



BROOME COUNTY FOOD COUNCIL

FOOD ACCESS PLAN EXPANSION

Two-Year Work Plan

A companion document to the Comprehensive Food System Assessment

Prepared for:

Broome County Food Council

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Overview

This work plan operationalizes the strategic recommendations from the Comprehensive Food System Assessment, organizing actions across six work groups over a two-year implementation period. Actions are sequenced based on priority designations (High → Medium → Low) and the continuum from Emergency Response to Systemic Change.

Guiding Principles:

- Treat Broome and Tioga Counties as a single, interdependent regional foodshed
- Address root causes of food insecurity: housing, transportation, and economic stability
- Build on existing collaboration to deepen coordinated, systemic change
- Center lived experience in all programming and communications
- Emergency food should be for actual emergencies, not permanent solutions to food insecurity

Note on Scope: The recommendations below are comprehensive by design. The Council cannot address everything at once. Priority designations help sequence work, focusing first on foundational actions while building toward longer-term systemic change. The Council should regularly revisit priorities as capacity and circumstances evolve.

Advocacy and Public Policy Work Group

Focus: Drive systemic change through policy and financial reform to address the root causes of food insecurity. Community survey data confirms this mandate: “Cost of food” was the second-most-cited barrier (34 mentions), and “Policies that support donating food” was the top-ranked solution to food waste (35 mentions).

Year 1 (Months 1-12)

High Priority Actions:

- Finalize the Council’s Policy Priorities/Advocacy Agenda, formally including affordable housing as a primary food security strategy (Broome survey ranked “More affordable housing” as top policy priority with 22 votes)
- Develop the financial and legal framework for structured incentives for food donation that compensate small producers for contributing to the emergency food system
- Research and increase awareness of existing donor protection policies:
 - Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (federal liability protection)
 - NYS Food Donation and Food Scrap Recycling Law
 - NYS Farm Donations to Food Pantries Tax Credit (25% of fair market value, up to \$5,000/year)
- Coordinate with the County Health Department to communicate donor protections during inspections

Medium Priority Actions:

- Draft white papers/policy briefs detailing mechanisms for direct economic support for farmers:
 - Property tax relief mechanisms
 - Labor shortage incentives
 - Advocate at the state level for adjusted thresholds in NYS Agricultural Assessment and School Tax Credit programs to better serve small/emerging farms
- Begin building coalitions with workforce development boards, economic development entities, and community organizations engaged in economic stability advocacy

- Pursue SNAP Administrative Advocacy at the local level—work with DSS to ensure adequate staffing and efficient application processing to reduce delays
- Support federal legislation: Local Farmers Feeding our Communities Act (cosponsored by Congressman Josh Riley) to codify and expand local food purchasing programs
- Monitor and support state legislation that advances institutional purchasing of local food, such as the Good Food NY bill; educate elected officials on the potential local impact of such policies on farm viability and food access

Year 2 (Months 13-24)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Policy Advocacy Blitz: Coordinate legislative outreach (local, county, state) to secure funding and support for the top three priorities: Housing, Transportation, and Farm Support
- Actively advocate for policies that increase SNAP/other food benefits to bridge the affordability gap for ALICE households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)
- Implement and monitor the effectiveness of the new food donation incentives program in partnership with Underserved and Transportation Work Groups
- Explore available state funding, including DEC grants, for food waste reduction strategies

Longer-Term Horizon:

- Explore alignment of food security advocacy with broader economic stability efforts (living wage advocacy, income-support programs)
- Position the Council to address root causes that drive families to need emergency food assistance
- The ultimate goal is not just to improve the emergency food system, but to reduce the number of households that rely on it

Transportation Work Group

Focus: Build logistical infrastructure to move food across the regional foodshed and connect people to food. “Transportation or distance to stores” was the single most reported challenge to food access (37 mentions overall; 17 in Tioga County alone).

