

Maui County Food Access Coordinator Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Study



May 2023

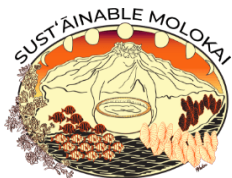
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UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA
HEALTHY HAWAII
EVALUATION TEAM

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Mahalo nui loa to everyone who participated in this evaluation study and shared their insights about the Maui County Food Access Coordinator position. Evaluation participants represented these organizations:



MAUI FOOD BANK
Helping the Hungry



Hawai'i
GOOD FOOD
Alliance
Communities uniting to grow, eat, and share

Lauren Nelson, Lauren Loor, and the Maui Nui Food Alliance Steering Committee provided critical input throughout this evaluation study.

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Evaluation Overview

The purpose of this evaluation study was to understand the value of funding the Food Access Coordinator position for Maui County by examining what food system outcomes were achieved from 2019 – 2022 and how the position contributed.

In 2019, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) SNAP-Education Program provided funding to establish the Food Access Coordinator (FAC) position in Maui County on a half-time basis. Housed in the Hawai'i Public Health Institute, the position was initially filled by the Maui County Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) coordinator who split time between the two coordinator positions. The FAC position was broadly tasked with developing the network of food system stakeholders, building a shared understanding of the Maui County food system, and increasing access to locally produced foods for residents experiencing food insecurity. Additional funding for the FAC position was secured from the Nuestro Futuro Foundation in 2021, which enabled the hiring of a full-time FAC. The new FAC continued to work closely with the former FAC (who was able to return to full-time duties as the HEAL coordinator) to collaborate on efforts around increasing the production, access, and consumption of healthy foods.

"Outcome Harvesting collects ('harvests') evidence of what has changed ('outcomes') and, then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes." (Wilson-Grau, 2015)

This evaluation study utilized Outcome Harvesting methodology to identify and describe outcomes related to the Maui County food system. Outcomes are defined as observable changes in actions, practices, relationships, or policies of individuals, groups, communities, organizations, and/or institutions (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2013). By focusing on the formative years of the FAC position and how the position contributed to the identified outcomes, this evaluation study aimed to inform decision-makers about the value of funding a FAC position for Maui County. In particular, the evaluation findings were intended to be shared with the leadership of the newly forming Maui County Department of Agriculture as they make decisions around strategic directions and staffing needs. In addition, the current and former FACs wanted to learn more about how the position influenced the county-level food system through a public health approach that centered community engagement. The timeline covered by the Outcome Harvest is presented to the right. Much of the programmatic work in 2022 was still in process at the time of the Outcome Harvest, so there were fewer completed outcomes to harvest for 2022.

Food Access Coordinator Position Milestones

February 2019

Established the Maui County Food Access Coordinator (FAC) position on half-time basis

May 2019

Inaugural meeting to build Maui Nui Food Alliance (MNFA)



