food security and transition from a reliance on emergency food relief to a community resilience framework. This means communities are better prepared to respond to future shocks, in addition to supporting Tasmanians who are already food insecure.

Background

Food insecurity has **3 domains availability, access, and utilisation, supported by stability**. Food insecurity has been a longstanding issue in Tasmania¹. Financial hardship and movement restrictions during COVID exacerbated the issue. Tasmanian Government-commissioned research by the University of Tasmania showed the rate of food insecurity in Tasmania increased markedly in the first half of 2020, with 1 in 5 households reporting some level of food insecurity, more than 3 times the normal rates². Despite the lifting of most restrictions and pre-COVID employment levels largely bouncing back in Tasmania, food insecurity remained an issue for 1 in 4 households in June 2021.

Consultations with Tasmanians who experience food insecurity tells us they respond in a range of ways, including skipping meals, buying poorer quality food, keeping children home from school because there is no appropriate food to send them to school with, and only 5% seek emergency food relief³ as a coping strategy. Food insecure households also tell us they regularly make choices between buying food or paying for healthcare or energy bills. Food insecurity therefore impacts the physical and mental health of Tasmanians, impacts on their ability to engage in employment and education, and places a greater burden on the state's health system.

Various interventions exist to address food insecurity in Tasmania, including school food programs, community and neighbourhood gardens and pantries, pop up markets and veggies boxes and emergency food relief. These are, however, not coordinated and there is no central mechanism for evaluating which initiatives work and which can be scaled and/or replicated. As a consequence, some communities have multiple, overlapping food initiatives while others are underserved. To better focus community efforts and see the best results from government investment, we need a more coordinated approach.

¹ Tasmanian Population Health Survey, 2013, 2016, 2019

² https://blogs.utas.edu.au/isc/files/2021/06/TTP4-Food-Security_Final_v3.pdf

³ Ibid.

Proposal outline

We propose the creation of a two-tier Coalition project: a coordination role to undertake state-wide coordination of food security initiatives; and a place based regional support role to build and sustain community level collaboration, research, and knowledge exchange. The regional support role includes supporting a community-based grants program for local initiatives responding to local needs.

The program will be informed and supported by a community-based coalition of experts to deliver outcomes in food access and nutrition for Tasmanian households and communities. The *Tasmanian Food Security Coalition* (the Coalition) are community service providers, policy makers, researchers and program designers with significant program and policy experience in supporting community food security, across its domains, availability, access, and utilisation. Coalition members have deep links to the Tasmanian community state-wide including to schools, community and neighbourhood centres, local government, a pool of over 400 *Family Food Patch*⁴ peer educators, child health centres, emergency relief providers and the food, agricultural and hospitality sectors.

Why a Coalition?

- **To deliver against commitment made in the Food relief to Food Security Strategy Draft Action Plan:** “Support a community sector alliance to inform Government decision making, advocate sector concerns, share information, monitor demand and contribute to the development of community-based solutions and build local capacity to sustain long term change. This alliance will liaise directly with the Department of Communities Tasmania.”
- **Because they work:** Research into the role of coalitions supporting their communities during COVID-19⁵ found they added value by contributing positively to co-ordination and networks, being adaptable, linking local producers with new supply opportunities, informing good policy and urgent responses, improving school food, and building local level resiliency, capacity and understanding of issues related to food insecurity.
- **Tasmanians are clear about how they want their communities to be able to respond in the COVID recovery:** As part of the **University of Tasmania Tasmania Project**⁶ Tasmanians were asked how their food system could be more resilient and sustainable. The diagram below summarises the themes that emerged and arrows indicate those designed into this proposal.



Building resilience at community level requires listening to what communities know are their local challenges and strengths and responding at a local level to those needs and aspirations. This is the approach the Coalition would adopt in undertaking this project. We believe such a governance model will work because it facilitates an effective interface between practice and policy at a community and government level.

⁴ <https://www.familiestasmania.org.au/services/family-food-patch/>

⁵ Palmer, A., Atoloye, A. T., Bassarab, K., Calancie, L., Santo, R., & Cooksey Stowers, K. (2020). COVID-19 responses: Food policy councils are “stepping in, stepping up, and stepping back.” *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*.