Year 1 (Months 1-12)

High Priority Actions:

- Formalize Broome-Tioga Logistics: Design formal, dedicated transportation corridors and distribution infrastructure to efficiently move Tioga-produced food to Broome distribution hubs
- Map all current informal supply chain actors (volunteer drivers, farm partners delivering recovery food to Binghamton hubs) and draft MOUs to formalize the network
- Conduct a detailed logistical assessment identifying gaps in:
 - Rural transit (Tioga “distance penalty”—lack of public transit cuts residents off from grocery stores, healthcare, and food assistance)
 - Urban transit (Broome—physical burden of carrying groceries discourages bulk purchasing of healthy staples)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Develop programs to improve transportation and delivery options for food recovery logistics, including mobile cold storage capacity
- Identify and connect sites with existing funding sources:
 - CHSC grant (Creating Healthy Schools and Communities) for cold storage at food access sites
 - DEC grants for food waste reduction infrastructure
- Coordinate with existing regional mobility programs:
 - Getthere (formerly Broome-Tioga Mobility Management Project) operated by the Rural Health Network of South Central NY
 - 511NY Broome-Tioga Rideshare
 - Move Together NY (Cornell Cooperative Extension/Way2Go initiative)

Year 2 (Months 13-24)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Pilot Rural Transit/Delivery: Launch a pilot program for subsidized delivery options or rural transit in the most isolated Tioga County areas to address the “distance penalty”
- Establish and fund the formalized transportation corridors to replace reliance on ad-hoc, volunteer-based systems
- Work with transit authorities to implement changes easing the physical burden of carrying groceries on urban public transit
- Address Cold Storage Gaps: Expand cold storage capacity in food pantries and distribution sites (insufficient capacity currently limits the ability to accept fresh food donations)
- Evaluate pilot programs and develop replication plans for successful models

Underserved Populations Work Group

Focus: Develop and implement solutions in targeted geographic areas (including Tioga County) and for vulnerable populations, addressing physical access and service delivery gaps.

Year 1 (Months 1-12)

High Priority Actions:

- Launch Integrated “Hub” Models: Secure sites and begin feasibility planning for one or two integrated service hubs that co-locate food, healthcare, and childcare to combat “resource overload” and navigation fatigue
- Coordinate with Families with Young Children Work Group to ensure early childhood needs are prioritized in hub design
- Design hubs to reduce bureaucratic silos where families in crisis fall through cracks between the food system and the healthcare system

Medium Priority Actions:

- Conduct a deeper analysis of community survey data to pinpoint the highest-need hamlets/neighborhoods
- Conduct a feasibility study for local processing or co-op grocery structures in Tioga County to mitigate “market leakage” (stakeholders noted most Tioga-produced food leaves the county due to weak local markets)
- Assess opportunities to expand farm stands or markets in targeted Broome County neighborhoods to combat “food swamp” environment (areas overwhelmed by inexpensive, unhealthy processed options)
- Strengthen farm-to-food-recovery pipeline: Connect local farms with food recovery organizations (CHOW’s Broome Bounty program, Good Neighbor) who have a critical need for fresh produce donations

Low Priority Actions:

- Initiate formal cross-county collaboration meetings with Tioga County service providers to build human infrastructure for the regional foodshed model
- Support Tioga County’s emerging Food Council formation efforts

Year 2 (Months 13-24)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Expand Market Access: Launch Tioga co-op/processing structure and open new farm stands/markets in targeted Broome neighborhoods
- Strengthen consumer education and marketing about existing local food outlets (dual approach: improve visibility of current resources while strategically expanding to underserved areas)
- Continue building the farm-to-food-bank/food-recovery pipeline with incentives that make participation accessible for small and mid-sized farm operations

Ongoing:

- Evaluate initial hub models and market access points
- Develop a plan for replicating successful models across the foodshed
- Formalize cross-county networks and collaboration structures

Families with Young Children Work Group

Focus: Increase access to food and nutrition resources in early childcare programs to address childcare deserts and youth nutrition risks. Focus groups highlighted specific concerns about children and youth, including obesity and poor nutrition during out-of-school hours.

