



Feeding Queensland Kids Phase 1 Evaluation

Interim Report 2 — June 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

Feeding Queensland Kids and the collaboration acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waters and communities where we work and live. In Gunana/Mornington Island, we respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Lardil Peoples of Mornington Island. We would also like to pay our respects to the historical people surrounding the Island, including the Kaiadilt, Yangkal and Gangalidda Peoples. In Tulmur/Ipswich we wish to acknowledge the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul Peoples and in Bundaberg we would like to acknowledge the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Taribelang Bunda Peoples and at our head offices in Meanjin/Brisbane the Turrbal and Yuggera Peoples. We also pay respect to our Elders both past and present and acknowledge the many leaders of the communities we work and live in. We recognise and respect their continued custodianship, culture and Elders. Project Background

Interim Report prepared by Enable Health Consulting

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Executive Summary

Feeding Queensland Kids (FQK) is a place-based, community-led initiative. It was developed from a partnership between Foodbank Queensland, SecondBite | FareShare, and OzHarvest and funded by the Queensland Government. The FQK Initiative (the Initiative) has a long-term vision to achieve food equity by working with communities in Gunana/Mornington Island, Ipswich, and Bundaberg regions to support solutions to food insecurity. This Interim Report captures progress for the Initiative from January 2025 to April 2026.

Across all three communities, **implementation** has centred on the FQK team building trust, strengthening relationships, resourcing actions and creating the conditions for collaboration. The five levers of change in FQK are: 1) employing FQK implementation roles in community to convene and facilitate change; 2) enabling and strengthening connections within community to increase opportunities for systems change; 3) offering FQK Community Grants (smaller funds; open perpetually) to Community Partners to facilitate practical opportunities through flexible funding; 4) offering FQK Food Solutions Funding (FSF, larger funds; open perpetually) to collaborations of Community Partners to enable systems change and food system strengthening towards food equity, and 5) advocating for reform towards place-based, community-led food equity solutions in the local- and state-level systems.

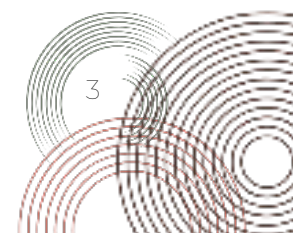
A key finding is that **the Initiative's two-pronged funding model** is working as intended to distribute \$1.45 million of grants to the three communities. As at April 2026, 43 FQK Community Grants totalling \$363,840 had been awarded across the three communities, supporting Community Partners to deliver equipment or infrastructure, community programs, community education, and food provision to meet immediate need and build local capacity. At

the same time, \$164,483 has been awarded through FSF to support longer-term collaborative responses, with two approved FSF initiatives to date in Bundaberg. There are also emerging FSF under preparation by Community Partner collaborations at the time of this Interim Report.

The FQK Community Food Coordinators (CFCs) are central to implementation success so far. Their local presence and relationships have enabled tailored engagement in each community, with a common practice of listening and understanding, connecting and building, and then supporting collaboration, including through emerging Community Food Collectives or Working Groups. These Collectives and Working Group are becoming an important mechanism for shared learning, co-design and community leadership in Bundaberg, Ipswich and Gunana.

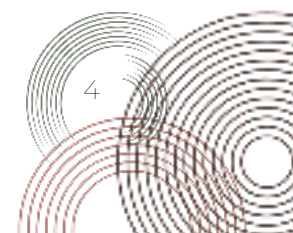
Early impacts are visible at several levels:

- For people in community, the clearest early evidence so far relates to practical benefits such as improved access to food, increased dignity and choice, better use of local infrastructure, and opportunities for social connection, learning and wellbeing.
- For the Initiative and the implementation team, FQK has strengthened their understanding of place-based practice and built readiness for stronger advocacy on food equity.
- For Community Partners, early outcomes include improved capacity to respond to community need and aspirations, stronger inter-organisational relationships, increased understanding of food equity and systems change, and greater willingness to collaborate.



Overall, the Interim Report shows that the Initiative is building a strong platform for further future impact and simultaneously creating early impacts with community. The intentional approach of the FQK team to create early, visible impacts in community, whilst setting up for the long game is paying off. Key enablers include the funded FQK implementation roles, values-based leadership, the First Nations Engagement Lead, and the CFC community of practice. Key barriers include the short funding horizon for a long-term systems change initiative, the logistical complexity of working in remote Gunana, widespread cost-of-living pressures and the limiting mental models held in community.

The findings to date reinforce that place-based food equity work requires flexible funding, sustained investment and time. While it is too early to draw conclusions about medium- and long-term outcomes, the Initiative is showing clear signs of early impacts and is well positioned for deeper systems change in the next phase of implementation. It is **important that the Initiative is funded beyond Phase 1** to maintain the momentum in community towards further FSF and Community Grants, protect the trust and relationships that have been earned by the CFCs and to convert the strong foundational work of the Initiative into broader advocacy and system change outcomes.



Initiative Background

What is the Feeding Queensland Kids Initiative?

The Feeding Queensland Kids (FQK) Initiative is a partnership between Foodbank Queensland, SecondBite | FareShare, and OzHarvest, and is funded by the Queensland Government. The vision of the FQK Initiative (the Initiative) is to achieve food equity by working with communities in Gunana/ Mornington Island, Ipswich, and Bundaberg regions to support locally-driven responses and systems change towards food equity.

The Initiative is leveraging place-based change through five levers for change (Figure 1):

- Employing FQK implementation roles in community to convene and facilitate change,
- Enabling and strengthening connections within community (between Community Partners and with people living in community) to increase opportunities for systems change,
- Offering FQK Community Grants (smaller funds; open perpetually) to Community Partners to facilitate practical opportunities through flexible funding,
- Offering FQK Food Solutions Funding (larger funds; open perpetually) to collaborations of Community Partners to enable systems change and food system strengthening towards food equity, and
- Advocating for reform towards place-based, community-led food equity solutions in the local- and state-level systems.

The Initiative is community-led and place-based, which means that each lever of change is directed by the needs and aspirations of each community (at the centre).



Figure 1: Five levers of change in Feeding Queensland Kids (FQK)

Who is involved in the Initiative?

There are many people making the Initiative work, grouped by:

- **Funders:** Phase 1 funding was awarded to Foodbank Queensland, SecondBite | FareShare and OzHarvest (the collaboration) by the Queensland Government's Department of Education and the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety.
- **The FQK Governance Group.** There are representatives from each collaborating organisation (Foodbank Queensland, SecondBite | FareShare and OzHarvest) that contribute to the governance of the Initiative. They serve as an accountability mechanism for the Initiative and uphold the values of the Initiative through funding decisions, strategic vision, and evaluation oversight. They also form the decision-making panel for FSF, alongside a representative from the Queensland Government funders and a representative from the relevant local council.
- **FQK Partnerships Manager.** This role manages the operations of the Initiative and supervises the Community Food Coordinators.
- **FQK First Nations Engagement Lead.** This role provides oversight of community engagement and advocacy for First Nations people.
- **Community Food Coordinators (CFC).** These three roles (one in each community) lead community engagement in their region, drive community development work and support capacity building for Community Partners.
- **Community Partners.** These are people, groups, or organisations involved in the Initiative. They may be:
 1. a Funding Recipient of a FQK grant,
 2. participating in a FQK Collective or Working Group,
 3. collaborating with a Funding Recipient or CFC, or
 4. a key community stakeholder working with the CFC/FQK.

Community Partners may include food as part of their core business or may be invested in food equity for other reasons.

- **People in Community:** These are the ultimate beneficiaries of the FQK Initiative, and the reason for driving the Initiative. Whilst there is a particular focus on children and families across the three regions, all people living, working and playing in these three regions (as defined by the local government area boundaries) are potential beneficiaries of the Initiative. The people and land areas of the three Queensland communities are diverse (see Figure 1).

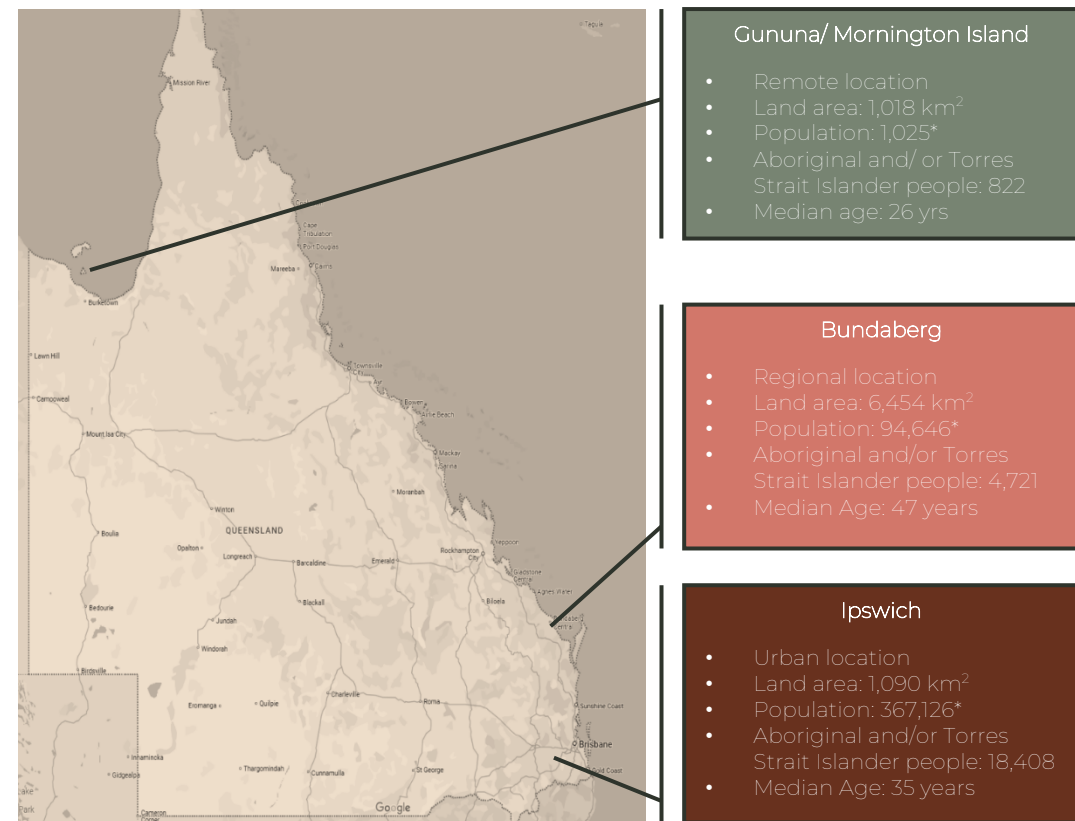


Figure 1 (Locations and population demographics of the three FQK communities)

* 2021 Census data via ABS

How is the Initiative framed?

Place-based work: The Initiative is grounded in a “place-based” approach. This means that the FQK team recognise that while food equity might be caused by structural forces, it is experienced locally and need responses that fit the specific place, culture and community.^{i,ii} It means the work is a locally led, collaborative approach to solving complex issues in a specific community, designed around that community's unique context, strengths, relationships, and needs.



Systems change: The Initiative is framing change based on the ‘Water of Systems Change’ model.ⁱⁱⁱ The FQK team are using this model internally to guide their reflective practice and planning, as well as externally when working with community to talk about shifting food inequities. The model in Figure 3 is an adapted model of The Waters of System Change,ⁱⁱⁱ and it shows four layers of deepening conditions that operate in a system to change how an issue is experienced by community.

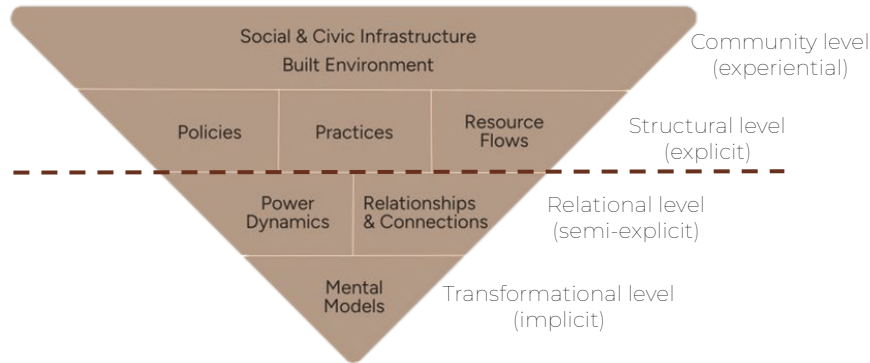


Figure 7 (Systems change model operating in the Initiative)¹

In Figure 2, there are seven key conditions for systems change that are all connected and have a significant influence on whether communities experience change in complex issues such as food inequity. These seven key conditions sit across four layers:

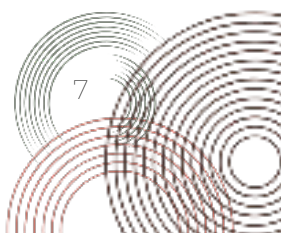
The first two levels are typically seen or felt by community and are easily labelled and communicated by system players – in a sense, they are the parts of the iceberg “above the water line.”

- At the **Community Level** are conditions we experience in the daily life of our communities, our built environment (e.g. public spaces, streets, neighbourhoods) and in-person gatherings within physical elements of the social and civic infrastructure.
- At the **Structural Level** are conditions like policies, practices and resources, that are easily seen and understood by many people. They are usually clear and communicated in the community.

The next two layers are less visible to community, harder to label or communicate about and are represented by the parts of the iceberg “below the water line.”

- At the **Relational Level** are conditions, relationships and power dynamics. These conditions might require a closer look or some extra effort to understand. They are somewhat visible, usually felt, but not completely clear, yet they are important foundations of the system.
- At the **Transformational Level** are conditions that are invisible. Mental Models are strongly held values, beliefs or understanding about an issue that are held by community, those in power or key influential people, organisations or systems. They may require deeper investigation to become aware of them.

¹ This framework builds on the ideas from The Waters of System Change by John Kania, Mark Kramer and Peter Senge, and the Policies, Systems and Environmental Change model.



Phased approach: The Initiative has been planned as a long-term program of work through a phased approach. Place-based initiatives with a systems-change approach are the long game. The scope of this evaluation is on Phase 1, but the Initiative and evaluation have been conceptualised over three phases, with Phase 2 & 3 happening concurrently (Figure 4).

Phase 1. Build (2024-26)

Build strong **governance** and identify levers for change.

Build **trust and relationships** in community.

Fund **community-led solutions** that make a difference.

Build **momentum** through early impacts and connections.

Learn about what is working and what needs to change.

Understand **systems change**, to **shape** policy, practice and resource flows to advance food equity.

Build **capacity** within each community to lead systems change towards food equity.

Phase 2. Amplify (2027-29)

Strengthen what is working, **deepen impact**, and expand community-led solutions.

Grow connection and **local leadership**.

Invest in **larger-scale Food Solutions** as community capacity grows and timeframes allow.

Maintain a whole-of-community approach with **First Nations leadership** at the centre.

Focus on **systems change**, **shaping** policy, practice and resource flows to advance food equity.

Share the **FQK 'how-to'** approach to other communities.

Phase 3. Scale (2027 onwards)

Shift **decision-making, power and leadership** of the Initiative to community in the three original communities.

Support new communities to **adopt the FQK approach** to addressing food equity issues in their community.



Figure 4 (Planned phases of the FQK Initiative.

Why are we evaluating the Initiative?

The drivers for this evaluation of FQK are to:

- Capture the multiple layers of change in FQK and the impacts and ripple effects of it over the short-, medium- and long-term
- Learn if and how the model works and how it could be adapted to other communities if it does
- Have an external partner to bring rigour to the evaluation

The Initiative has been funded for the first 2 years of operation (November 2024 – January 2027) but aims to run as a place-based initiative over many years. This evaluation is therefore being referred to as an evaluation of **Phase 1 of the Initiative**, which will inform applications for support of Phase 2 of the Initiative.