⁶ <https://blogs.utas.edu.au/isc/files/2021/10/49.-Learning-from-food-supply-challenges-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

The investment needed

1. Coordination at a state level via the Coalition - State level coordination requires a senior **Executive Officer (EO)** who will:

- Provide secretariat to the Coalition
- Establish and support project governance
- Plan, implement and oversee evaluation of the project
- Manage key partnerships within government and cross sectoral stakeholders
- Represent the Coalition on groups and committees as appropriate- such as a state level Food and Nutrition Coalition which is under consideration and COVID Recovery Committees
- Manage the Regional Coordinator team
- Manage communications – web site and social media
- Produce submissions and contract reporting as required, and
- With the Team, coordinate an annual conference and half yearly webinars to encourage knowledge sharing.

2. Place based regional support – Four coordinators, acting at a regional level, will support communities to establish, maintain and grow responses to food security in a variety of settings, including neighbourhood houses⁷, schools, local government⁸, community organisations, retail, and hospitality. The regional responsibilities will include:

- Mapping stakeholders and activity (what is working, what needs support, where is the energy for change?)
- Create regional profiles that summarise the mapping and networks and relevant local statistics, for example
- Coordinate and plan with local stakeholders for place-based responses
- Encourage and support community development and capacity building
- Support activation within communities and develop case studies for success
- Share information up into government via the Coalition and across the other regions.

3. Community grants program- A grants program will run in years 2 and 3. It will allow communities to respond to locally identified needs that encourage transition from a reliance on emergency food relief to more resilient solutions. The local initiatives will consider the scale of local food insecurity and will encourage innovation and partnerships. Examples, might include low-cost veggie box programs, transport to bring people to food or food to people and new partnerships with local growers and wholesalers.

Timelines

This project should commence as early as possible given the data tells us that food insecurity continues to impact a considerable number of Tasmanian households and is likely being exacerbated by rising petrol, housing, and utilities prices. Below is a broad outline of key activities for the project Phases.

Phase 1 Month 1-6

- Appointment of Coalition EO who:
 - commences detailed project planning (including communications, stakeholder engagement, evaluation),
 - establishes governance structure – terms of reference, membership, meeting frequency,
 - with UTAS develop an evaluation framework for the project,
 - recruit and manage Regional Coordinators, and
 - establish community facing communications channels – web site, social media

Phase 2 Months 6-36

⁷ Neighbourhood Houses are in 35 communities across Tasmania and are supporting food security in their communities. <https://www.nht.org.au/resources/creating-community-food-security-through-neighbourhood-houses-2021>

⁸ "Local government authorities are well-placed to develop integrated and long-lasting solutions to make healthy food accessible, affordable and available in their area. To find out more about what's happening in local government areas across the state, visit the [Local Government Association Tasmania](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/community_nutrition/health_and_community_workers/food_security)" https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/community_nutrition/health_and_community_workers/food_security

- Regional coordinators are appointed, who:
 - commence regional mapping of food security initiatives – stakeholder engagement, desktop research,
 - establish or strengthen local networks,
 - work with communities to identify opportunities to transition from EFR to community food resilience solutions,
 - develop local action plans responding to local needs – workshops, surveys, and
 - facilitate twice yearly webinars to encourage knowledge sharing across regions.

- Coalition EO – oversees implementation and monitoring of the project plan
 - Monitoring and evaluation commences,
 - Key stakeholder engagement,
 - Establish governance, assessment criteria for and deliver a small grants round to support place-based projects that build resilience at the community scale – These are delivered in years 2 and 3,
 - Support evaluation of the place-based projects, and
 - With the regional coordinators develop and deliver Annual conferences (in year 2 and 3) – virtual or in person (COVID dependent).