Year 1 (Months 1-12)

High Priority Actions:

- Prioritize Childcare in Hub Models: Collaborate with Underserved Populations Work Group to ensure early childhood community needs are central to the integrated hub feasibility study
- Engage in continued conversation with childcare providers and families to track needs and inform hub design
- Address Broome County census tracts identified as childcare deserts

Medium Priority Actions:

- Collaborate with the Advocacy Work Group to advocate for policies and funding sources supporting early childcare and its nutritional component
- Identify existing CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) and WIC participation rates and barriers to participation

Year 2 (Months 13-24)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Resource Distribution & Capacity Building: Distribute targeted resources to support food access at childcare sites; build capacity for sites to offer food access and nutrition services
- Continue advocacy for sustained funding for childcare-food integration
- Address out-of-school nutrition gaps identified in focus groups

Ongoing:

- Track key metrics: number of families with childcare access, CACFP/WIC participation rates
- Measure changes in program availability and participation due to Council efforts

Marketing and Communication Work Group

Focus: Translate the plan's vision into public action through awareness, stigma reduction, and centralized communication. Survey data shows the vast majority of respondents believe the public has a limited understanding of local hunger, and "Stigma or difficulty asking for help" was repeatedly cited as a top barrier.

Year 1 (Months 1-12)

High Priority Actions:

- Bridge the Empathy Gap and Combat Stigma:
 - Design and implement "Shadow Day" program for decision-makers and policymakers to experience food insecurity firsthand (as one focus group participant envisioned: "every decision-maker would have to shadow someone with lived experience for a day")
 - Expand the use and visibility of the existing ALICE video developed by the Work Group
 - Develop respectful video reels to "demystify the pantry" and show "a day in the life" of residents navigating the food system to normalize assistance programs
- Assist Advocacy and Underserved Work Groups in compiling qualitative stories and data to build a narrative around the ALICE households and the need for policy change
- Address misinformation within the food security sector itself (focus groups noted harmful narratives sometimes circulate among those working in food access)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Develop a cohesive communications strategy explaining the shift to the regional Broome-Tioga foodshed model and the shared benefits of the systemic approach
- Evaluate existing tools before creating new ones: Assess Food Access Map and other current resources; determine whether updates, improved promotion, or consolidation better serves community than launching new platforms

Year 2 (Months 13-24)

High Priority Actions:

- Execute Policy Campaigns: Deploy targeted public education and outreach campaigns for new programs (SNAP benefits, affordable housing policy)

Medium Priority Actions:

- **Centralize and Simplify Communication:**
 - If gap analysis supports it, create a unified information hub listing all food resources, hours, and eligibility requirements
 - Ensure dissemination through all non-digital channels (faith communities, schools, senior centers) to reach populations with limited internet access
 - Design with input from end users to avoid adding to “resource overload”
- **Focus Education on Practical Utility:**
 - Launch public education campaign specifically clarifying “Best By” vs. “Expiration” dates (cited 20 times as key solution to reducing food waste)
 - Pair educational programming with direct resource provision where funding allows (Resource-First Approach)—education is valuable regardless, but pairing with resources can address participation barriers
- Develop/promote apps or technology to create efficient, real-time connections between sources of extra food and organizations that need it (24 survey mentions)

Low Priority Actions:

- Continue impact storytelling to support advocacy efforts

Cross-Cutting Principle: Balance digital and non-digital outreach—leverage technology where it adds efficiency while maintaining robust non-digital channels for populations with limited internet access or digital literacy. No single communication channel will reach everyone; a diversified strategy is essential.

Steering Committee (Leadership)

Focus: Strategic direction, funding, and structural integrity of the regional effort.

Year 1 (Months 1-12)

High Priority Actions:

- Formalize Regional Governance: Finalize formal operating structure for sustained cross-county collaboration that officially treats Broome and Tioga as a single foodshed for grant and operational purposes
 - Define the foodshed as the geographic region producing and supplying food to the population (analogous to a watershed)
 - Consider benchmarking against other regional food system initiatives to identify best practices
- Secure Major Systemic Funding: Lead efforts to secure major grant funding for resource-intensive systemic recommendations:
 - Integrated hub models
 - Formalized transportation corridors
 - Cold storage infrastructure
 - Incentives for farmers, housing, and transportation
 - Improving quality of emergency food supply

See Appendix A: Funding Strategy Framework for detailed information on funding sources, partnership opportunities, and the implementation approach.