February 2020

First meeting of the MNFA Steering Committee

March 2021

New FAC hired on full-time basis

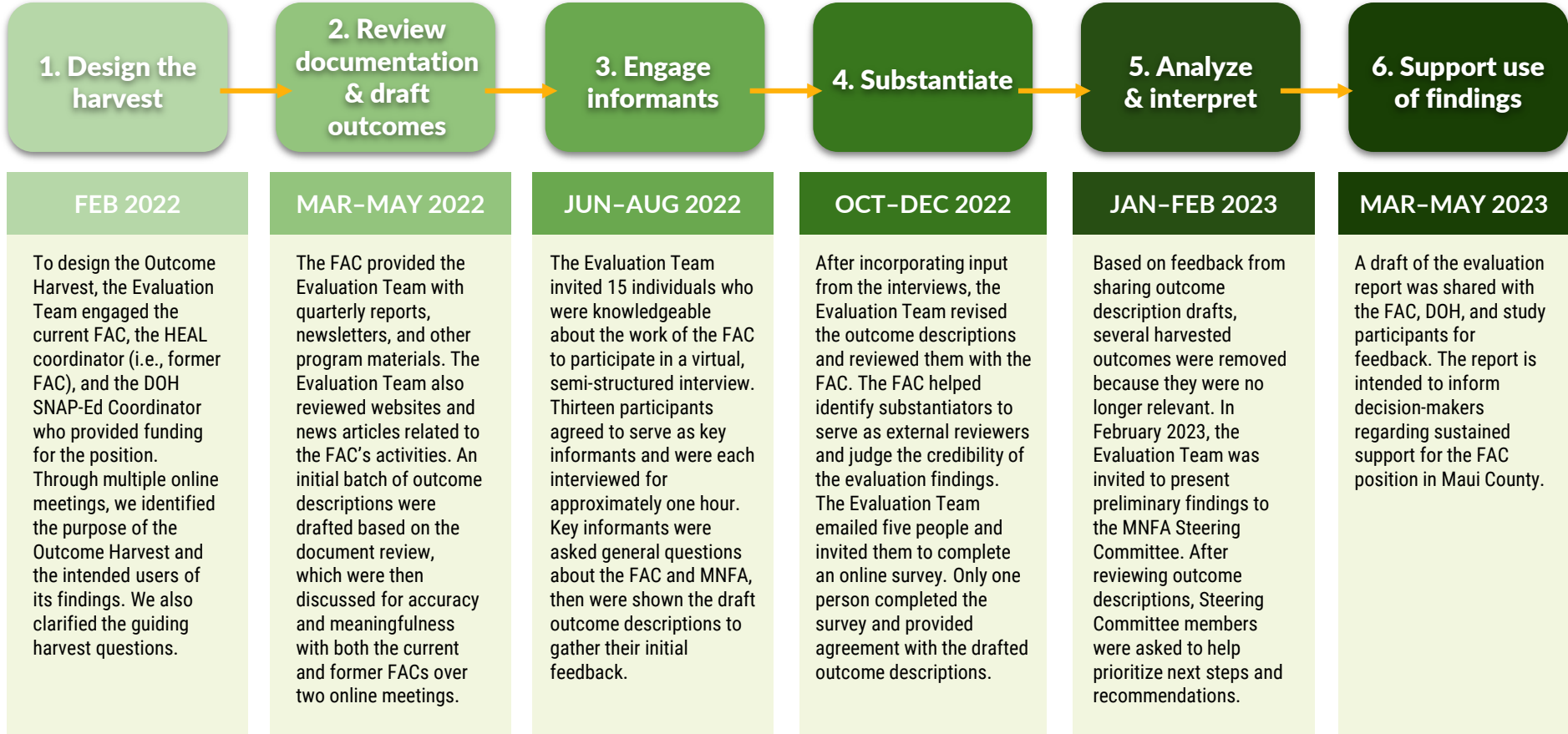
October 2021

MNFA hosted the first annual Maui Food Summit (virtual)

October 2021

Formed subcommittees for Food Systems Assessment & Community Engagement

Outcome Harvesting Process



Key Findings

The Food Access Coordinator position for Maui County is highly valued by community stakeholders.

All key informants strongly believed that the FAC position was needed for Maui County, especially to bridge food system issues across the three islands comprising the county. The FAC position's focus on bringing stakeholders together and strengthening relationships was seen as a foundational step for future food system initiatives to improve food security and address health inequities. As one participant stated, "Food is social. Food involves people." The FAC was able to navigate differing viewpoints and effectively facilitate meetings so that participants were able to focus on shared priorities and areas of alignment. The FAC was seen as having the "30,000 foot view" needed to tackle bigger picture food system issues, break down silos among food system stakeholders, and generate collaborative projects. Described as the only person focused on connecting the many pieces of the food system across Maui County, the FAC fostered a collaborative approach in the context of limited resources.

As a neutral facilitator for the Maui Nui Food Alliance, the Food Access Coordinator is seen as the "glue" that connects food system stakeholders across sectors and organizations.

Key informants described some of the critical tasks performed by the FAC as:

- **Facilitating MNFA meetings** to promote cross-sector collaboration and relationship building
- **Bringing knowledge and sharing expertise** around food security, coalition building, and public health
- **Sharing resources, updates, and information** with community members and farmers
- **Serving as the spokesperson** for the MNFA and advocating for county government support
- **Connecting organizations** around funding opportunities
- **Ensuring that food system stakeholders feel supported and connected** in the MNFA space
- **Conducting research** and leading food system assessment efforts

"[During the COVID-19 pandemic], that's when the Food Access Coordinator came into its glory because the ability to put diverse people into touch with each other that would not normally have had that access, to help get food out from the Maui food banks to the smallholder farmers to food hubs, to doing food distribution for schools and keiki, and getting people connected—that was the power of that role. And people would say, 'Well, it's the Maui Nui Food Alliance.' Well, Maui Nui Food Alliance was a vehicle for them to reach out across. And so that vehicle is still useful today and we're still continuing on down and it's still vibrant today and healthy, but the Food Access Coordinator is the person—and people between the two Laurens—that kept it glued together... Basically, the [COVID-19] crisis proved [the position's] need."

