

SEED PROJECT IDEA

Advance Community Food Justice

The following is a project idea for inspiration—ultimately, the Seed Project you choose should be based on your community's climate resilience priorities. Remember that you will have up to \$50,000 to spend on the Seed Project and about 9 to 10 months to accomplish it, so you may need to carve out a piece of the following action to fit those guidelines, and then work together on a plan for financing the next phase.

Project Description:

Through community engagement and partnership with regional organizations and agencies, the project would result in a list of goals and implementation steps to advance community food justice. Advancing food justice means working towards the goals of communities owning and managing their food provisioning; supporting regional farmers and food businesses to create regional economic vitality; and expanding access to fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate, nutritious food for everyone. Communities should use this project to build upon and start to implement priorities documented in the Food + Water section of their Social Resilience Roadmap.

Depending on your local priorities, you may partner with regional organizations and agencies (like [Extension and Extension Agents](#), food banks, farmers, collectives, non-profits, etc.) to understand community expertise in the food sector. Tribes and members of specific cultural and ethnic groups may also be important sources of local knowledge. As an additional resource, Sustainable CT offers actions that can be adapted for promoting a community-based, sustainable, and equitable food system (see [10.1 – Encourage an Equitable and Just Food System](#) & [10.5 – Support Equitable Food Access and Local Farmers](#) & [10.4 – Develop and Promote Community Growing Spaces](#)).

High-level List of Potential Project Tasks:

1. **Reaffirm key partnerships and priorities:** Refer back to your Social Resilience Roadmap, specifically Food + Water in Part 2. What were the key takeaways from this exploration? What are the main community strengths/gaps? Who are the key stakeholders? Use this information to identify partners with knowledge in the local food system and community needs. This may include: foodbanks, WIC offices, farmers' cooperatives, grocery stores, school food programs, community kitchens, community garden managers, Tribes, people with lived expertise with food insecurity, and/or specific cultural groups.
2. **Form a project team:** The project team's work will be to evaluate the existing food production, networks, and access within the community, guide community engagement, and develop local food justice goals and implementation steps. In addition to some of the key partnerships identified in task 1, ensure your group is reflective of diverse perspectives and backgrounds of your community—such as age, race, gender identity, religion, immigration status,

and language. Compensation should be provided for project team members who are not participating as part of their job.

3. **Assess strengths and gaps in food production, networks, and access:** Again, refer back to the Food + Water section of the Social Resilience Roadmap. Prepare a preliminary list of key themes, capabilities/strengths, and vulnerabilities/gaps as they relate to food justice. Identify any areas that need further exploration. [Key indicators of food justice](#) from the GEAR tool, the U.S. Census Bureau, and other national and local data sources may include the following: food retail options, emergency food providers, community garden plots, participation in the National School Lunch Program, and number of persons participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps).
4. **Seek community input:** Develop and implement an engagement campaign to confirm or adjust your understanding of the important food justice issues in the community and priorities for action. Utilize the MVP 2.0 Engagement Plan to implement multiple engagement activities which might include participation in community events, leading workshops with community-based organizations, surveys, [storytelling events](#), and more. Document the experiences and recommendations that community members provide. Engagement should include community members, including Environmental Justice and other priority populations, organizations that serve the community, farmers, businesses, and other social networks and community leaders.
5. **Develop community food justice action steps:** Informed by the community input, the project team can reconvene to develop a shared list of local food justice goals and identify priorities for action. This list can serve as a shared vision for stakeholders to work toward implementing priorities. To the extent possible, identify a lead partner, funding source, and target timeline for each priority. Examples of such actions may include supporting farmers' markets' acquisition of technologies for processing SNAP benefits; promoting locally-owned restaurants in municipal and community publications; establishing pop-up markets at locations underserved by food access points (e.g., areas without grocery stores, convenience stores, farm stands, food banks); providing opportunities and resources for farmers to supply excess produce to food banks; hosting an event to connect local farms to food retail companies to encourage local supply chains; creating a plan to help all people access food during supply-chain emergencies and climate emergencies; and identifying and supporting local growing spaces such as greenhouses and community gardens.
6. **Share and promote the goals and action steps:** Share the goals and action steps across municipal departments, the city council / selectboard, the school department, and with relevant entities in the community to build support, secure funding, and implement actions. This work may take place throughout the year depending on budget and regulatory cycles, grant program timelines, or other factors.
7. **Sustain the work with community partners:** Make a plan to periodically check in with key partners, assess progress, and support continued advancement of the identified goals and priorities for action. This could look like hosting a semi-annual meeting where participants discuss progress, obstacles, and brainstorm funding and other resources to continue to advance goals. The project team may be sustained by evolving into a sub-division of a local organization, such as the agricultural commission, the health board, food pantry, or a farmers network such as the local Young Farmers Association.