What are the aims of this report?

This Interim Report captures progress in the Initiative from its inception through until April 2026. The aims of the report are to:

- Start to explore the answers to the evaluation questions so far
- Trial some methods of analysis and presentation for the Final Evaluation Report (due in December 2026)
- Identify any adaptations needed in our evaluation processes to ensure we can best answer evaluation questions in the Final Report

What have we done
so far?

This section provides a brief overview of key methods needed to understand this Interim Report. A more detailed Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework has been produced for the Initiative, offering further detail and is available from the FQK team.

Evaluation Questions

The questions were developed based on the assumptions shown in the FQK Logic Model (see Appendix A) and the questions are grouped under three evaluation domains:

Domain 1: How was the FQK Initiative implemented?
1. What was the model of delivery of the Initiative? 2. What funding, personnel and resources were required? 3. How were Community Partners engaged in each community? 4. How many Community Partners applied for FQK funding in each community? What kind of groups applied? 5. What were the solutions generated by each community? 6. What are the enablers and barriers to delivering FQK?
Domain 2: What were the early impacts in Phase 1 of the FQK Initiative?
7. What were the early impacts overall and in each community for People in Community? a) What do we know so far about medium-term outcomes for this group? 8. What were the early impacts for the FQK Initiative and the team that deliver it? a) What do we know so far about medium-term outcomes for this group? 9. What were the early impacts overall and in each community for Community Partners? a) What do we know so far about medium-term outcomes for this group?
Domain 3: How can the FQK Initiative be scaled?
10. How should FQK be scaled to other communities? 11. What are the enablers and barriers to scaling place-based, community solutions to food insecurity and food equity through programs like FQK?

Data Sources

There are 17 different sources of data that inform the evaluation of the Initiative (Table 1). In Table 1, sources are greyed out yet if they have not yet been collected.

Table 1 (Data sources for answering evaluation questions by Domain)

Across all three communities	
Process data collected by FQK team	
14 Reflective Journals completed by the Governance Group, Partnerships Manager and CFCs over 3 time points	
3 'Early Days' Community Network Maps	
2 Reflection Workshops with FQK Evaluation Project Team	
Community Stories (Ongoing)	
Interviews with CFCs and FQK Partnership Manager	Not-collected-yet
'Later Days' Community Network Maps	
Focus Group with the FQK Governance Group	
Focus Groups with 'Collectives' of Community Partners	
Follow-up Key Community Stakeholder Surveys	
Focus Groups with Key Community Stakeholders	

Gunana/ Mornington Island	Ipswich	Bundaberg
4 Community Grant funding application forms	16 Community Grant funding application forms	18 Community Grant funding application forms
4 Baseline surveys	15 Baseline surveys	18 Baseline surveys
0 Progress surveys (Not yet eligible)	2 Progress surveys (12 eligible so far)	15 Progress surveys (15 eligible so far)
No Food Solution Funding applications yet	No Food Solution Funding applications yet	2 Food Solution Funding application (Baseline and Progress Surveys Completed)
0 Interviews with Community Partners	0 Interviews with Community Partners	2 Interviews with Community Partners
2 Baseline Key Community Stakeholder Surveys	1 Baseline Key Community Stakeholder Surveys	3 Baseline Key Community Stakeholder Surveys

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

We have compiled and collated all available quantitative data as at 30 April 2026 in Microsoft Excel™. Data were cleaned prior to analysis, including checks for missing values, recoding of “not stated/not known” responses, and preparation of variables according to measurement level (categorical or continuous). Descriptive statistics were used to summarise Funding Recipients by community, including frequencies and proportions for categorical variables, and means and standard deviations (SD±) for continuous variables where appropriate.

Due to the interim nature of this report, we have not conducted inferential analyses on differences between communities or changes over time between baseline and progress surveys. The Bundaberg community was the only community with a sufficient sample of Progress Surveys available as at April 2026 (n=15 pairs of data), so these changes over time analyses have been saved for the Final Report in December 2026.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis technique by one ehc consultant. The interviewer or focus group moderator created a document containing their reflections on the interview, topic summaries and verbatim quotes, and process reflections. One ehc consultant read all hybrid documents, coded the qualitative data, and discussed these with another consultant to build consensus on key themes. Illustrative quotes and case studies are used to support theme understanding.

Story telling in this report

To help guide the reader through this Interim Report we use callout boxes and symbols to tell the story of the Initiative so far. Here we explain what each reporting mechanism means for the reader.

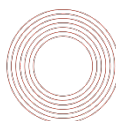
“Direct quotes collected from people will look like this”



This icon is used when highlight findings that relate to different layers of the systems change model.



This icon is used to highlight findings from Gunana, which is also represented by **this colour** in our charts and diagrams. We also have chosen to adopt the label Gunana for this community throughout the report.



This icon is used to highlight findings from Bundaberg, which is also represented by **this colour** in our charts and diagrams



This icon is used to highlight findings from Ipswich, which is also represented by **this colour** in our charts and diagrams.

These shaded boxes summarise learnings across communities, when data have been presented by community.

Planned for Final Report.

These brown boxes will be used to flag data or concepts that are planned to be added for the Final Report in December 2026.

In Summary...

These green boxes summarise findings for each evaluation domain

What have we found
so far?

Domain 1: How has the FQK Initiative been implemented?

In summary...

- FQK was implemented as a multi-community, place-based initiative with central governance across three communities: Gunana, Bundaberg and Ipswich.
- Phase 1 of FQK Implementation so far has built trust and relationships in community and enabled conditions for systems change, which takes time.
- The two-pronged grant approach is working well to:
 - offer flexible funding that meets pragmatic needs of community through the FQK Community Grants, and
 - build Community Partners' capacity to collaborate and design longer-term, food equity-centric initiatives through more advanced Community Grants and Food Solutions Funding, and
 - build trust in the FQK team and their intention to be community-led
- Collaborative groups of Community Partners (referred to as *Community Food Collectives*) are emerging as an important implementation mechanism for shared learning, co-design of longer-term solutions and community leadership.
- Implementation progress to date is dependent on:
 - taking the time to get the right CFC for the community
 - Community Partners understanding of and readiness to work in a systems-change based way
 - the flexible terms of the two FQK funding streams
 - local circumstances, strengths and resources, and the urgency and magnitude of the food relief need
 - the funded roles in the FQK team and the leadership style of the people in the roles

How has the Initiative been delivered so far?

Governance

In Phase 1, the Initiative operates as a multi-community, place-based model with centralised governance. Across Phase 2&3, it is intended to shift governance to be localised. There are three distinct communities – Gunana, Ipswich and Bundaberg – that have locally tailored approaches, but are strategically governed, funded, and supported by the FQK Governance Group (see Figure 3).

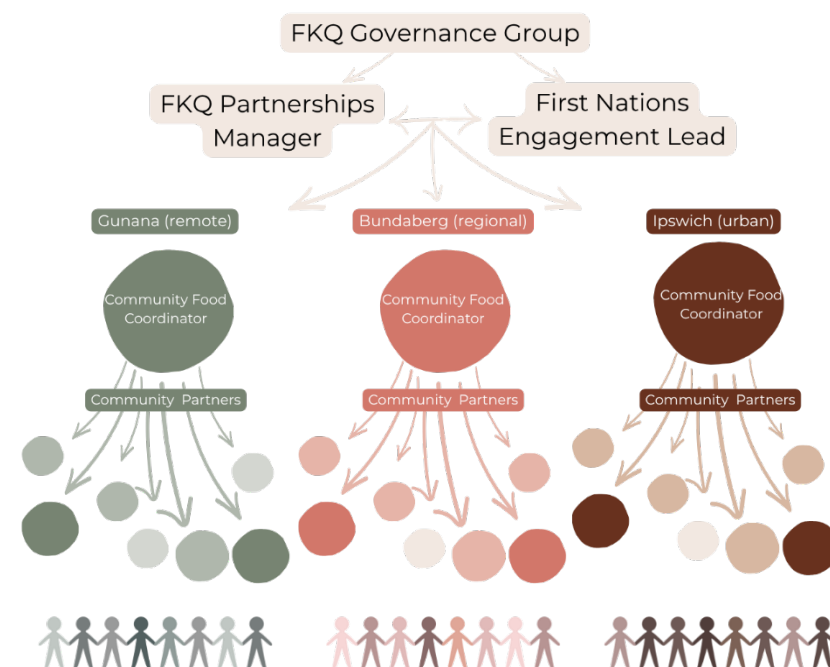


Figure 3 (Governance model of the FQK Initiative)

Funding

The Initiative was originally funded from November 2024 to September 2026. The funding was provided by the Queensland Government's Department of Education and the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety and totalled \$2,300,000. There has since been a (non-funded) extension, with the existing allocation of funding stretched with phased recruitment to cover until January 2027. This adaptation to implementation is described on Page 29.

The original Queensland Government funding was designed to cover both the implementation costs of running the Initiative and the funding of solutions direct to communities, through the two FQK funding mechanisms. The majority of funds (63%) was planned to go to community, with the remaining 37% of funding covering the personnel costs of the FQK Implementation Roles and project management costs of the Initiative.

The \$1,450,000 in community funding was originally planned to go to community via the split of 30% for FQK Community Grants (\$435,000) and 70% for Food Solutions Funding (\$1,015,000), however as a result of learning during implementation, the Governance Group shifted this split to be 50% for each pot of FQK funding. This adaptation is described on Page 29.



Levers for change

As introduced in Figure 1, there are five key levers for change being used in FQK.

FQK Implementation Roles. A key lever for change in this Initiative is the direct employment of local people in each community and the other management roles employed to support them.

- The three local **Community Food Coordinators** (CFC, 2.7FTE) are employed through Foodbank Queensland and funded from the State Government grant. They work from locations within each community. The Initiative is built out from the CFCs. Their connections with Community Partners, and the local knowledge and presence that CFCs hold drive the Initiative. The CFCs engage directly with people in community through local events or site visits, but their connection is largely via Community Partners. These connections go beyond networking or knowledge sharing to deep trusting relationships that give the CFCs agency to sit with Community Partners in shifting mental models or assumptions that may be slowing systems change.
- The **FQK Partnerships Manager** (1.0 FTE) supports the CFCs in their day-to-day operations, coordinates shared learning and reflection opportunities, reports to the Governance Group on progress and advocates for required adaptations or support for CFCs and communities.
- The **First Nations Engagement Lead** (0.2 FTE) is employed through Foodbank Queensland and funded from the State Government grant.
- The **FBQ Chief of Impact and Engagement** is an FBQ employee (not funded through the State Government funding) and brings to the Initiative: strong leadership, operational direction and advocacy expertise (approx. 0.1 FTE of their role).

FQK Community Grants are smaller pots of funding that can be used to address more immediate, practical needs that expand Community Partners capacity. They have also been used to support building relationships between Community Partners and with community. This funding is also being applied to create systems change. The details of the Community Grants approved to date are described on Page 23-24. Importantly, the process for these grants is flexible, encourages iterative feedback during applications, and many Community Partners have reported already that it is much more simple than other funding application processes they have engaged in previously.



"[The FQK Community Grants application] was uncomplicated... and the other important feedback to give you is that it wasn't a very cumbersome process. It was very straightforward. It was easy to do; it was easy to achieve." – Bundaberg Funding Recipient

"Thank you for offering this grant submission in an accessible and supportive format. It significantly reduces the barriers for community workers applying for funding. With heavy workloads and limited time, the simplified process helps us focus more on delivering support to families rather than navigating complex applications. This approach is both appreciated and empowering." – Ipswich Funding Recipient

FQK Food Solutions Funding is much larger and specifically requires collaborative work between Community Partners to create solutions that aim to address long-term food equity in community. The details of the Food Solutions Funding approved to date are described on Pages 24-27.

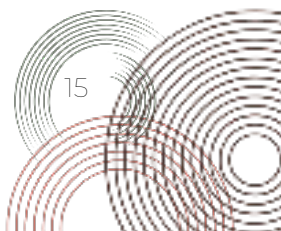


Connections for change opportunities. A common feature of place-based work is that relationships between people, groups and organisations within community form the basis of sustainable change and identify opportunities for change that would not be possible in isolation. In FQK these connections are a key lever for change that the CFCs and broader FQK team actively enable and strengthen over time. They create connections in formalised and informal ways, including:

- Creation of formalised Community Food Collectives or Working Groups in each community
- Identification of overlapping needs or complementary resources between Community Partners for change opportunities
- Co-design of FSF application groups

These are described in more detail on Page 19, 27, 38, 45.

Advocacy for food systems reform. Whilst the focus of change is within each community and tailored to their needs and aspirations, there is an element of change that is directed at the local and state-based systems that these communities must operate in. When there are barriers to change identified by community, FQK play a role as advocates to amplify the voices of community to local and state agencies in positions of power and decision-making. The advocacy work to date is described on Page 41.



Tempo of Implementation

Place-based initiatives with a systems-change approach take time. The scope of this project forms Phase 1 of what is conceptualised as a much bigger three phase initiative (see 'Phased approach', Page 6). The establishment phase of a place-based initiative takes a significant time investment. It takes time to get the right people into the right roles, understand the context of the communities where the work is happening, get Community Partners aware of and invested in the Initiative, and build trust and collaboration between Community Partners. The FQK team understand this tempo of place-based work and they made intentional implementation choices in Phase 1 to balance the long-term, slow tempo with some short-term, paced shifts. This intention came from a desire to meet the urgent food relief needs in each community, to acknowledge that Community Partners already knew some of the solutions they needed from the outset and just needed resourcing, and to build early momentum and trust in each community. The timeline in Figure 5 & 6 shows how the Initiative was paced in Phase 1, showing the different timelines between communities, and the developing momentum that ongoing community engagement has built for community Collectives/Working Groups and FSF.



The clock symbol in the timeline points to some key decisions, considerations and observations in the tempo of implementation in Phase 1 of the Initiative, which include:

- **Multiple levers for change introduced concurrently**



Place-based initiatives commonly carry out an initial engagement period, which is then followed by the funding or commissioning of activities. FQK deployed Community Engagement and the first funding stream – Community Grants – concurrently. This accelerated trust in the Initiative from community's perspective and engagement from early days. The first Community Grant in Gunana was approved within the first month of the Initiative, which was needed for a school holiday program run by the Mirndiyan Gununa that was about to start. This ability to meet an immediate community need through flexible funding

established a perception of the Initiative as responsive, trusted and approachable in community.

- **Recruiting CFCs with existing relationships and local knowledge**

By recruiting CFCs locally some of the groundwork for establishing relationships and connections as a lever for change was already done. Local CFCs were a shortcut to some key Community Partners, and in understanding how the geographical and social landscapes impact different Community Partners in the community. In Bundaberg, the CFC has worked in the community food space for over 20 years and was already well regarded with many Community Partners. In Bundaberg, from CFC recruitment to the development of a Community Food Collective only took 4 months, from which two FSF collaborations were formed and approved within 6-9 months.

- **Early First Nations Engagement**

With leadership from the First Nations Engagement Lead, the FQK team engaged early and deeply with First Nations communities, Elders, and Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations through visiting the three communities in-person. The place-based, community-led approach was well-received by the First Nations community that were engaged – they already work in this way and have been for generations. This early engagement was especially key for initiating the early Community Grants in Gunana, which generated immediate positive impacts for young people that were noticed by teachers and police in community.

- **Early establishment of reflective and evaluation processes**

The FQK team recognised the value of reflective processes in their practice and had the foresight to engage external evaluators early in Phase 1. The FQK team were aware that the Initiative would require justification to funders, collaborators and community from the early days. The FQK team also knew that they required data collection processes in place from the outset to understand adaptations in the process and to capture the early signals of community impacts and systems change.