- Lead “Support, Advocate, and Educate” initiative to develop Food Systems Analysis-Regional approach

Medium Priority Actions:

- Executive Advocacy: Ensure Food Council Representatives meet with:
 - Local town and village boards
 - Binghamton City Council
 - Broome County Legislature

- State and Federal representatives
- Introduce and lobby for regional foodshed vision and policy priorities

Year 2 (Months 13-24)

Medium Priority Actions:

- Continue executive advocacy and relationship building
- Increase relationships with Tioga County organizations
- Support Tioga County Food Council formation (noted in original RFP as “months out” from formation)

Ongoing:

- Conduct mid-plan review of all Work Group metrics and regional structure
- Identify Organizational Responsibility: Map each recommendation to specific organizations or partners who can take ownership
 - Identify which organizations have the capacity, relationships, and mandate to advance each priority
 - Flag gaps where new partnerships may be needed
 - Ensure accountability across the work plan
- Regularly revisit priorities as capacity and circumstances evolve

Food Waste & Recovery Cross-Cutting Actions

Note: Food waste and recovery touch multiple work groups. The following actions should be coordinated across groups:

Infrastructure (Transportation Work Group lead):

- Address cold storage limitations that prevent pantries from accepting fresh food donations
- Improve transportation and delivery logistics for food recovery
- Invest in mobile cold storage capacity

Policy (Advocacy Work Group lead):

- Increase awareness of existing donor protection policies
- Coordinate outreach through County Health Department inspections
- Advocate for strengthened donation incentive policies
- Explore DEC grants for food waste reduction

Workforce (Underserved Populations Work Group lead):

- Develop strategies to recruit and retain new volunteers or paid staff to address the aging volunteer pool (average volunteer age now over 75)
- Build a pipeline of younger volunteers to sustain food recovery operations

Technology (Marketing Work Group lead):

- Develop/promote apps or technology to connect extra food with people who need it
- Create real-time communication networks between food donors and recovery organizations

Farm Connections (Underserved Populations Work Group lead):

- Build on the success of existing programs like CHOW's Broome Bounty, whose scale is enabled by a Redistribution Organization (RDO) contract with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and connection to Feeding America's Retail Recovery Program

- Strengthen connections between local farms and food recovery organizations (distinct from the Food Bank model)
- Address the critical need for fresh produce at CHOW, Good Neighbor, and similar organizations

Sustainability Consideration: Current reliance on food recovery, while essential, depends on surplus from retailers, restaurants, and farms. Economic pressures may reduce available surplus over time. The food system must pursue recovery as one component of a broader strategy that also addresses the root causes of food insecurity.

Tioga County Specific Actions

Note: Tioga County faces distinct challenges requiring targeted attention within the regional foodshed approach.

Transportation Solutions:

- Targeted investments in delivery options or rural transit to bridge geographic isolation
- Address the lack of public transportation that prevents access to food sources, healthcare, and food assistance

Economic Support for Agriculture:

- Pursue policy changes offering direct economic support for farmers
- Focus on alleviating the burden of property taxes (cited as “massive”)
- Address labor shortages

Infrastructure Development:

- Facilitate the creation of local processing or co-op grocery structures
- Prioritize purchasing fresh, local food to keep Tioga-grown products within the county
- Mitigate “market leakage” where most sales occur outside the county

Local Network Building:

- Provide support and resources to foster formal, sustained cross-county collaboration
- Create meaningful local networks for producers who currently feel isolated (“on my own as far as making connections”)
- Support the emerging Tioga County Food Council formation

Implementation Notes

Priority Action Summary (Year 1 Focus)

Work Group	Top Year 1 Priority
Advocacy & Policy	Elevate housing as a food security strategy; develop a donation incentive framework
Transportation	Formalize Broome-Tioga logistics corridors
Underserved Populations	Launch the integrated hub model feasibility
Families w/ Young Children	Prioritize childcare in hub design
Marketing & Communication	Bridge empathy gap; combat stigma through lived experience
Steering Committee	Formalize regional governance; secure major funding