(Participant 9)

"I think having someone coordinate a bunch of people or stakeholders who have—everyone has their own agendas, right, and there are so many groups out there that do good for food... but there's no one person that looks at the food system as a whole. I think that that's an important key because, at least in Maui, when you hear about food and food bills or anything like that, it's either having to do with food access or nutrition or it has to do heavily with Ag, right, and those two things, amongst other many things around the food system, sort of have to marry at some point in order to make sense... you know all these entities have to come together and there's no one organization, aside from the Maui Nui Food Alliance and that Food Access Coordinator, that I think has the capacity to bring those voices to one table... and so I think having that Food Access Coordinator is so critical because it takes that one person to sort of moderate all of the conversations so that people have to stop and consider someone else's viewpoint right and how it's all going to kind of affect each other and how the food system is truly this web."

(Participant 11)

Outcome Descriptions

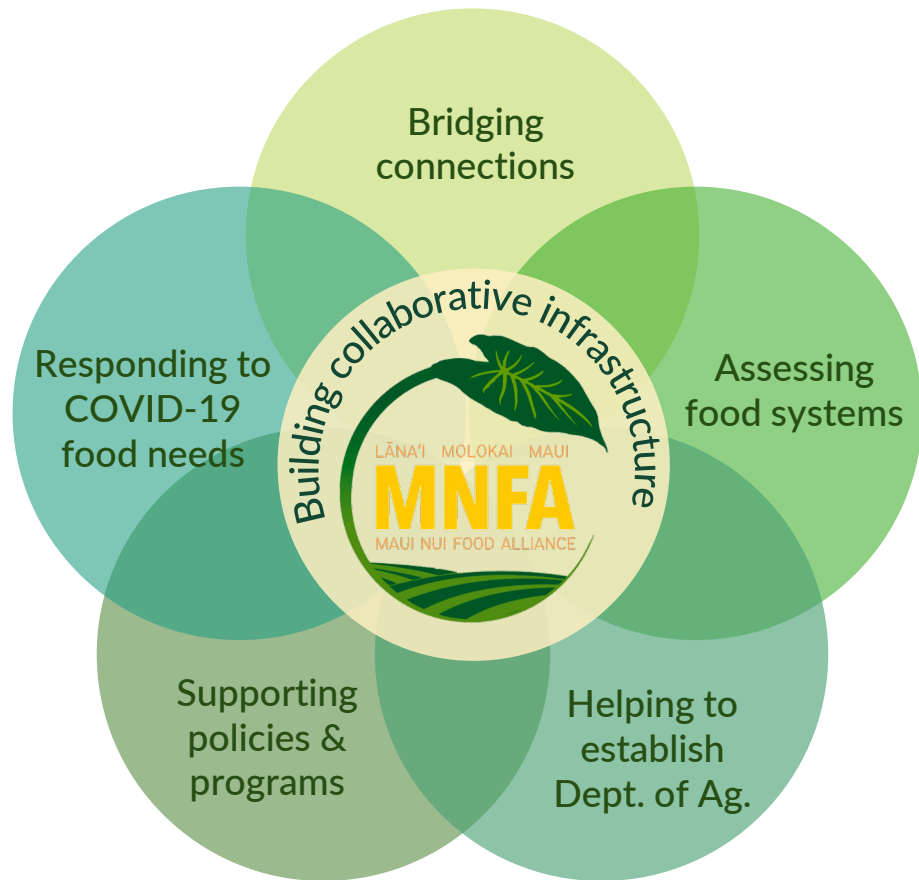
The outcomes harvested in this evaluation study encompassed six overlapping thematic areas.