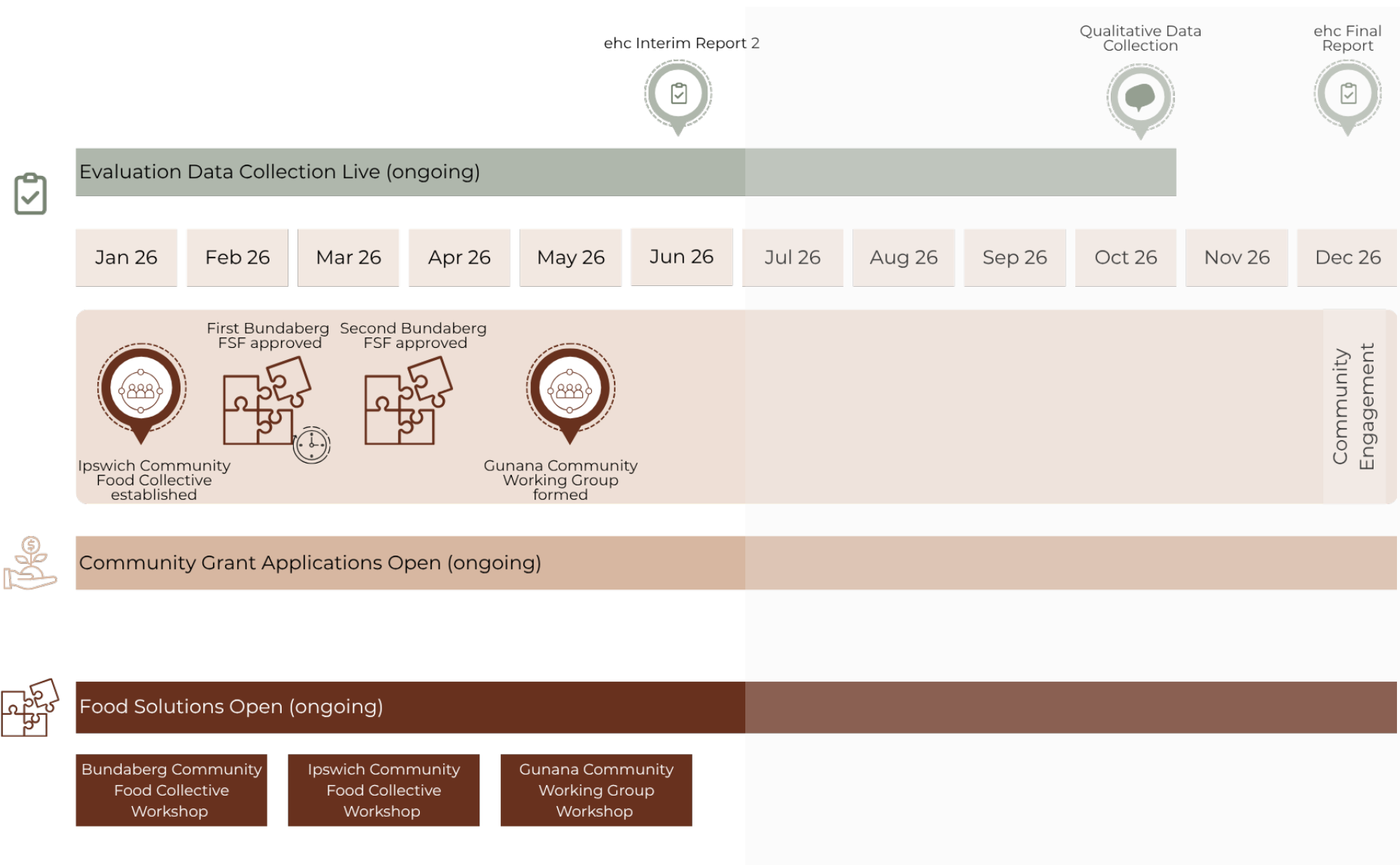


Figure 1 (FQK Initiative Phase 1 Timeline (2026)).

How are Community Partners being engaged?

Each CFC has engaged with Community Partners in a different way, tailored to the context of their community.



Gunana. The engagement strategy in Gunana has been **very hands-on**, with almost all communication to Community Partners and people in community conducted in person. Before the CFC was onboard, the First Nations Engagement Lead and the FBQ Chief of Impact and Engagement spent a week on Gunana sharing the plans for the Initiative and ensuring there was community buy-in through connecting with important community members, especially the Elders group, who hold deep knowledge and respect from their community. This was an important first step to **building community trust**. Since the onboarding of the Gunana CFC, a man who has lived in Gunana for over five years, he has started to build and strengthen relationships with Community Partners. There are some key community members in Gunana that hold multiple positions across community services and cultural leadership, and these people have become key partners for the CFC. The CFC has been meeting regularly in person with these key people to respond to community need and facilitate ideation for solutions to food insecurity in the community. The Partnerships Manager has visited Gunana on multiple occasions as well to support engagement and progress conversations with key community stakeholders.

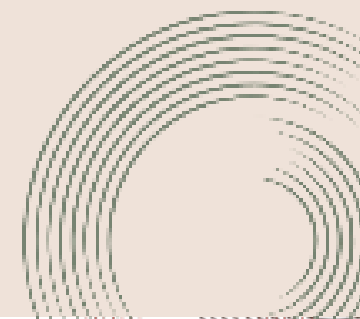
There have been some **significant impacts on engagement**. Most notably, in late 2025 and into early 2026 there was a devastating series of unexpected deaths in community. The whole community were deep in the process of Sorry Business. The losses were felt deeply, especially as such a small and connected community. The CFC is engaged in supporting the community through this, providing culturally sensitive and practical offerings. The Community Partners have also told the CFC that they are **at capacity**, which translates to challenges in finding time to engage in the Initiative; they are busy responding to **urgent and overwhelming need** in their community for food relief.

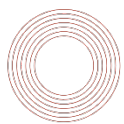
CASE STUDY: Responsive Engagement in Gunana — Supporting Young Men Through Sorry Business

"In early February 2026, the Mornington Island community was deeply affected by the tragic loss of two young men to suicide. These events had a significant impact on families, local services, and the wider community, highlighting an urgent need for culturally safe spaces to support young men through sorry business. In response, a Ranger Worker from the Mornington Island Rangers contacted the FQK CFC to support the organisation of a men's gathering. The aim was to bring young men together with Elders and respected men in a safe yarning space to strengthen wellbeing, connection, and mutual support."

An existing Men's Morning Tea scheduled for Friday 20 February at the Uniting Church was reshaped into a Men's Gathering Yarning Session. An invitation acknowledging the recent losses was shared through community social media and distributed widely across services to encourage attendance. Strong community collaboration followed. Mission Australia Youth and Family Support Service, Jika Kanga Gununamanda (JKG), Gununamanda Local Shop, Feeding Queensland Kids, and the Uniting Church each contributed practical support, with additional services offering assistance, reflecting a united community response. On the morning of the gathering, the Uniting Church was prepared as a welcoming, culturally safe space, with food and refreshments provided. Men from local services and young men from the Mornington Island Rangers program arrived from 9:30am, sharing morning tea and informal yarning. The session opened with a calm healing space, followed by Elders speaking about the strength of culture, family, and community during difficult times. Elders encouraged young men to seek guidance, stay connected, and support one another. The gathering stood as a strong, community-led response to tragedy, grounded in culture, collaboration, and shared responsibility for the wellbeing of young men."

– Gunana CFC





Bundaberg. The Bundaberg CFC has lived and worked there for over 20 years. She had **existing personal connections** with Community Partners and was also supported through established relationships between members of the FQK Governance Group and Bundaberg Community Partners. From there, the CFC grew her network through a **snowball approach**, reaching out to new Community Partners as she became aware of them. Her engagement was a **hybrid approach** – starting with emails to communicate the aims of the Initiative and then following up with phone calls and in-person meetings. Face-to-face engagements have emerged as the preferred method for this CFC as it supports building rapport and also means the CFC is able to visit the locations of community services and understand the context of Community Partners.

One of the key ways the CFC has engaged in Bundaberg is through **existing network meetings**. Before the FQK Initiative, there were established collective groups and networks invested in supporting food security in Bundaberg, or at least acknowledging food security as a key issue for their community. The CFC has regularly attended meetings for the Bundaberg Interagency, Community Youth Collective, and the Family and Babies Network. There was also significant collaboration in supporting community food security through Wide Bay Kids and the Education Precinct. In the early stages, there was a significant time investment in supporting Community Partners to apply for FQK Community Grants. This was both a way to start to meet some of the more immediate need in community, as well as to build trust and deepen understanding of how Community Partners are thinking about food security.

As the Initiative has progressed, the CFC has begun to **facilitate the Bundaberg Community Food Collective**. At the time of this report there has been three workshops (run quarterly). These workshops are supporting information and knowledge sharing between Community Partners, building consensus on the food security priorities for Bundaberg, and have been the platform for collectively designing food solutions for Bundaberg.

CASE STUDY: Presence in community in Bundaberg – Keep it simple, show up

The Bundaberg CFC has engaged in many ways, one of which is direct to people in community – to connect and hear community voices. She attended Bundaberg State High School ‘Bullying, No Way Day’, Dorrie Day and Options Day.

“We had free fruit – apples, bananas, mandarins – to give away, some basic recipe resources from OzHarvest, and prepared an engagement question that varied depending on event. Community was keen to engage with me, and we were able to collect lots of ideas which will be used to inform our work. Many community members were grateful for the fruit being handed out and reflected that it was nice to see this at events. Some organisations reflected that they would have the capacity to do that and it would be more impactful and positively align with health and community messaging.” – Bundaberg CFC

A Community Partner from this event explained: *“It was so nice to see healthy fruit being handed out the event, not just lollies like what we usually have. It made me think that we could all do that.”*

This seemingly small spark of inspiration that came from the CFC’s way of engaging is an example of how change starts to happen – the Community Partner’s realisation that there are small things within their power that invite conversation and align with their values is a meaningful and an often unseen part of work like this.





Ipswich. In Ipswich, the current CFC was onboarded most recently in the timeline of the FQK Initiative (Figure 5). She is an Ipswich local who has lived there for 20 years.

There was a different CFC in Ipswich for three months who initiated engagements with Community Partners. The Partnerships Manager also introduced the Initiative and established connections in Ipswich early on. The current CFC used these initial connections as a springboard and similar to Bundaberg, used a **snowball approach** to engage Community Partners. They started with a few key contacts (i.e., local Council) and prioritised attending interagency meetings, especially those that support young people and First Nations communities. The CFC prioritised face-to-face engagement where possible to establish rapport and witness locations of Community Partners, their resources and assets, although many of the Community Partners are open to email and phone calls for follow-up.

The Ipswich CFC has leaned on **principles of the Asset Based Community Development Framework** to support her work in mapping out existing strengths and resources in the community, which aligns well with the aims of the Initiative to drive community-led solutions. While there has been significant interest in the Initiative and the food equity conversation in Ipswich, the Community Partners were not yet well connected – **information sharing and collaboration is not common practice**. The much higher population density in Ipswich, relative to the other two communities, means there are many more Community Partners to engage with to understand who aligns with this way of working best.

The CFC hosted a 'Food Solutions Workshop' in December 2025, from which the **Ipswich Community Food Collective** was formed, with Community Partners requesting quarterly meetings. There was an interest in sharing information, but also a 'Community of Practice'-style platform where people can learn more about food equity, safely talk about their challenges in doing the work, and share opportunities for, or brainstorm, collaborative work between Community Partners that address their common goals. So far, there have been two workshops with the Community Food Collective.

CASE STUDY: A Growing Circle of Connection in Ipswich

"What began as a simple conversation has blossomed into a powerful wave of connection, collaboration, and cultural strength. The Ipswich CFC has embraced a snowballing approach to First Nations engagement – one that centres listening, trust, and genuine partnership. That approach is now bearing fruit in the form of new relationships with local Indigenous groups. A key spark came from local Yuggera woman, Nora who works with DWATSIPM. Nora saw opportunities to strengthen connections to local First Nations community who might benefit from, and participate in, the Initiative. She introduced the CFC to two local First Nations arts businesses, opening doors to creative expression and community-led storytelling. She also connected the team with Wirrinyah Gurrnung Aboriginal Corporation, whose work in preserving Yagara language and culture – including at Hymba Yumba Independent School – aligns deeply with FQK's commitment to celebrating identity and belonging. Nora's support hasn't stopped there. She is now helping link the FQK team with the Ipswich and Lockyer Local Decision-Making Body, a group of respected community members who guide conversations about local developments that affect Country and First Nations peoples. This connection represents a meaningful step toward ensuring FQK is grounded in community priorities and cultural authority. Momentum continued to build at the Murri Interagency meeting, facilitated by Uncle Ken* from Council. The gathering sparked rich discussion and led to several new relationships, including Kruger State School's Indigenous student support team, Ipswich Flexi School's Indigenous officer, and Lori* from QCAA, who is consulting on a new First Nations course for the Queensland curriculum. Each of these connections represent threads in a growing network of people who care deeply about culture, children, and community."*

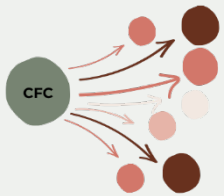
– Ipswich CFC

*psudonyms

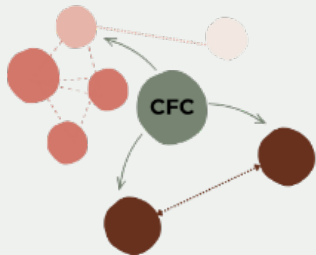
What are the learnings across communities about engagement?

Three common stages of engagement have emerged, and each community has progressed through these stages at different rates and in slightly different ways depending on the existing networks in community.

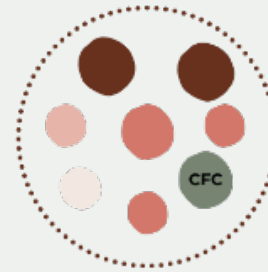
The three stages of engagement in FQK so far have been:



1. Listen and understand. The first stage involves the FQK Team, and especially the CFC, reaching out and listening to community and Community Partners. They listen to understand the landscape of how food equity is understood and how it is being addressed in community. It is about building trust and relationships with Community Partners. A face-to-face approach is the most effective way to do this. These relationships are the foundation for the rest of the work.



2. Connect and build. The second stage is about connecting stakeholders to each other and understanding existing connections. FQK builds capacity in communities through bringing people together and providing opportunities for knowledge sharing and idea generation. Community Partners invest in FQK through sharing their understanding of community and the time, energy, and capacity to deliver community solutions for food equity.



3. Collaborate and share. The third stage allows the CFC and FQK Team to take a step back in driving engagement. They still hold a key role in facilitating and hosting a platform for collaboration – bringing Community Partners to the table – but the Community Partners have joined up and are leading the work.

These stages are not always linear, rather they provide a frame of the important elements of place-based engagement. Importantly, alongside these engagement stages, the FQK Initiative concurrently resources Community Partners. **This means FQK responds to community in real time, which enables change and impact quickly and deepens trust with community.**

The way CFCs are engaging with Community Partners is noticed and deeply valued. The Community Partners have spoken about how the FQK Initiative, and specifically the way CFCs engage with them, is truly place-based and community-led, unlike other experiences of theirs that have not shown these values.

“What they’re [FQK] doing is actually demonstrating to other funding bodies how it actually should be done. To be honest, this is place-based, community-led work. Everyone seems to be talking about it. But for us here in Bundaberg, for what I’m seeing, this Initiative [FQK] is the only one who’s actually doing it.” – Bundaberg Funding Recipient

How many and what types of Community Partners have applied for FQK funding?