Outcomes

The project evaluation plan is developed with UTAs. Outcomes may include:

1. Resilient regional and local networks/coordination to support food security at a community and regional level
2. Improved food literacy and food security knowledge in local workforces and community volunteer organisations
3. Capacity building in local government around their role in addressing community food security – this may include inclusion of supporting community food security in local government Health and Wellbeing Plans
4. Community projects that create greater local resilience in the emergency relief system through stronger networks and creating efficiencies
5. Evidence of food security needs at community level and of what works in delivering community food security to inform future government long term investment
6. Evidence of successful transitions from emergency food relief reliance to food resilience at household and community level
7. Evidence of systems change through cross sector adaptations that demonstrate awareness and response to food insecurity.

Budget⁹

Budget Item	Year 1	Years 2	Year 3	Project Total (3 years)
Executive Officer	\$140,000	\$145,000	\$148,000	\$420,000
Regional Coordinator (n=4)	\$200,000	\$410,000	\$420,000	\$1,030,000
Project admin support	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$27,000	\$67,000
Evaluation	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$120,000
Annual conference and webinars	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$36,000
Communications (web site, design, and social media)	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$20,000
Travel	\$20,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$92,000
Accounting/ audit	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
Community Grants	-	\$250,000	\$ 250,000	\$500,000
TOTAL	\$432,000	\$ 918,000	\$933,000	\$2,283,000

Appendix 1

⁹ Please note this proposal and budget assumes that current investments in food relief distribution and delivery is maintained by the State Government for the period of the project. This project is an additional investment.



Tasmanian Food Security Coalition Overview

1. Background

The Tasmanian Food Security Coalition was formally established in October 2021. The Coalition is a response to a current gap in representation to government on food and nutrition issues in Tasmania. We believe our collective experience is valuable and can assist governments in making evidence-based decisions. Not any one organisation has all of the answers, but collectively we can be impactful when we work together around a common vision and mission.

How is Tasmania doing when it comes to food and nutrition?

- One in five Tasmanian adults are experiencing some level of food insecurity,
- Less than 10% of Tasmanians eat enough vegetables and only 40% eat enough fruit, a key measure of their dietary quality,
- Tasmanian kids get over 40% of their calories from *junk* food,
- The State Government investment in health promotion is too small to address the current issues, currently under 2% when best practice is 5-7%.
- State government agricultural policy currently doesn't prioritise supplying Tasmanian food needs,
- The new Food Security Strategy is overly reliant on emergency relief to support Tasmanian's food security, and
- Tasmanians have strong preference to eat locally grown and sourced fruit and vegetables.

Consequently, we need government investment and action that address poor nutrition and ALL of the underlying causes through a whole of government response and collaboration across sectors to support all Tasmanians to eat well.

2. Our Vision is that all Tasmanians are able to eat fresh, local, and nutritious food every day.

Our Mission is that as a collective of leaders we collaborate, advocate, and empower to create a food secure Tasmania.

3. Our Objectives are to:

Provide Leadership –

- ✓ we speak up for everyday Tasmanians in forums that influence food systems policy, settings, processes, and practices.
- ✓ We offer clear evidence-based alternatives for government investment to address barriers to food security for Tasmanians

Outcomes/impacts include – Active participation in decision making forums. Increased investment in place based and regional solutions

Advocate –

- ✓ We build a greater understanding of issues to create impactful and coherent public policy and supportive environments for community food security.
- ✓ We strengthen community action by building capacity in organisations and community members to be effective influencers to public policy.

Outcomes/impacts include – submissions, position statements, forums, research translation for community and government, stakeholder engagement.

Collaborate –

- ✓ We enhance coordination and networking by connecting key stakeholders
- ✓ We build capacity in organisations and community by sharing technical and strategic knowledge to inform planning

Outcomes/impacts include – supportive and connected networks working at state-wide, regional, and place-based levels. A comprehensive picture of activity and key stakeholders.

Empower –

- ✓ We empower by creating opportunities for the voices, experience and needs of Tasmanian communities to inform place based and solutions focussed responses.
- ✓ We empower government through our knowledge brokerage to influence investment and policy coherence

Outcomes/impacts include – evidence informed place-based responses and solutions supported by good local policy. Governments have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of communities

4. Our principles

- We are solutions focussed and use an evidence driven approach.
- We are adaptable, responsive, and innovative.
- We apply an equity lens.
- We are brave and respectful.
- We are ethical, transparent, and honest.