Through the Outcome Harvesting process, evaluation participants identified meaningful changes related to the Maui County food system. The changes fell into six interrelated thematic areas, with the theme of building collaborative infrastructure viewed as central to the other themes. Building the collaborative infrastructure of the MNFA enabled outcomes around connections, food system assessment, the new County Department of Agriculture, policies & programs, and efforts to respond to heightened food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

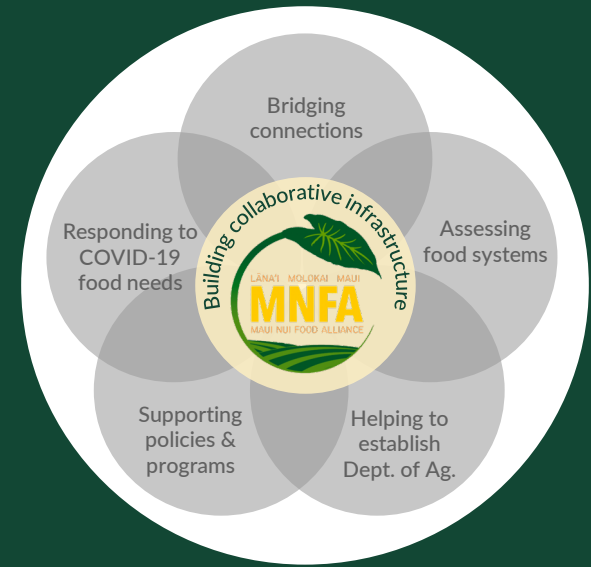
Outcome descriptions provide information about what changed, how the Food Access Coordinator position contributed to each change, and why the change is meaningful or important.

Outcome descriptions are the products of the Outcome Harvesting process. Eighteen outcome descriptions are provided in the following section to highlight specific, observable changes related to the thematic areas. Illustrative quotes from the key informant interviews are also included.

As the facilitator of the MNFA, the FAC contributed to outcomes that happened as a result of MNFA activities (e.g., convening stakeholders and sharing information during meetings). In addition, the initial FAC wore several hats as the coordinator for both the HEAL and MNFA collaborative groups; after the full-time FAC was onboard, the two coordinators worked closely together. As a result, for a few outcome descriptions, it was challenging to disentangle shared activities and attribute the contribution to a specific position. This intertwined context should be considered as unique to the food system outcomes for Maui County.



Building the collaborative infrastructure of the Maui Nui Food Alliance



The structure and shape of the MNFA was formed and strengthened between 2019-2022. The FAC invited key food system stakeholders to the table and facilitated the Steering Committee and subcommittees.

The Food Access Coordinator shepherded the formation of the Maui Nui Food Alliance in 2019.

Outcome	<p>In May 2019, the Maui HEAL Coalition partnered with the Blue Zones Project - Central Maui to organize a two-day Inaugural Action Planning event in Wailuku that convened over 90 food system stakeholders across Maui County. On the second day, 40 leaders from different sectors of the food system nominated 16 members to form the MNFA Steering Committee.</p>
Contribution of the FAC position	<p>In 2019, the FAC supported the Inaugural Action Planning meetings by planning, organizing, and hosting the event in partnership with the Blue Zones Project - Central Maui. The FAC continues to convene, facilitate, and support the MNFA in developing and executing work plan goals.</p>
Significance	<p>The MNFA brings together food system stakeholders across Maui Nui and provides members with opportunities to build relationships, share resources and information, and participate in countywide food system assessment activities. The consistency of the MNFA has helped the alliance establish trust within the community, resulting in food system stakeholders seeing the value of and joining the MNFA.</p>
Quote	<p>“So I think the fact that the Alliance steered the course, stayed consistent, focused on relationships, I think we're going to continue to see enrollment and participation go up in many different areas. You're going to see the producers, the subsistence people will start to come into play, but it really comes into play when you create a platform for collaboration and create a platform where people are able to share what they're passionate about because most people who talk about food systems are passionate about it.” <i>(Participant 8)</i></p>

The Nuestro Futuro Foundation provided funding to establish the Food Access Coordinator position at full-time capacity.