FQK Community Grants

43 Community Grant applications totalling **\$363.840** have been submitted and awarded as at end of April 2026. The total available fund for FQK Community Grants is now \$725,000 (based on the new 50:50 split), which means that **50%** of the available funds have been distributed to community so far in the Initiative. These grants have gone to 40 different Community Partners (2 Community Partners have received more than one grant).

The three communities have awarded a different number of Community Grants so far, based on their differing population sizes, differing needs and capacity from Community Partners and also the different engagement stage they're up to in each community.

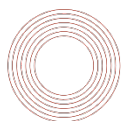


Gunana has received:

8 FQK Community Grants

\$45.858 (average \$5,732 per grant)

In addition to the Community Grants, FQK covered \$8,786 in freight costs to get the goods to Gunana



Bundaberg has received:

19 FQK Community Grants

\$161.717 (average \$8,511 per grant)



Ipswich has received:

16 FQK Community Grants

\$156.265 (average \$9,767 per grant)

3 of the 43 Community Grants to date were **secondary grants** to the same Community Partner (2 in Gunana and 1 in Bundaberg).

The types of Community Partners applying for FQK Community Grants vary widely, service broad target groups across communities and are not specifically or exclusively delivering food relief as their core business (Figure 8).

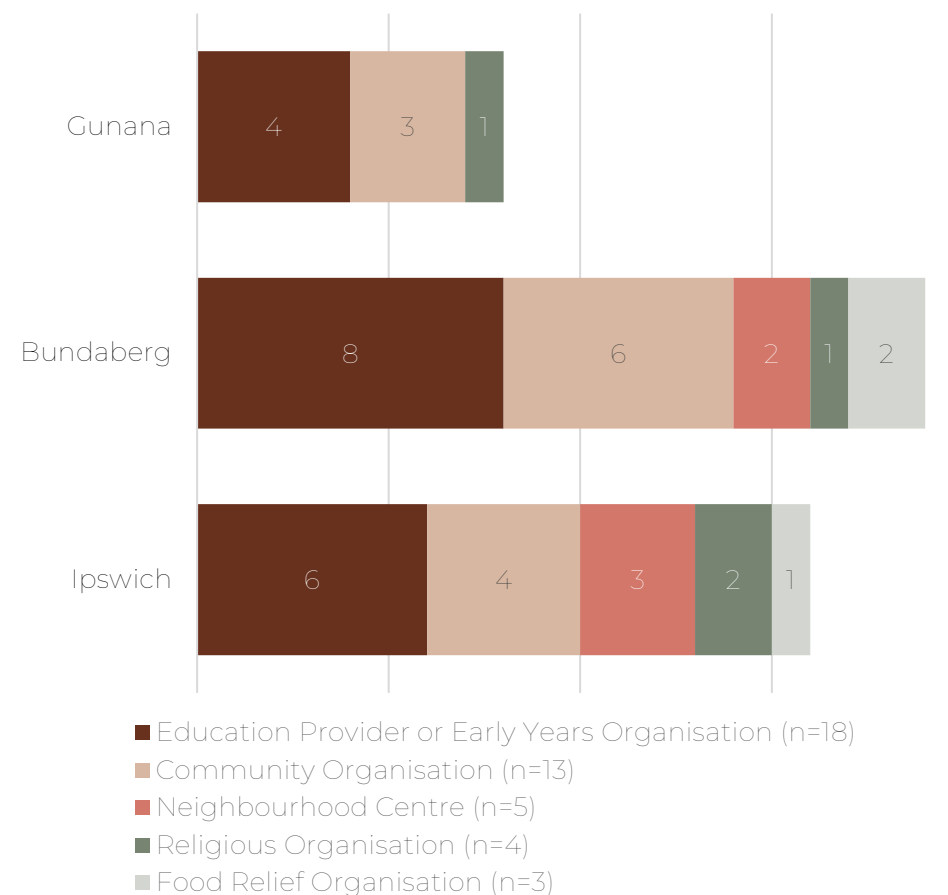


Figure-2 (Number of Community Grants awarded by community by Community Partner type)

Education Providers and Early Years Organisations are the largest category of Community Partners applying for grants overall (18 grants, 42%). This category includes schools and other education providers (e.g. tertiary education or early years care) as well as organisations that directly support school-aged children (e.g. PCYC). These are key organisations in community that support families with children and young people (a key target of the Initiative). Providing funding for Community Partners that support children and young people creates a very strong channel to the community more broadly. Neighbourhood Centres are common Community Partners applying for these grants in Ipswich and Bundaberg, but not in Gunana (as there is no Neighbourhood Centre there). As Neighbourhood Centres operate within clearly defined local boundaries, they often have a wealth of insight into what is happening in a place and which people and families are needing support.

FQK Food Solutions Funding

2 FSF applications totalling **\$164,483** have been approved so far, both in Bundaberg. The total available fund for FSF is now \$725,000 (based on the new 50:50 split), which means that **27%** of the available funds have been distributed to community so far in the Initiative. There are 8 Community Partners involved across the two applications (3 of which are networks made up of multiple Community Partners).

The Help Happens Here initiative was funded for \$130,100 (with an additional \$21,900 of in-kind contributions). This FSF is a joint initiative between Wide Bay Kids; Impact Community Services; Bundaberg Educational Precinct; River Nations Indigenous Corporation; Family and Baby Network (FAB).

The **Fresh Seconds, Stronger Communities** initiative was funded for \$34,383 (with an additional \$4,400 of in-kind contributions). This FSF is a joint initiative between Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers, WYLD Projects and Bundaberg Meals on Wheels.

What are the responses generated by each community so far?

The responses generated so far have been based on community need. The Community Partners drove the ideas in each funding application and were guided by the people they support in community, and at times by the CFCs and FQK team to ensure their request aligned with the FQK mission of supporting longer-term impacts and being community-led.

FQK Community Grants

The Community Grants are intentionally designed to support Community Partners with flexible funding towards the ultimate goal of reducing food insecurity and increasing food equity. The Community Grants have been used for different purposes, and this has evolved over time in each community, including for: the CFC to build rapport and trust in community, meeting basic infrastructure needs, supplementing other channels of funding, progressing or evolving programs, and/or diversifying the target groups being reached.

We can group the 43 Community Grants into broad categories to help understand the patterns across the three communities:



Equipment or Infrastructure – such as funding used for: cold storage (freezers, refrigerators), kitchen equipment (rice cookers, microwaves, cookware), or transport/logistics equipment.



Multiple Actions – these responses include a combination of two of the five categories described (e.g. equipment AND community training, food provision AND infrastructure).



Community Programs – such as funding used for: community meals/ BBQ/ events, community hubs, or cultural support (e.g., Sorry Business).

-  **Community Education or Training** – such as funding used for: cooking skills training with community, nutrition education, or food and budget literacy programs.
-  **Food Provision in educational settings** – such as funding used for: school meals (breakfast clubs, lunch programs), food relief distribution, food hampers, or food for holiday programs for students (primary, secondary, tertiary) and their families.
-  **Food Provision in community settings** – such as funding used for: food relief distribution, food hampers, and low-cost pantries for all community members.

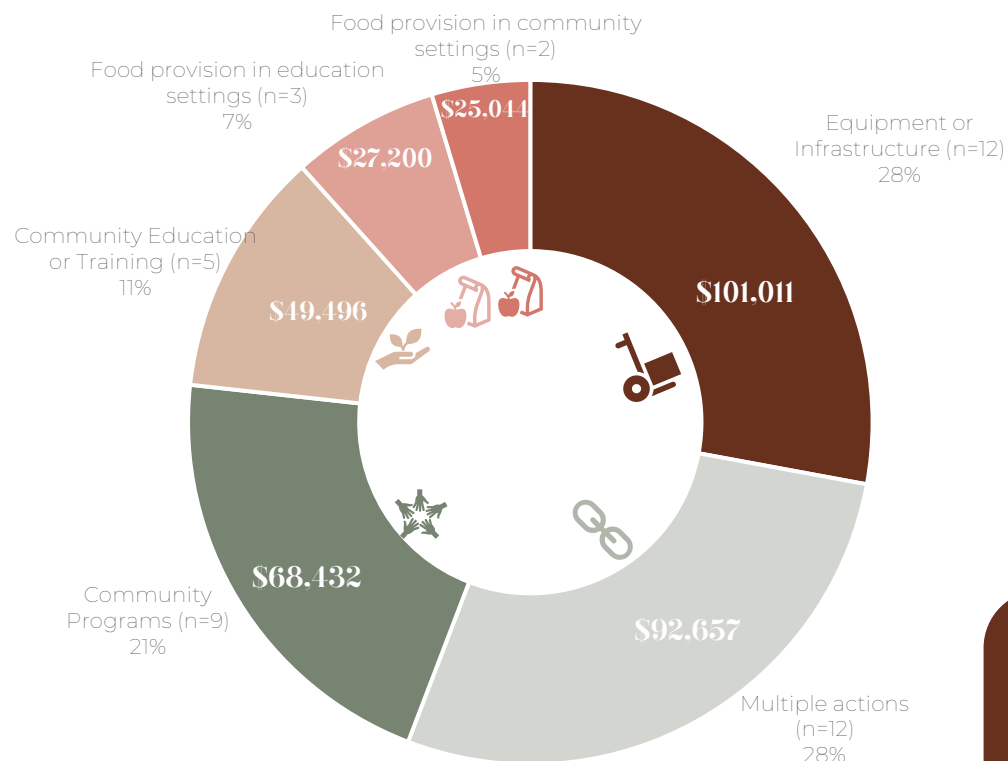


Figure-3 (Number and total value of Community Grants by type of response across all three communities (n=43))

These categories of responses can be helpful for noticing patterns in what Community Partners are requesting funds for and what they are not. Few Community Grants to date (12%, Figure 9) have been exclusively for direct food provision. Most Community Grants to date have been for the provision of Equipment or Infrastructure (28%) to support Community Partners in their work with community (e.g. reduce food waste or increase food choice and storage capacity through cold storage for food), and funding for Multiple Actions (28%, Figure 9). These “Multiple Action” Community Grants often represent the multi-faceted approach that Community Partners are taking to supporting community with immediate food relief whilst also planning for longer term responses. For example, a Community Grant enabled a Community Partner in Ipswich to purchase supermarket cash vouchers for immediate relief of young families experiencing food insecurity, as well as purchasing a freezer to store essential food items through a partnership with another provider with longer-term plans to support young families.

We must acknowledge that whilst these categories represent what the funds were spent on, they represent so much more for community (see Early Impacts for People in Community on Page 32). On the surface, a community cooking class is about knowledge and skill acquisition, but it is also about social opportunities and connections between members of the class, about wanting to share this new knowledge back with family and others in community, and to expand the community conversation beyond giving out food to ‘fix’ food insecurity.



Planned for Final Report.

We used a data-driven, bottom-up qualitative analysis of the types of food solutions requested to date. However, there were some emerging features of the solutions that align with a systems-change approach, which could be a useful way of grouping benefits in the Final Report. For example, whilst most of the requests have been for solutions at the Structural Level of the model, some have started to emerge with objectives that are more targeted towards tackling community stigma and beliefs about seeking support.

The types of Community Grants to date have **varied by community**. As shown in Figure 10, each community has had a similar quantity of requests for Equipment or Infrastructure (25-38%). The most common type of response requested in Gunana has been Community Programs, and in Ipswich and Bundaberg have been Multiple Actions. These multi-action responses reflect the layered needs of community, and in many cases multiple actions are needed to make the response possible (e.g., increase diversity of infrastructure to create space for community education and training).

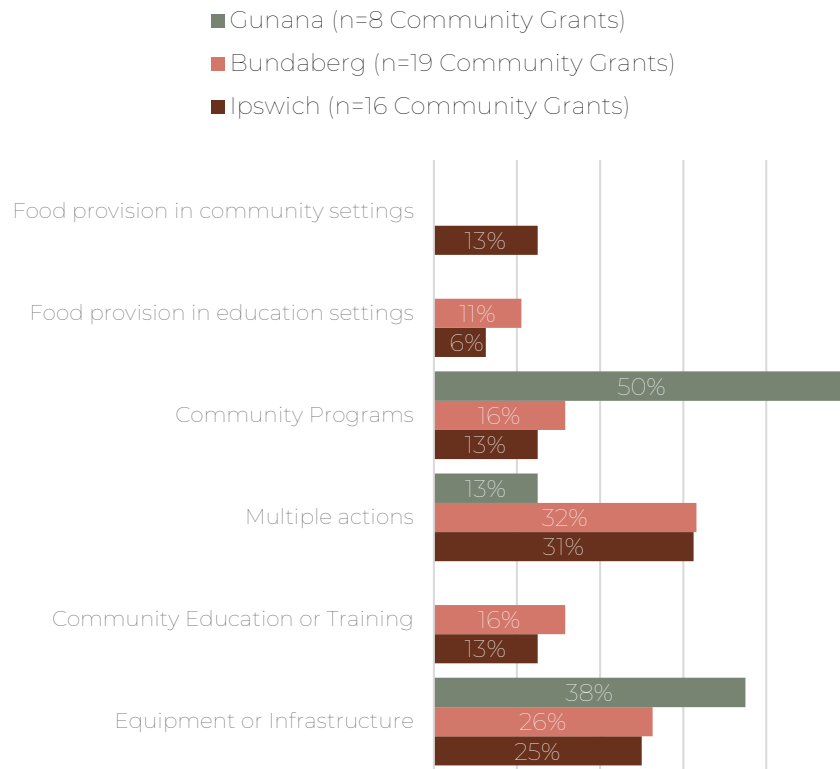


Figure-54 (Proportion of Community Grants in each community by type of response (n=43).

The differences in types of responses across communities in Figure 8, reiterates that the funding requests are community-led and based on local Community Partner needs and aspirations, which means the responses vary.

The responses funded through Community Grants to date have also supported a **broad range of people in community**, representing different age groups (Figure 11) and target groups in FQK (Figure 12).

FQK is a community-wide initiative, and the FQK team are committed to supporting all people in community in need. However, a key value for FQK is equity, which includes funding organisations and activities that support target groups who are especially at risk of food insecurity.

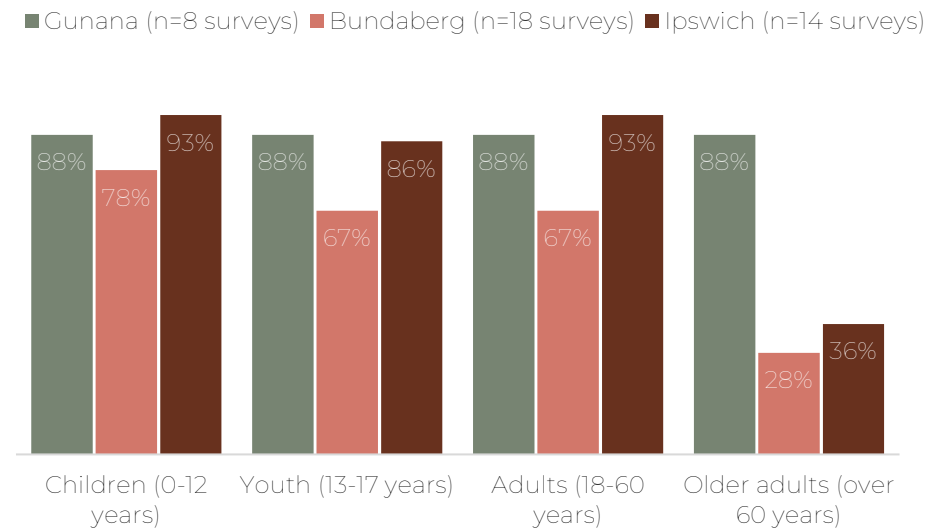
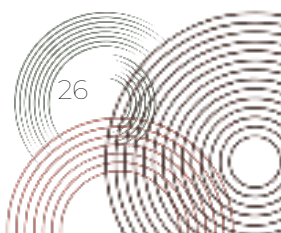


Figure-55 (Proportion of responses funded through Community Grants that were reported to reach specific population age groups by community.