Success Metrics

Each Work Group should establish baseline metrics in Year 1 and track progress, including:

Advocacy & Policy:

- Number of policy meetings/legislative contacts
- Policy changes achieved (housing, SNAP, farm support)
- Coalition partnerships established with economic development entities

Transportation:

- Transportation corridor utilization rates
- Number of MOUs formalized with supply chain actors
- Cold storage capacity added (square footage/cubic feet)
- Rural transit/delivery pilot participation

Underserved Populations:

- Hub model service integration metrics
- Number of farm-to-food-recovery connections established

- New market access points opened
- Cross-county collaboration meetings held

Families with Young Children:

- Childcare site food access capacity
- CACFP/WIC participation rates
- Number of sites receiving targeted resources

Marketing & Communication:

- Public awareness/stigma reduction indicators
- Shadow Day program participation
- Video content views/engagement
- Information hub utilization (if created)

Steering Committee:

- Cross-county collaboration formalization status
- Grant funding secured for systemic recommendations
- Organizational responsibility mapping completion
- Executive meetings completed

Coordination Requirements

- Monthly Work Group meetings with quarterly cross-Work Group coordination sessions
- Steering Committee oversight of inter-group dependencies
- Regular community input sessions to ensure lived experience remains centered
- Annual comprehensive review aligned with the Food Council meeting schedule

Living Wage Context

The assessment documented that the living wage for a single adult working 2080 hours per year with one child in Broome County is \$39.21/hour, while the NYS minimum wage (as of January

1, 2026) is \$16.00/hour—a gap of over \$23/hour, translating to more than \$48,000 annually in unmet basic needs before taxes. This context should inform all advocacy and policy work.

Appendix A: Funding Strategy Framework

Prepared by Jeff Smith, Steering Committee

Food System Priority Goal 5: Secure Major Systemic Funding

The Food System Plan for Broome and Tioga counties calls for the Steering Committee to take on funding for the more major initiatives. This responsibility will eventually involve Tioga County as the governance structure is defined. There are many initiatives in the Food System that will require more significant funding. Some examples include:

1. Development of 1 or 2 pilot programs for a Service Hub
2. Incentives for farmers, housing, transportation, etc.
3. Infrastructure for cold storage and food recovery
4. Warming centers and other support for the homeless.

Several smaller grants will continue to be used for community gardens, farm-to-school, repair of transportation equipment, etc.

The larger grants require significant planning and detail. Many Federal Programs aim toward larger, regional plans. Some opportunities may involve the entire region or Upstate NY. It is important for our region to have an organization that can track and recommend grant opportunities. Most smaller communities lack the resources to identify and develop grant proposals.

The Broome County Food Council and Tioga County could be the beginning of a grant review and planning committee for the two counties and the region. Our efforts could be supported by the Foundation of South-Central NY and Binghamton University. Both organizations have subscriptions that identify most opportunities.

On some occasions, other organizations will secure the funding. The McKinney-Vento application by UE Schools is a great example.

New York State has several grant opportunities. Most of these opportunities are part of the annual filing in July. Our organization should be planning now for next July. In many cases, we will be working with partners.

Some examples of funding include:

1. Local Foundations
2. National Foundations
3. Gates Foundation

4. Southern Tier 8: a source of Federal Funding for 8 counties in our region
5. State and Federal political leaders
6. Companies: Tioga Downs donates \$2 million per year
7. DEC, USDA, USDOE, NSF
8. Major Investment Banks and Companies

Significant grant funding requires extensive planning. We should now be furthering our major initiatives. Some examples include:

1. Service hub pilot
2. Building a dynamic ag industry
3. Reducing poverty through clean energy manufacturing jobs
4. Improving the quality of the emergency food supply

Two to three members of the leadership team could partner with other organizations, such as BU, Foundation of South-Central NY, and Southern Tier 8, to systemically review grant opportunities. Some outreach with funders and project leads will be required.