Outcome	Beginning in March 2021, the Nuestro Futuro Foundation provided funding to support the FAC from a part-time to full-time basis. One of the Nuestro Futuro Foundation's goals is to work with organizations and committees like the MNFA to address food system issues and support families across Maui County.
Contribution of the FAC position	In the summer of 2020, the FAC met with the Nuestro Futuro Foundation to discuss food system data as well as the work, mission, and goals of the MNFA. The FAC highlighted the increased need for food and subsequent demand on the Maui Food Bank during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Significance	The transition from part-time to full-time expands the capacity for food system work in Maui County. The COVID-19 pandemic further reinforced the importance of the FAC position.
Quote	"As an organization that wants to support people in need, we can certainly see that that's quite a territory [Maui County] to have to be involved with. So when Nuestro Futuro needed to come to the table, we did. We talked a lot about this as a choice and by this time, Nuestro Futuro was well into understanding the food issues that were happening here and it is one of our major goals is to work in this area." <i>(Participant 4)</i>

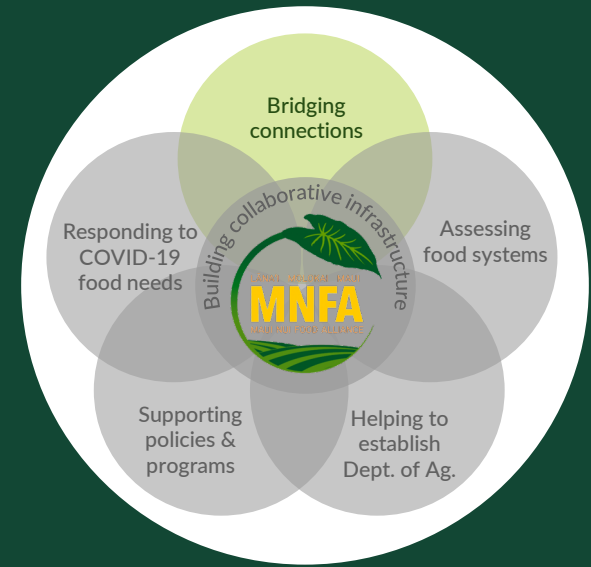
The Maui Nui Food Alliance expanded its membership to include more farmers and members from rural communities.

Outcome	In 2021, several more farmers and members from rural communities were recruited to the MNFA Steering Committee and/or new subcommittees.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC facilitates the MNFA and plays an active role in recruiting new members, maintaining existing relationships, organizing meetings, and providing support and resources to guide the work of the MNFA.
Significance	The inclusion of farmers and members from rural communities ensures the MNFA has representation across food system sectors and regions. Through their participation in the MNFA Steering Committee, members from rural communities have increased access to relevant information that they then share back with their community networks. Furthermore, the collaborative structure of the MNFA encourages the sharing of diverse perspectives to build capacity for working towards shared food system goals.
Quote	“I'm a farmer, I own and operate my own small farm, and there's also several other farmers who are represented on the Steering Committee now, which is really amazing. It's not just like people sitting behind a desk in the office. It is truly representative of our food systems and [the FACs] have done a great job of trying to do that outreach.” <i>(Participant 12)</i>

The Maui Nui Food Alliance launched two subcommittees and is in the process of establishing a third subcommittee and a working group.

Outcome	In October 2020, the MNFA Virtual Food Summit Planning Subcommittee was established to support the planning of the Fall 2021 Virtual Food Summit. Following the 2021 Virtual Food Summit, the Food Summit Planning Subcommittee evolved to be the Community Engagement Subcommittee. In October 2021, the Food System Subcommittee was established to support the development of the Maui County Food Systems Needs Assessment. The MNFA is in the process of creating a Policy, Advocacy, and Legislation Subcommittee and Agriculture Education Working Group.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC plays a key role in launching and convening the Community Engagement Subcommittee and Food System Subcommittee and is actively involved in helping to form the Policy, Advocacy, and Legislation Subcommittee and Agriculture Education Working Group. The FAC convenes the subcommittees, facilitates regular meetings, gathers stakeholder input, and communicates information across members.
Significance	The MNFA subcommittees are structured around the MNFA strategic priorities and are essential to helping complete specialized tasks that advance the work outlined in the work plan. The MNFA subcommittees and working group provide Steering Committee and general alliance members the opportunity for meaningful engagement by empowering members to lead, shape, and carry out food system initiatives that directly affect them.
Quote	"I think it's important to have kind of subgroups like that when you're talking about very specific needs and outcomes because some people want to participate for that specific goal, but may not want to do it for just years and years and years." <i>(Participant 13)</i>

Bridging connections among food system stakeholders in Maui County



The FAC bridged connections across sectors and both within and outside the MNFA, which facilitated the sharing of information and resources.