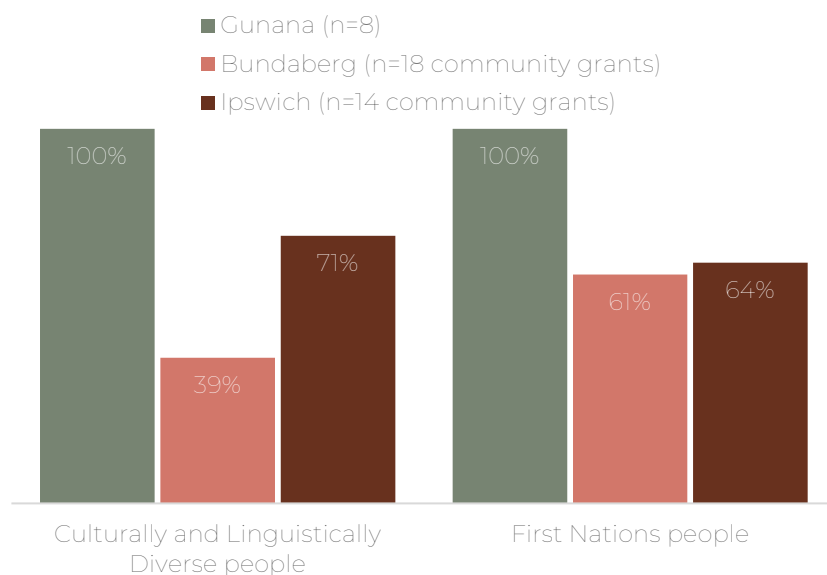


Figure 55 Proportion of responses funded through Community Grants that were reported to reach specific population targets groups by community.

Overall, Gunana has excellent reach across age groups and target groups, likely driven by the tight-knit social networks and geographical proximity of the population within the township. It has also been observed that Community Partners in Gunana often serve multiple functions within community and therefore reach different cross-sections of age groups and target groups across the community. In Bundaberg and Ipswich there is good coverage for different age groups, however there is an opportunity to ensure that older adults (aged over 60 years) are not left behind, as there are fewer Community Grants that have targeted support at older adults in both communities.

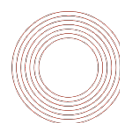
FQK Food Solutions Funding (FSF)

There have been two formally approved FSF applications so far, both in Bundaberg, and the work is now underway. However, there are a lot of exciting developments across communities for the FSF.



Gunana. The Gardening and Bush Seed Working Group emerged from community workshops in May 2026. This group – comprised of local community members, trusted Elders and service provider representatives – aims to meet monthly to share ideas around building sustainable home and community gardens and to support the dissemination of traditional knowledge between Elders and young people and through the community of food gathering, growing and planting. Community have solutions however, they have expressed many members have very little capacity. The Gunana community are facing significant, cumulative pressures that deeply impact their capacity to show up and engage in the Initiative. There is a high amount of unmet need in the community, and the reality of the immediacy and magnitude of this need has often had to take precedence over creative, community-led collaboration.

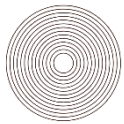
The Working Group is emerging as an important platform for overcoming capacity limitations. It has put on the table the assets and strengths of the community and by bringing these together, the community can see the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Many of the community members in the Working Group have small home gardens, grow food on Country and are invested in supporting and sharing food and knowledge. One suggestion that has come up is using the FSF to hire personnel to support this work and supplement community capacity, which is actively being worked on.



Bundaberg. The Community Food Collective has generated three key areas for developing Food Solutions – food growing and picking, food education, and new ways to access food. The Collective built consensus on these areas across multiple conversations and workshops and they reflect the specific food landscape of Bundaberg. That is, although Bundaberg has an abundance of food production, much of it leaves

the region and does not meet community needs. The focus on food growing and access responds to this gap by supporting a more localised food system.

Their first, fully approved FSF application – Help Happens Here - is a collaboration between three collective networks and two community organisations, one of which is First Nations-led, and the solution covers both food education and new ways to access food. The second approved FSF – Fresh Seconds, Stronger Communities – is a collaboration between three organisations. It focuses on supporting young First Nations people and disengaged young people to collect seconds produce from local farms and redistribute it to schools. The aim is to reduce food waste while building skills, collaboration and a more circular local food economy.



Ipswich. The Community Food Collective has met twice so far, and there has been a strong positive response to this platform facilitated by the CFC and hosted at different community organisations. One of the key pieces of work in Ipswich has been to bring the services together to show how closely they align in goals and demonstrate the potential impact of their collective efforts and assets. An exciting development in Ipswich is three Food Solutions currently in active development, led by Three Little Birds, Rosewood and District Supporting Communities and Gailes Community House. Three Little Birds is leading a project centred on cooking, life skills and hospitality mentoring for marginalised young people by First Nations chef using native ingredients. At Rosewood, the community centre, in collaboration with the local QCWA branches, is planning a connected series of cooking workshops, and a support network for community members to link them in with the community centre's wrap around services, social groups and volunteering opportunities. In Gailes, the Community House is collaborating with Vedanta Centre and Hymba Yumba Independent School to continue building upon their Waste Not Want Not Network, with a focus on food waste prevention and education.

What were the learnings across communities about funding solutions for food equity?

Across communities, the Community Grants have felt **approachable and flexible** for Community Partners. They have provided feedback that the application process itself has been very streamlined and the CFCs have been helpful in ensuring their responses align with the eligibility criteria. Community Partners have said that funding streams outside of FQK have often restricted their ability to develop responses that make sense for their community, especially as they relate to food equity. For some Community Partners, they are not actually eligible for many other types of funding because of their status (e.g., community volunteers and champions that are not part of an organisation or organisations that are not incorporated or registered as a non-profit). There is also a sense that the size of the Community Grants works well with their capacity, as many of them are small operations.

The aim of the FSF stream is to drive collaborative, community-led work that addresses food equity using a systems-change approach to facilitate long-term change. However, communities are at **different stages of readiness**



to engage in systems-change work. Early in Phase 1, Community Partners were primarily working on Community-level and Structural-level conditions – the things we can see, like the environment, policy, and community resources. However, there are often different levels of understanding of the Relational and Transformational conditions – the things we cannot always see, like relationships, and the beliefs and attitudes that obstruct change. The CFCs have played a big role in building understanding and capacity in Community Partners for systems change work. They have facilitated capacity building workshops around food equity, systems change, and what it means to work in this way to strengthen collective efforts. These have led to the development of Community Food Collectives and a Working Group in Gununa. This takes more work when Community Partners aren't yet connected. When Community Partners understand and can see the benefit of working in this way, they are on board.

Adaptations to Implementation

As a community-led Initiative, there is a need to adapt to each community differently, based on the food security landscape, their strengths and resources, and their capacity for systems-change work. During Phase 1, there have been some key adaptations.

- **Initiating Community Food Working Groups**

One of the planned governance mechanisms of the Initiative was that CFCs would work within their community to form a FQK Community Food Working Group. As the CFCs began to engage stakeholders in the community, they learned that there were already networks and/or working groups in the community, and at the time there was no desire from community to create this kind of group. The CFCs listened and pivoted to work in different ways, which required significant engagement efforts from the CFCs to continue to engage community stakeholders separately.

As the CFCs built trust and connections with Community Partners and, more importantly, between Community Partners, there was a renewed interest in creating Community Food Working Groups (called Collectives in Bundaberg and Ipswich and Working Group in Gunana). The FQK team have held this evolution with care and provided the space and platform for communities to initiate the working groups and lead how and how often they want to gather and organise themselves. This positions the Initiative well for community ownership and sustainability into Phases 2 and 3.

- **Changing the Food Solutions Funding processes**

The Food Solutions Funding (FSF) application process was initially designed as two rounds, each with an expression of interest period followed by a full application period, so that the FQK Governance Group could assess applications at set times. However, the Initiative shifted to a more flexible process, recognising that communities need time to develop collaborative food solutions, work across Community Partners and receive iterative feedback from the CFC to strengthen FSF applications. The collaborating Community Partners from the first Bundaberg FSF application also supported

refinements to the application form, Progress Update form and legal funding agreement. Collaboration has remained central to FSF, both in the solutions themselves and the processes that support the application. These community-led, participatory processes have reduced barriers for Community Partners wanting to work in this way and ensured momentum is not lost when Community Partners are ready to start.

- **Extending the Initiative without additional funding**

The FSF were developing at a different pace to what was planned in the Initiative, which presented a risk to communities that resources could be withdrawn from community before the solution could be implemented (if Phase 2 was not funded). The Governance Group requested the State Government provide a four-month, non-funded timeline extension for the Initiative. Place-based work takes time, and the Governance Group has had to be flexible and take on additional risk to ensure community are not left in the lurch.

- **Shifting the focus of the Community Grants**

In Phase 1, there was an urgent need to use Community Grants to fund some direct food provision and basic infrastructure to support food relief activities. As the Community Partners have become more equipped (e.g., through expanded infrastructure) and more informed on systems-change (through CFC-led capacity building), they have shifted to plan and propose initiatives that aim to address food equity more broadly. The FQK Governance Group have also approved secondary Community Grant applications, which has allowed Community Partners to build momentum and expand their reach, impact and capacity for food equity.

“The Bundaberg Neighbourhood Centre’s (BNC) first Community Grant funded a freezer, portable cook tops, and a raised garden bed. Since these infrastructure updates, BNC have partnered with the Queensland Country Women’s Association Bundaberg Branch’s Country Kitchens facilitators to launch a series of community cooking classes with funding from Neighbourhood Centres Queensland. Classes filled quickly, participants returned week after week, and the sense of connection in the room was undeniable. The BNC secured additional funding through a second FQK Community Grant, allowing the community cooking classes to continue for another year and expand to different target groups. What began as a kitchen renovation has grown into a thriving community program that nourishes more than just bodies. This initiative connects people to each other, shifts people’s sense of autonomy and beliefs around their ability to prepare affordable, nutritious meals, and also connects them to an established community service that has wraparound supports that address causes of food insecurity.” – Bundaberg CFC

- Changing the ratio of funding allocations

The Initiative made a formal amendment to reallocate the funding ratio from 70:30 (FSF:CG) to 50:50 to expand the amount of funding on offer through the Community Grants stream. This adaptation was done because Community Partners:

- have shifted towards more food equity-based activities within the scale of Community Grants funding
- find that the Community Grants stream aligns better with their capacity to deliver than the FSF stream
- are having great impacts in community through secondary Community Grants funding opportunities

For each of these implementation adaptations, the evaluation has also adapted methods to capture the process and impacts.

What are the enablers and barriers to delivering FQK so far?

We are beginning to understand what supports and enables the work of the Initiative and what makes it more difficult.

Enablers of implementation so far include:

- **Fully funded Partnership Manager:** This role and the person in the role have been identified as central to the success of implementation so far. This role allows the CFCs to focus on their communities, provides them with practical and emotional support and centralises the governance activities.
- **Leadership style of FBQ Chief of Impact and Engagement and the FQK Partnership Manager:** The two people in these roles have been identified as bringing values-based leadership with strong alignment to the Initiative. They value transparency, reflective practice and open communication between the FQK team, and create a safe space for the team members to hold this complex work and for community-led solutions to be developed.
- **The CFC Community of Practice:** The fact that there are three CFCs has been noted as a strength because they form a small team to learn from each other and share the load of doing this type of work.
- **First Nations Engagement Lead:** This role and the person in the role have also been identified as a strong reason for implementation progress to date. Their role has expanded beyond engagement guide to include, direct community partnership facilitation, advocacy work and supporting the CFCs to build their approaches to First Nations communities.

Barriers to implementation so far include:

- **Funding timeline:** The Initiative received initial, short-term (2-year) funding for establishing what is a long-term approach to place-based, systems change. An outcome of this short timeline on Phase 1 funding is that it made it hard to facilitate planning for FSF because the remaining time in the Initiative would not allow the collaborations time to co-design the solutions and be ready for applying. The FQK team are meeting this challenge to secure ongoing, sustainable funding. They understand the deep importance for the communities to experience continuity of momentum and relationships, which have been carved out by the FQK team.
- **Geographical distance to Gunana:** It takes about 8-9 hours to travel from Brisbane (where the FQK Partnership Manager is based) to Gunana. This community was intentionally selected as a remote community to explore the feasibility of doing place-based work within this context. There have been challenges in implementing work in Gunana due to this remoteness, and the relational norms of meeting in-person rather than Teams or email. Additional freight costs for delivering goods through the Community Grants has been borne by the Initiative and these deliveries often took months before Community Partners received the benefits of the requested goods. The FQK team have intentionally made time to be on Gunana and with the CFC there, however this is more difficult than visiting the other two communities. Whilst these remain as barriers, the FQK team have actively overcome through their equity focus.
- **Cost-of-living pressures:** All CFCs have reported the pressure on FQK implementation introduced by the nation-wide cost-of-living increase being experienced by people. This pressure has increased the need for food relief, which made it more difficult to focus on longer-term systems change solutions, especially initially.
- **Limiting mental models.** These assumptions or beliefs are held by people in community and have been felt, seen and heard by the FQK Team. Those identified to date are described on Page 36. These mental models form the implicit fabric that often limits, slows or stops community responses from taking root.

Planned for Final Report.

Include data from the IPSOS Hunger Report, by community, to provide more detail about the local context as an enabler/barrier.

Domain 2: What have been the early impacts in the Initiative?

In summary...

Impacts for People in Community

- Received immediate practical benefits of food access and choice through Community Partners with more capacity to provide food relief
- Experienced deeper community connection and participation, and greater food dignity through diversified access points for food and culturally relevant and appropriate supports

Impacts for the Initiative

- Expanded local impacts by connecting local organisations and resourcing the changes they identified as needed
- Expanded organisational learning and advocacy readiness within the collaborating organisations

Impacts for the FQK Team

- Built stronger understanding of local context, systems, and the beliefs and attitudes (mental models) that are barriers to implementing the Initiative
- Increased capacity for relational ways of working, which has been guided by First Nations' leaders and communities

Impacts for Community Partners

- Improved capacity to respond to community need
- New and deeper connections to other Community Partners that have:
 - changed resource flows in local food systems
 - increased coordination and optimised use of existing facilities services, staff capacities and relationships
 - generated new ideas and early momentum for collaborative food equity initiatives

What were the early impacts for People in Community so far?

The ripple effects of the FQK Initiative for people in community are vast and varied. There are examples of shifting local food systems to be more accessible to people in community, changing models of food relief to promote dignity of choice and access for people who have experienced shame or embarrassment in seeking help, and programs that are connecting people back into their communities and culture.

Observed Benefits to Community

Of the 21 Funding Recipients (Gunana=4, Bundaberg=15, Ipswich=2) that have reported on **direct and indirect benefits** to people in community, they identified 64 benefits to people in community across 14 categories (Figure 13). The direct benefits are the proximal, early impacts that change people's lives – the first ripple. The indirect benefits are the broader community, social, and systems changes that happen as a result of the direct benefits - the wider ripple effect of the FQK Initiative that Funding Recipients are seeing happening in community. We have condensed these, as there were overlaps in direct and indirect benefits because of the variety of Community Partner responses.



Figure 57 Observed benefits of FQK to people in community (n=39). The more commonly reported impacts are larger in the picture.

In community, this looks like...