Through the Maui Nui Food Alliance, Steering Committee members with diverse interests and perspectives found common ground in shared food system goals.

Outcome	Through their participation on the MNFA Steering Committee, members formed new connections with each other and fostered interpersonal relationships across food sectors and communities. The Steering Committee meetings provided a space to discover commonality on food system issues, even among members who would traditionally take opposing sides on proposed policies. As a result, MNFA Steering Committee members developed mutual respect for differing perspectives and opinions.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC convenes and facilitates the MNFA Steering Committee. Through strong facilitation skills, the FAC creates a safe space for Steering Committee discussions and finds common ground by centering shared food system goals.
Significance	The MNFA Steering Committee brings together a diverse group of food system leaders that represent all regions and sectors of the food system. As a result of this collaborative space, Steering Committee members were able to form respectful relationships with each other even though they previously advocated on opposite sides of issues like GMO crops.
Quote	“Overarching, the more people we talk to, the more we can shatter biases and ultimately the more we realize that people who are into farming, like that care about farming, they have so much more in common. And then people from the outside, like consumers, even see, right, there's like a soul calling to people who want to spend their life on a tractor or whatever, even large scale commercial--there's this other thing that drives them, just like this baseline. And so I just think for Maui County, we need more of that. We need more things that just honor that. Bring that together.” <i>(Participant 2)</i>

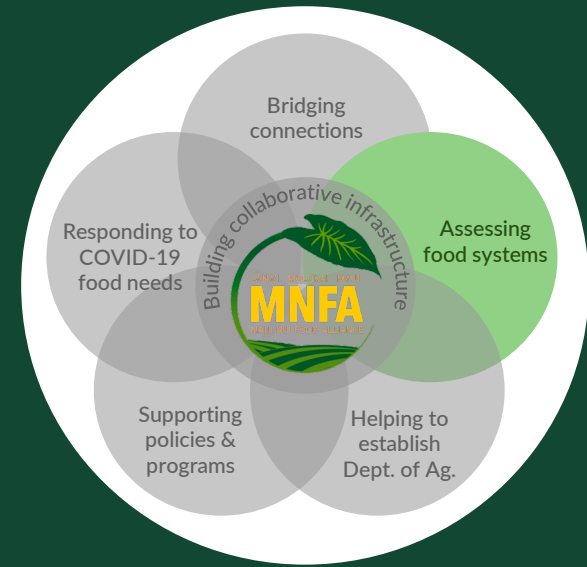
The Food Access Coordinator created a contact list to facilitate communication among key organizations during food emergencies.

Outcome	<p>In November 2021, partners including the Maui Food Bank, Feed My Sheep, and the Salvation Army conducted an assessment of Maui's emergency food response services through an online survey. The survey findings led to the creation of a phone tree and email listserv with key organizational contacts. This resource was immediately put to use in December 2021 during the Kona Low storm flooding.</p>
Contribution of the FAC position	<p>The FAC designed and shared the assessment survey with partners. Many of the responses came through Maui Food Bank's partner network. The FAC collected the results and created an emergency food response phone tree and email listserv based on the survey responses.</p>
Significance	<p>The creation of a widespread resource allows for agencies to get into direct contact with one another during emergencies and immediately share resources. Having the emergency contact list expands communication networks and helps to build transparency among community organizations.</p>
Quote	<p>"We could continue to use this [contact list] in the future for any emergency that arises... I do hope that they continue to update it.. I do remember when the request was sent out and there are still many organizations I didn't see on there that should be on there but of course, if they didn't respond, that's their choice." <i>(Participant 3)</i></p>

Through the Maui Nui Food Alliance’s Virtual Food Summit, food system stakeholders strengthened existing connections and formed new connections.