IMPROVED ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, NUTRITIOUS FOOD

"These freezers have made it possible for us to offer families a greater variety of healthy options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner – choices that might not otherwise be available." – Bundaberg Community Partner

INCREASED FOOD KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICAL SKILLS

"The 52 students have been trained in kitchen safety and nutrition. This has increased their confidence and opportunities for mentorship and giving back to community, as well as provided a foundation for future study or training. One student with a disability progressed so significantly that by her third session, she was able to work together with two other students in a class-wide project. Students prepared "care meals" for a local family in palliative care and hosted a thank-you morning tea for their teachers, experiencing the pride of using their skills to serve others." – Bundaberg Community Partner.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO RECEIVE RELIABLE MEALS and DEEPER COMMUNITY CONNECTION

"The funding enabled us to directly support young people during the seven-week school holiday period in Gunana, a time when many experience increased food insecurity due to the absence of school-based meal programs. Through the provision of regular nutritious meals and a shared Christmas meal, participants had reliable access to food, reducing hunger and associated stress for both youth and their families. In addition to addressing immediate food needs, the fishing excursion provided young people with a positive, engaging experience that supported their wellbeing, social connection and confidence. The activity encouraged teamwork, learning and time outdoors, while also reinforcing food sustainability by linking the experience to food sourcing." – Gunana Community Partner

DEEPER COMMUNITY CONNECTION

"Students prepared "care meals" for a local family in palliative care and hosted a thank-you morning tea for their teachers, experiencing the pride of using their skills to serve others." – Bundaberg Community Partner.

INCREASED COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

"Seeing the fridges in public spaces has raised awareness in community about food security issues, which has prompted more community members to contribute food, time, or resources." – Ipswich Community Partner

BETTER SHARING CHANNELS FOR FOOD AND KNOWLEDGE TO SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, CARERS AND NEIGHBOURS

"We receive feedback the meals are being shared amongst neighbours and those who can't make it to our store. Additionally, they are being handed out to people who are experiencing homelessness in town." – Bundaberg Community Partner



Planned for Final Report.

We used a data-driven, bottom-up qualitative analysis of the direct and indirect benefits for People in Community, grouping the benefits as the Community Partners described them. However, there were some emerging features of the benefits that align with a systems-change approach, which could be a useful way of grouping benefits in the Final Report. For example, some Community Partners talked about how FQK funding had supported increased visibility and awareness in community, which reduced people's perceptions of shame in seeking help – a powerful negative mental model to begin to shift.

CASE STUDY: Lulu's Laundry: A one-stop shop in Gunana.

The Orange Sky Laundry is more than a place to wash clothes. Managed by local legend Loretta "Lulu", the site has become a vital community hub for families, Elders and others experiencing hardship, offering a safe, welcoming space to connect, yarn and access support. Alongside managing the Orange Sky service for Mornington Shire Council, Lulu also volunteers her time to open the co-located op shop, ensuring community members can access clothing, linen and household essentials. The shared site continues to grow, with a developing garden and shaded yarning area that encourages connection, dignity and informal support. Lulu is often the first person people turn to. Using the on-site freezer, she quietly distributes hampers to individuals and families across the community. FQK has supported this work by stocking the freezer, supplying school holiday food hampers and co-designing a community grant to deliver pantry boxes through the Gununamanda Shop – keeping food access local, practical and community-led. – FQK Partnership Manager

CASE STUDY: Dinners with dignity in Bundaberg.

In Gin Gin, four local women responded to rising food insecurity and social isolation by creating the weekly Gin Gin Community Dinner – a welcoming space where community share a meal, connect, and access practical support. Since June 2025, 70+ people now attend each week, with food donated by local farms and purchased at markets and grocery stores and prepared in the RSL's commercial kitchen by eight regular volunteers and local homeschool students learning to cook and serve. Operating on a "pay as you feel" model, the dinner has become a lifeline for older residents, low-income families, and people experiencing homelessness. Despite strong community backing, the dinner faces significant ongoing costs, often exceeding donations, creating a barrier to sustainability. With

no alternative Gin Gin venue offering a commercial kitchen, these costs remain the primary obstacle to maintaining the dinner. FQK's Community Grant has covered these costs for a year. Guests take home meals and produce, receive referrals to the Neighbourhood Centre's Community Connect worker, counselling support and safety services, and experience a renewed sense of community. The dinner also strengthens longer-term community capacity by involving children, young people and marginalised adults in the kitchen to build food literacy and confidence. New friendships have formed, isolation has eased, and families in crisis are connected to support quickly and compassionately. – Bundaberg CFC

CASE STUDY: Food as the gateway to support in Ipswich.

Leichardt One Mile Community Centre (LOMCC) is proud to be a place where everyone belongs, and in the words of its Coordinator Kym, each person is a thread that makes up the woven tapestry of community. LOMCC is a neighbourhood centre that runs food relief, men and women's groups and other social offerings for seniors, First Nations and Pasifika families, and young people. The community grant they received in 2025 allowed them to increase their food storage to support an increase in food relief they can distribute through the centre in partnership with SecondBite | FareShare, as well as food, utensils and equipment to run two series of cooking workshops: "Feeding your Family" and "One Pot Meals".

Delivered in partnership with Good Shepherd, who offered budgeting and financial resilience advice to participants, the workshops taught community members to cook budget friendly meals for under \$20 for their family. Incorporating some ingredients from their community garden, the workshops were able to build upon LOMCC's food relief operations, to deliver an educational program with longer term impact for families who would usually only attend the centre for immediate assistance. – Ipswich CFC

What do we know so far about medium-term impacts for this group?

Many of the observed benefits from the Funding Recipients in the above section on early impacts are actually aligned with medium-term outcomes in the FQK Logic Model. The ripple effects of a place-based initiative like FQK can happen slowly or quickly and the people who are delivering the work on the ground have already observed shifts in outcomes that were expected to take much longer.

What were the early impacts for the FQK Initiative and the team that deliver it?

Early in the Initiative, there were significant shifts in understanding of community mental models, how to do place-based work well, and who the key stakeholders are in each community.

Awareness of community mental models

There is emerging evidence of the harmful mental models that make it more challenging to address food equity. Across communities there are some common mental models being identified:



Food relief is the answer to food insecurity

While it is important to meet immediate community need, this belief stops people thinking about root causes of food insecurity.

Food relief and security should be provided to the “right people”

Stereotyping people who are experiencing food insecurity creates a barrier to access and undermines food security as a fundamental human right.

The situation will get worse

Some people felt hopeless about the situation, and at the mercy of external circumstances.

It is up to government or organisations to do this work

Related to the above belief, is the perception that organisations hold all the answers and the power. The belief that community don't hold the resources or capacity to create change can stop people from trying.

Planned for Final Report.

In the Final Report, many of the medium- and long-term outcomes will be explored through publicly available datasets, including Census data, Queensland Preventive Health Survey, Australian Early Development Census, and from the IPSOS Hunger Report by community from 2022 through to 2025. However, these population-level outcomes take a long time to change. We will be setting up the context and baseline data for evaluation of future FQK phases.

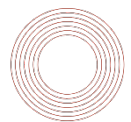
Improved knowledge and skill in place-based work



Learnings from Gunana: Trauma-informed engagement is needed in place-based work for food equity

Gunana is a remote, predominantly First Nations community. There is rich culture on the island of the Lardil people, the Traditional Owners of Gunana, and there is an especially strong history of song, art, and dance. There is also a significant history of trauma across generations from the 'mission times', where people were forced by missionaries from the island, and traditional language, art, song and dance were disallowed under Mission law. The impacts are still felt today. The Gunana community is an especially strong example of the need for taking a trauma-informed approach to engaging in place-based work, which looks like:

- understanding the role of food in healing and re-connecting to culture,
- putting relationships first through deep listening and genuine care,
- acknowledging community resilience,
- considering intersectionality and layered traumatic experiences



Learnings from Bundaberg: Place-based work requires coordinated advocacy at a broader level

The work on the ground in the Bundaberg community is progressing well. Community Partners are enthusiastic about collaborating to create positive change. The Bundaberg CFC has reflected that this needs to be met with equal efforts of advocacy at the state and national level to support place-based work. The Bundaberg Community Food Collective have identified better local food systems as a food equity priority, as they are one of the biggest food producing areas in Australia. However, there are complex systems in place that make a local food system

challenging, and the food producers and suppliers in the community have expressed feeling powerless in changing this system. The CFC has put forward key targets for FQK advocacy that would support these local efforts and in future phases the three FQK collaborating partners will need to use their nationally respected positions and voices to push these advocacy asks forward.



Learnings from Ipswich: A First Nations approach supports collaboration in a place-based approach

The Ipswich CFC has shared learnings around working with First Nations-led organisations in the Ipswich community, and their relational way of being, knowing and working.

"This can look like more complex webs of relationships between organisations, due to professional and personal connections between staff. It can also look like older-brother mentoring relationships between organisations, and the way that groups learn from Elders in an advisory capacity. I have learnt that some community members will relate in their roles to others as whole people, which can mean sharing their background and Country, family stories, and other things. It can be an important part of trust building to engage in some storytelling, in order for people to meet you as a full person, rather than just another staff member in a given role. This can lead to an increased desire to assist with the snowballing process, and increased idea-sharing. This has confirmed my personal intuition about relationship building and the way to do it authentically with First Nations community as a non-First Nations person, and it has increased my confidence in doing so." – Ipswich CFC

A First Nations approach naturally lends itself to deeper connections to each other and to community. Seeing people as whole people makes room for more respect, deeper trust and buy-in, and a greater desire to work together.

Understanding of Community Partners

As the FQK Team, especially the CFCs, have engaged with Community Partners they have developed a deep understanding of who are the key Community Partners, how are they connected, and how ready they are to collaborate to take a systems-change approach to supporting food equity.

These Community Network Maps are intended to show:

- the volume of stakeholders in each community
- how connected they are
- how they are relevant to FQK,
- and how this changes over time.

They represent roughly the first three months of engagement in each community.

FQK Funding:



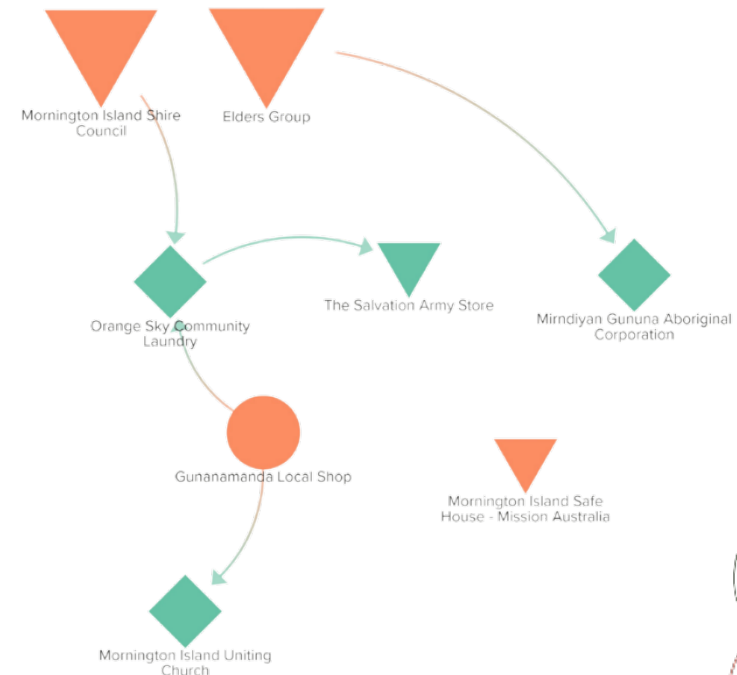
Food as core offering:

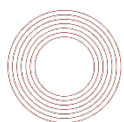


Gunana 'Early Days' Community Network Map.

There were **13** Key Community Partners for FQK in Gunana in the early days. They were not well connected (**5** existing connections), although there are key individuals who work across multiple organisations (e.g. Mornington Island Shire Council and Orange Sky and Salvation Army op-shop) that facilitate information sharing and support resource flows between Community Partners. The Mornington Island Shire Council hold a lot of power in community through resource provision and decision-making, and the Elders Group hold power in community through community respect. There are **5** Key Community Partners targeted specifically at children and young people. In the early days, they were not connected, but through FQK and new staff in community there are emerging examples of collaboration between these service providers.

The Community Partners are not set up for food to be part of their core offerings (n=1); however, many organisations have responded to the need for food relief regardless. This does mean that infrastructure to support food relief was limited in the early days.



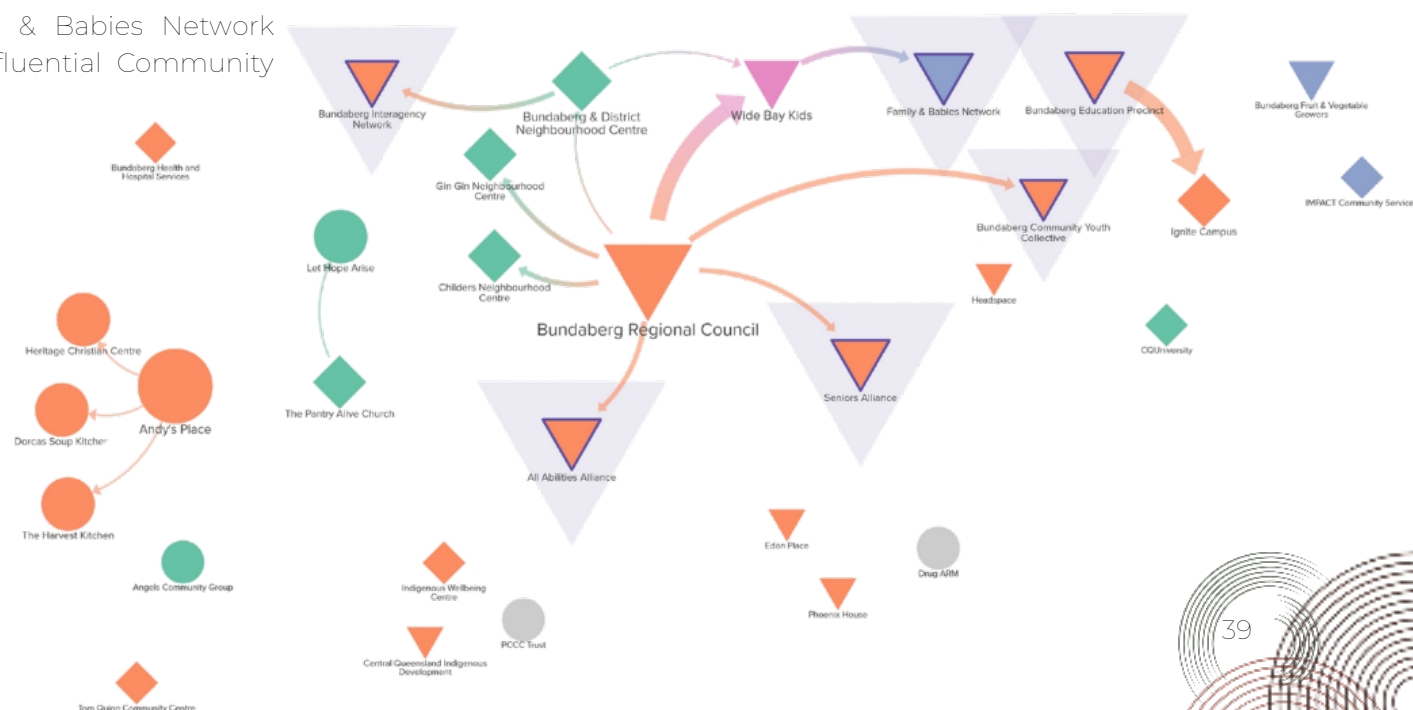
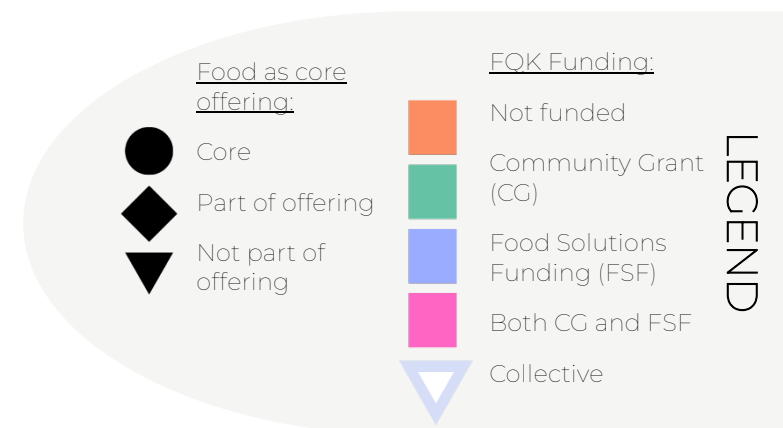


Bundaberg 'Early Days' Community Network Map.

There were **31** Key Community Partners for FQK In Bundaberg in the early days. The Bundaberg community were already quite well connected, with **15** existing connections (*arrows*). This connected landscape included **6** existing Collectives (or Interagency/network groups), largely targeted at different priority groups within the community. Within these Collectives, there are good foundations for collaboration.

The Bundaberg Regional Council hold a lot of power as a key facilitator, funder and connector of existing Collectives and Key Community Partners. With **7** existing connections, they are the most central Community Partner by 'degree' (number of connections) and 'closeness' (distance to connections). Wide Bay Kids hold some important pathways to other Community Partners and are also part of deeper levels of coordination and collaboration with Council (*thick arrow*) and the Family & Babies Network (*medium arrow*), which makes them an influential Community Partner.

There are **8** Community Partners with food as their core offering, and an additional **10** Community Partners with food as part of their offering, so there was some base level infrastructure in place, however many Community Partners spoke about restrictions in their funding for equipment that was limiting how they supported food security.





Ipswich 'Early Days' Community Network Map.

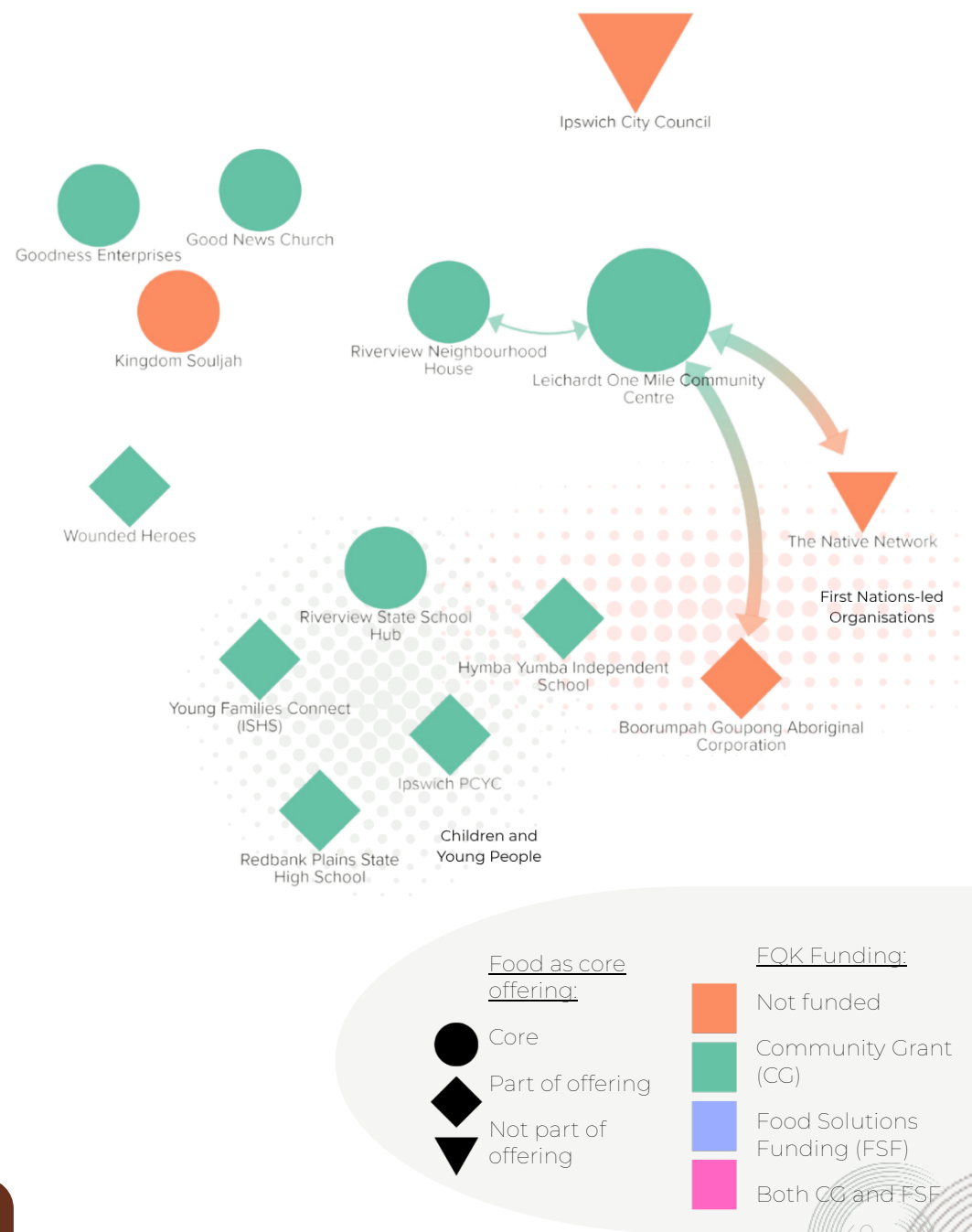
There were **15** Key Community Partners for FQK in Ipswich in the early days. They were not well connected (only 3 mutual connections); this was driven by both geographical spread and a sense of competition for limited available resources. A key connection point in Ipswich in the early days was the Leichardt One Mile Community Centre, who were already collaborating with two First Nations-led organisations (*thick arrows*) to share infrastructure, co-facilitate programs, and refer their community between Community Partners as needed. These existing connections could be leveraged in the future to connect up the First Nations-led organisations (*red dotted background*) to collaborate to support the First Nations communities in Ipswich. Leichardt One Mile Community Centre were also aligned with Riverview Neighbourhood House (*thin arrow*) and engaged in regular knowledge sharing. They are a great asset in a place-based initiative, as they have physical space available and oversight of community activities and support already available.

There are **5** Community Partners supporting children and young people (*grey dotted background*) – a key focus of the FQK Initiative – however they were not yet connected to collaborate. All of these Key Community Partners have received a Community Grant from FQK, so there is an opportunity now they have expanded capacity and infrastructure to join up and increase their impact collectively.

Of the 15 Community Partners, **6** offer food as their core offering, so there is some infrastructure for food relief, although scattered, already in community. The key opportunities in Ipswich are through increasing connections between Community Partners.

Planned for Final Report.

In the Final Report, there will be two maps for each community to show how FQK shifts the Community Partner Network landscape from the early days of Phase 1 to the end of Phase 1.



What do we know so far about medium-term impacts for this group?

We are only just starting to hear stories about shifts in medium-term outcomes for the FQK Initiative and the team that deliver it, as aligned with the FQK Logic Model (Appendix A).

Organisational changes

Working in this way is still new for the three collaborating organisations that govern the FQK Initiative. Largely, the core business of the three organisations centre on food relief, reduction of food waste, improving food systems, and food education. They are all investing resources toward work that promotes food equity and working in a place-based, community-led way, however FQK is unique and still finding its place as part of each organisation's core business models. At this stage, the organisational changes are focused on:

- Increased advocacy within the organisations and to different levels of government to support and fund more place-based food equity work like FQK
- Internal conversations around how to work with community from a “listening-first” approach
- Increased support and food relief delivered to the three communities because of expanded capacity and infrastructure provided through FQK funding

Increased connections

Within each community, there are new and deeper connections with Community Partners. However, at the Initiative-level there are also developing connections between the FQK team and state-level partners that offer strategic insight and the potential for better state-wide coordination for rolling out and expanding FQK.

These connections include:

- **Queensland Kids Partnership.** A systems-change initiative for improving child and youth wellbeing across Queensland. They are motivated similarly to connect efforts across different levels of government with community-level efforts to create meaningful change. There have been important discussions in how the role of food and food equity support the different parts of wellbeing that the Queensland Kids Partnership are addressing. 
- **Neighbourhood Centres Queensland.** Neighbourhood Centres have come up as key community hubs in supporting food relief, and have received FQK funding in two of the three communities (noting there is no Neighbourhood Centre in Gununa). Neighbourhood Centres Queensland (NCQ) as the peak body are committed to increasing the impact of Neighbourhood Centres, and the partnerships between FQK and NCQ may be an avenue for this. 
- **Local Councils.** In each community the local council has been a key partner throughout Phase 1. Whilst these do not represent a state-level body, their common functions, structures and connection to community are creating connections for FQK both within and between communities. 

Advocacy and leadership

While there is impressive work happening and developing at the local-level in each community, some of the changes needed to create long-term change at the broader systems-level cannot be achieved through local work alone.

In Phase 1 of the Initiative, advocacy work has been primarily focused at the local-level within each community, with limited capacity for state-level work. The FQK team reported that this capacity was limited due to competing interests of other levers of change, and the focus of advocacy work being food rescue and relief and reducing waste, not systems change for equity.

However, there has been discussion about what is needed in the remainder of Phase 1 and into Phase 2. At the national level, some of the key targets for advocacy are:

- National Food Security Strategy
- Good Food Purchasing Australia
- End Waste Australia
- Plus One Serve

The FQK team have identified key advocacy issues as being:

- Shifting focus from food relief to food equity and food justice
- Positioning of food as a foundation of not just physical health, but also social and community health and wellbeing
- Food in schools (i.e., Universal School Meal Program – recommended by the Commonwealth Government Inquiry into Food Security in Australia 2023 report)
- Infrastructure that supports local food systems

What were the early impacts for Community Partners?

There are two groups of Community Partners to learn from here.

- Those who have received funding through FQK (Funding Recipients)
- Those key community stakeholders that hold power or influence in community, but may not have received funding through FQK (Key Community Stakeholders)

For Funding Recipients, so far we can explore the short-term outcomes of their:

- awareness of what people want
- capacity to meet the needs of community
- relationships and connections between community partners
- awareness of any harmful mental models held by community

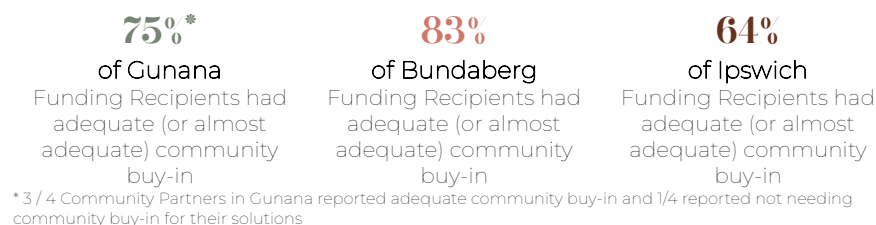
These short-term outcomes are mapped out in the FQK Logic Model (Appendix A) and relate to different levels of the systems change model introduced in Figure 2.



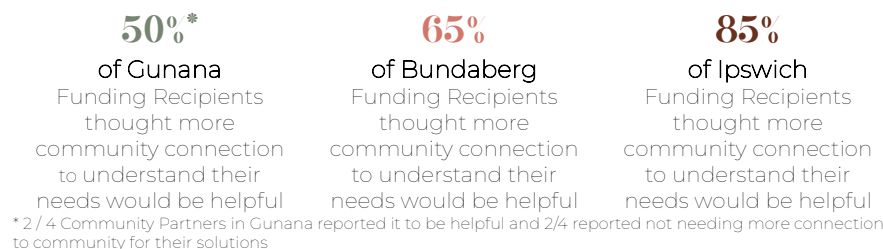
As noted earlier, for this Interim Report only Bundaberg had an adequate sample of Progress Surveys to explore change in outcomes for Funding Recipients from Baseline (when they received the funding) to Progress (from 3 to 12 months after funding). Therefore, we focus on describing the outcomes of Funding Recipients at baseline between communities.

Community Partner awareness of what people want

The Funding Recipients reported at baseline whether they had adequate community buy-in to deliver their proposed Community Grants. As a community-led, place-based initiative, FQK places great value on Community Partners having buy-in from people in community. This is a way of understanding whether Community Partners are aware of and responding to what their community want and need. The majority of Funding Recipients felt they had adequate buy-in from community (75%), and this varied between the communities:



We also asked Funding Recipients if it would be helpful to have more connection to community to understand their needs at baseline, and interestingly, even though they thought they had adequate buy-in, they still reported wanting more understanding of community needs (73%), and it varied by community:



Community Partner capacity to meet the needs of the community

Funding Recipients reported at baseline and progress surveys their capacity to deliver their responses to community. This was interpreted as “adequate” capacity or one of three levels of “inadequate capacity” (e.g. almost adequate, limited, very limited).

Overall adequate capacity to deliver the responses at Baseline was high in Gunana (75%) and reported by half of the Funding Recipients in Ipswich and Bundaberg (Figure 13). This capacity reflects the existing strength of Community Partners, and the CFCs work in identifying and working with Community Partners that are aligned with the FQK aims for more sustainable, long-term support (i.e., high capacity to deliver responses).

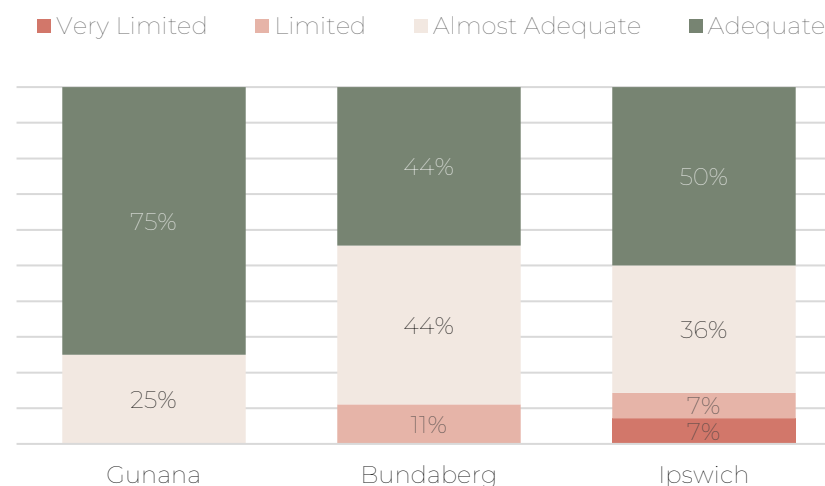


Figure 13 Adequacy of Funding Recipient's overall capacity to deliver the response in their Community Grant at Baseline by community.

Figure 13 also suggests that half of the Community Partners in Ipswich and Bundaberg were not adequately equipped to deliver their responses at Baseline. This reflects broader sector resourcing,

where Community Partners are “making it work with what’s available” and are used to operating in under resourced environments to meet community needs. We also note that the single Community Partner in Ipswich who rated their overall capacity as “very limited” (Figure 13) was a neighbourhood house and they rated their capacity as “very limited” across all capacity sub-domains. They also indicated that they would benefit from further support, and the Ipswich CFC is working with them to provide this support.

There were some interesting patterns when we explore the **sub-domains of capacity** that the Funding Recipients held at Baseline (Figure 14).

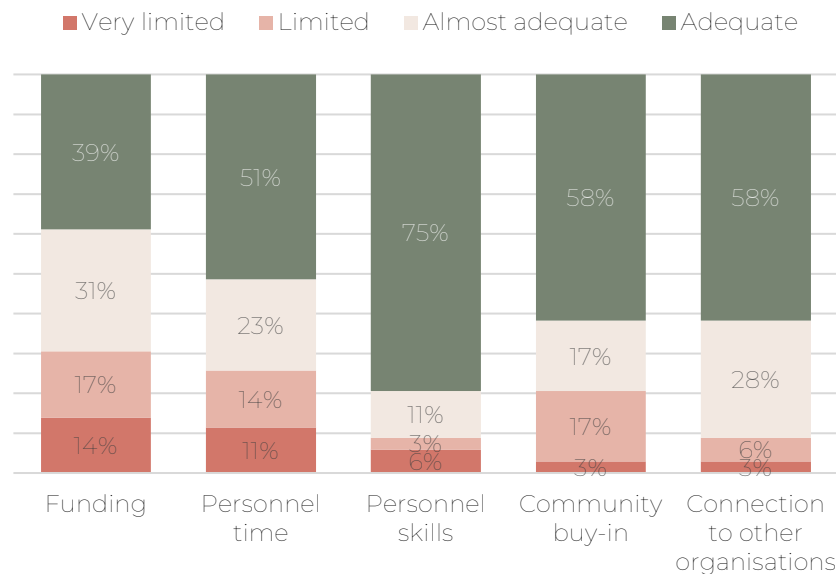
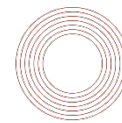


Figure 14 (Adequacy of Funding Recipient’s capacity to deliver their response at Baseline for five different sub-domains.

Across communities the strongest capacity sub-domain was personnel skills (Figure 14). The weakest capacity sub-domain was funding (with only 39% reporting adequate funding capacity to

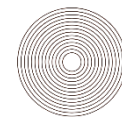
deliver the response), which highlights the importance of FQK Community Grants and their need to be accessible to a range of organisations. This funding capacity finding also relates to the data we have on whether Funding Recipients needed to **contribute resources in addition** to the FQK Community Grants to make the solution possible.

The majority of Community Partners (71%) had to contribute resources in addition to the FQK Community Grants to deliver the responses. This looked different in each community:



90% Bundaberg Funding Recipients contributed additional resources to the food solution, including:

- Volunteer time and staff time for food preparation, distribution, and coordination
- Electrical and utility costs (power for freezers, fridges and cooking)
- Vehicle/fuel for food collection and delivery to schools
- Kitchen equipment, utensils, and facility space
- Pro bono professional services (e.g., equipment installation)
- Food and cooking supplies to supplement programs



50% of Ipswich Funding Recipients contributed additional resources to the food solution, including:

- Staff time coordinating volunteers and administering programs
- Existing kitchen facilities (cooktops, BBQ, freezers)
- Community venue space and utilities (electricity, water, waste)
- Vehicles and logistics infrastructure for food distribution
- Food items to supplement donated supplies
- Cooking instructor time and training delivery

Gunana Funding Recipients did not answer this question.

Community Partner relationships & connections

So far in the Initiative, increasing and deepening connections has been the most significant benefit across communities. As part of the relational level of a systems-change approach, the developing connections are creating foundations to shift how Community Partners can, and are willing to, operate.



The three communities were at different levels of connectedness when the Initiative began. We have observed that capacity, specifically personnel resource, is related to how connected a community is, or can be. Connection and collaboration require a significant time investment, and each community has started with different levels of capacity to engage in collaborative work.

In the early days of the Initiative...



in Gunana, there was very little collaboration between organisations due to staffing shortages, a reliance on fly-in-fly-out workers and their schedules, and funding structures that dictate how organisations can operate and who they can support. Early on, there was also some concerns shared by Community Partners around a few stakeholders holding significant power in food relief decision-making, which created some protectiveness in information and resource sharing, and in willingness to collaborate. The CFC has developed relationships with key local services and community members in Gunana (see Community Network Map). Through these relationships, they have been able to begin to rebuild trust between community organisations, Council, the Elders, and community, and actively support coordination across these groups to improve access to food relief and food equity activities and engagements. Access to food is an urgent priority in Gunana – the need is high and increasing in community.

in Bundaberg, there was already a 'culture of collaboration' in the food relief and community services space. Bundaberg community had several existing collectives that supported different groups across community (see Community Network Map). There was a

willingness to collaborate, and as a local who was working in this space for many years already the CFC was able to develop relationships relatively quickly to get the ball rolling on applying for FQK funding. Even with this existing network, many Community Partners have provided feedback that in attending the FQK Food Solutions Workshops, which then developed into the Community Food Collective, they have seen new people and organisations come to the table. The FSF has led to the development of new partnerships. The second Food Solution, 'Fresh Seconds, Stronger Communities', has brought together three Community Partners that had never previously worked together. There have also been examples of organisations connecting through the Community Food Collective and starting to refer community to each other's programs.

in Ipswich, there was a competitive nature between some organisations, with some Community Partners talking about feeling as if they were all trying to apply for the same pools of funding. There were some connections between Community Partners in similar geographic locations, however largely the sector in Ipswich was relatively siloed (see Community Network Map). This has started to change is changing. The CFC has worked hard to communicate the benefits of collaboration and show different Community Partners how they align in goals to benefit community, shifting Community Partners' desire to collaborate more with others in the space. This uplift in willingness and capacity to collaborate has led to the development of the Ipswich Community Food Collective, which was not expected to eventuate at the start of the Initiative. From the Collective, there have been emerging partnerships, especially between Community Partners supporting young people (e.g., PCYC and Ipswich Community Youth Service) and First Nations families and community (e.g., Youth Retreat Collective, Three Little Birds and Goodna Street Life).

What do we know so far about medium-term outcomes for this group?

It is still early in the evaluation process to be identifying medium-term outcomes for Community Partners, as aligned to the FQK Logic Model (Appendix A). However, there are emerging stories and evidence of shifts in some of these outcomes that we can share in this Interim Report.

Increased shared ownership of solutions

In Ipswich and Bundaberg, a FQK Community Food Collective has been established. These were both borne naturally out of a desire from Community Partners to collaborate more and to have a forum to communicate about work being held in community, community needs and to plan collective solutions. When facilitating these newly formed Community Food Collectives, the CFCs have noted that they are still active in driving engagement work, but that there is potential for emerging leadership from within the Collective to take over this role or co-facilitate these sessions in the future.

Improved community infrastructure

As shown earlier, a high proportion of FQK Community Grants (28%) have been requested for equipment or infrastructure within Community Partner organisations. However, this is largely reflective of organisation-specific infrastructure (e.g., food relief storage capacity; kitchen upgrades). Whereas community infrastructure refers to larger food systems infrastructure that serves the needs of multiple Community Partners within a community (e.g. local food hub that supports a more localised food system). Whilst this larger community infrastructure is the focus of some of the recently awarded or planned FSF, and is a known gap across communities, implementing local food infrastructure is complex, expensive, and takes time. It is likely that this will not happen until Phase 2&3 of the Initiative.

Domain 3: How can the Initiative be continued past Phase 1?

In summary...

- The continued work of the Initiative is at risk due to short-term funding expiring, and this would jeopardise the strong foundations of the work and the early impacts experienced by community, which could lead to mistrust within communities for future place-based work as well
- It is too early in the FQK Initiative to understand different models of scaling and which models would work best to retain fidelity to the model of delivery

The State Government funding for Phase 1 of FQK ended in September 2026. There has been a (non-funded) timeline extension, with the existing allocation of funding stretched with phased recruitment to cover the Initiative until January 2027. Beyond this point in time, there is no funding security for the sustainability of the Initiative- as it is currently modelled. The short-term nature of the funding is a systemic barrier commonly experienced by place-based initiatives in Australia.ⁱ

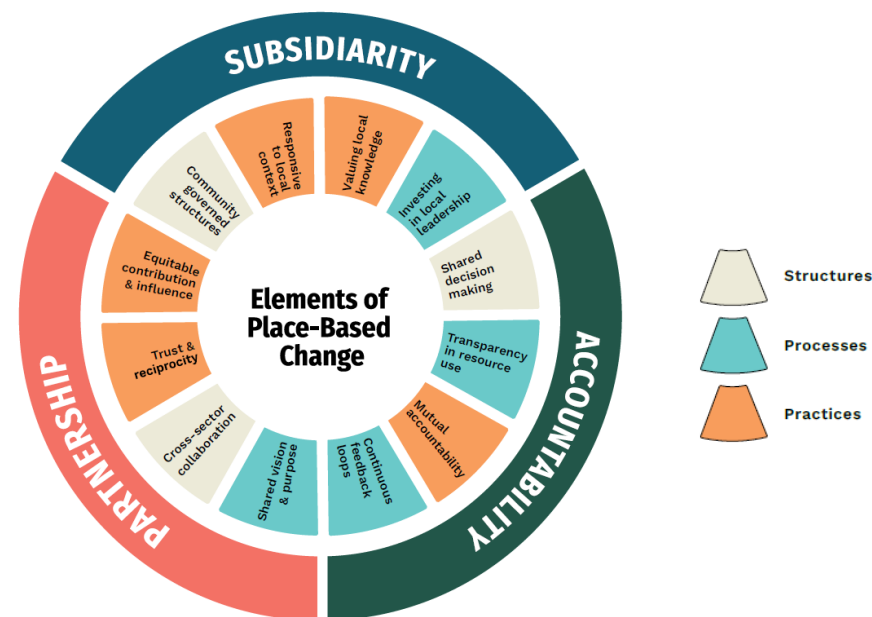
Reflections on the future of the Initiative from this Interim Report...

The Initiative has invested many resources, in the form of funds, people time, relationships and trust, into the three communities and as a result have built strong foundations of long-term systems change and seen early local impacts. This momentum would be lost if sustainable funding is not secured to continue the Initiative past Phase 1. The consequences of ceasing the Initiative stretch beyond

losing the FQK Implementation roles in community, and beyond the lack of Community Grants or Food Solutions Funding, it could also erode the community trust in the three collaborating organisations and with future place-based efforts from other partnerships too.

The FQK Governance Group and Implementation team need to come together to fully back and support efforts to attract longer-term funding between now and January 2027. The continuation of this work is essential for three communities who have already begun to benefit from the work and for realising the potential future impacts of the foundations laid to date.

In future reports we will use the enablers to scaling place-based work from PLACE (see image below)ⁱ as a framework for exploring the key determinants of successfully sustaining and scaling these types of initiatives.



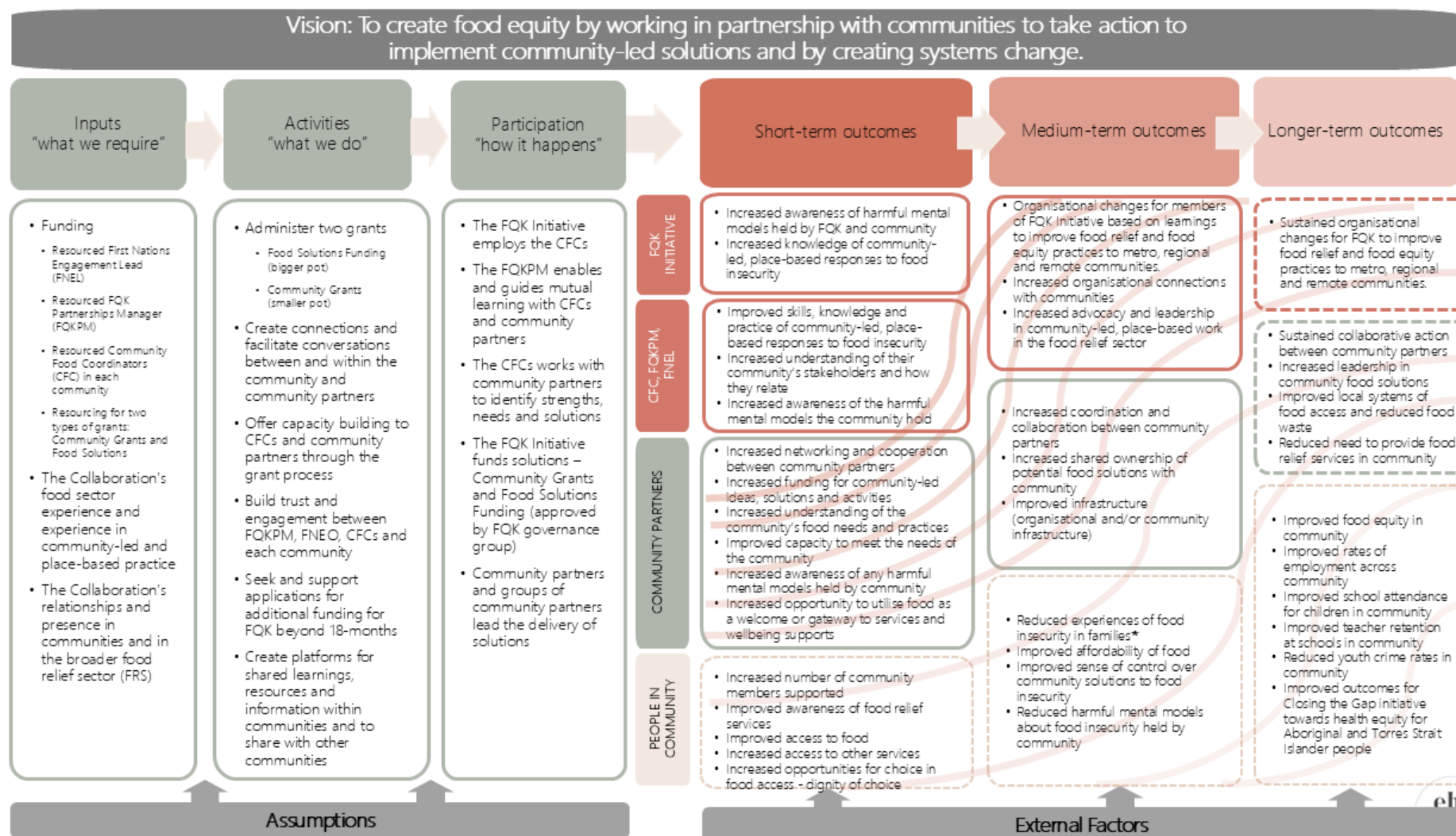
Reflections on evaluation processes from this Interim Report...

The evaluation team took this Interim Report as an opportunity to bring attention to the gaps in our understanding of the Initiative.

Moving toward the Final Report we will:

- Support the Gunana CFC with practical support and potentially new data collection mechanisms to ensure we understand the impacts on Funding Recipients in Gunana.
- Continue to collect the multiple avenues of qualitative data from the FQK team, Community Partners and Governance Group as this is serving as the best mechanism to understand the changes in communities.
- Support all CFCs in securing baseline and progress reports from FSF as they emerge in this next phase.
- Work with the FQK team to gain greater insights into the actual spends of funding by category and how this aligned with the original classifications of spending.
- Focus on co-creating 'later day' Community Network Maps with each CFC to make the best use of this data source to demonstrate the immense shifts that happened within the networks.
- Clarify the scope of impacts being captured in the evaluation for People in Community with the FQK team as the Initiative plans for Phase 2 of implementation.

Appendix A: FQK Program Logic Model (V. 5)



References

ⁱⁱ PLACE: Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment. <https://www.placeaustralia.org/resource-library/>

ⁱⁱ Dart, J. 2018. *Place-based Evaluation Framework: A national guide for evaluation of place-based approaches*, report, Commissioned by the Queensland Government Department of

Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS) and the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

ⁱⁱⁱ Kania et al (2018). *The Waters of System Change*, adapted by The Foundation for Social Connection