Outcome	In October 2021, the Virtual Food Summit provided attendees with an overview of the MNFA mission, vision, strategic priorities, and progress to date. Over 60 Maui Nui residents attended the Virtual Food Summit, including farmers and representatives from government agencies such as the District Health Office and Office on Aging. Attendees new to the MNFA were drawn to the Virtual Food Summit by the heightened interest in the food system during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC convened the MNFA Virtual Summit Planning Subcommittee to coordinate, promote, and execute the Virtual Food Summit. This included tasks such as gathering input to frame the Summit agenda, inviting guest speakers, and facilitating Planning Subcommittee meetings.
Significance	During the COVID-19 pandemic, existing MNFA members were less able to participate in meetings and activities. The virtual gathering helped to re-invigorate existing members, introduce policy and advocacy priorities, and expand MNFA membership. The 2021 Virtual Food Summit also served to launch the Food System Subcommittee.
Quote	“It's always hard when it's a Zoom and you've been on a 1,001 Zooms, but they did an amazing job to get engagement. Like just putting that event together was incredible, the way that they sort of did the breakout rooms and everything to be able to really establish more relationships. So you had an opportunity—it wasn't just people talking at you, there were opportunities to do breakout rooms to really connect with other agencies or entities or individuals that were attending the conference, and so I think that part was really beneficial.” <i>(Participant 12)</i>

Assessing the food system to identify gaps and needs

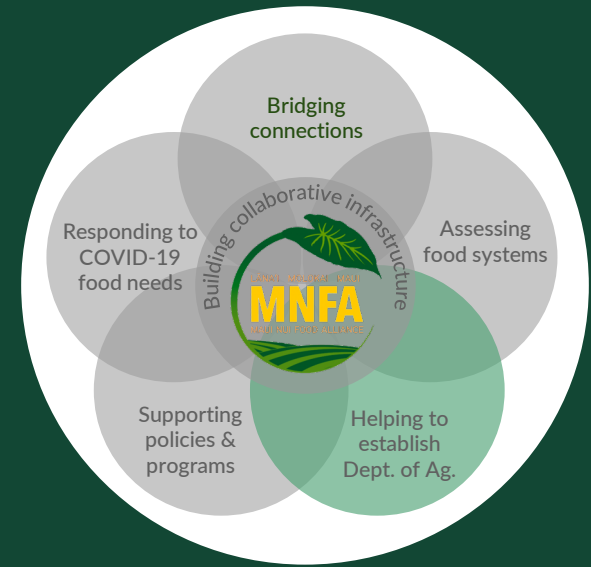


The FAC has directed multiple food system assessment activities in order to understand the current food system in Maui County and identify ways to strengthen it.

The Maui Nui Food Alliance Food Systems Subcommittee initiated work on a county-level food system assessment.

Outcome	Following the 2021 Virtual Food Summit, the Food Systems Subcommittee began working on an assessment of the Maui County food system. Multiple activities are tied to the food system assessment, including a network survey, health center needs assessment, food producer needs assessment, food supply chain needs assessment, a food security stakeholder assessment, an Agricultural Education needs assessment, and a consumer needs assessment.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC oversees the food system assessment, convenes and facilitates the subcommittee, and directs progress. The FAC conducted a desk review of existing assessment tools related to food systems, nutrition security, and agriculture; developed data collection tools; and launched data collection.
Significance	The Food Systems Needs Assessment seeks to identify the needs of food system sectors, track relevant metrics, increase local food production, support institutional purchasing partnerships, and build climate resilience and adaptability. The findings will be used to develop a Food Security Plan for Maui County.
Quote	“Yes, the Food System Subcommittee has worked long and hard to develop pretty advanced drafts of the food assessment doing what you call a desk review of food assessments that exists worldwide because in any survey you don't want to reinvent the wheel, you want to use tools that are repeatable so you can do comparative analysis from one area to another. So it's not a simple tool to build and I think, again, kind of the pandemic problem is it just takes longer for these things to happen. So that food system assessment is making progress.” <i>(Participant 1)</i>

Establishing the Maui County Department of Agriculture



The FAC participated in the Community Impact Working Group and provided input on the proposed strategic plan for the new Maui County Department of Agriculture.

Maui County voters passed a charter amendment to create the Maui County Department of Agriculture.

Outcome	The Community Impact Working Group (CIWG) drafted a charter amendment to create a new county-level Department of Agriculture (DOA), which was introduced and then approved by the Maui County Council in July 2020. In November 2020, over 60% of Maui County residents voted in favor of creating a Maui County DOA. By passing the charter amendment, voters signaled their support to develop a sustainable regional agricultural system for Maui County.
Contribution of the FAC position	To remain neutral and maintain relationships, the FAC did not take an official advocacy position on the charter amendment. As the conduit to the MNFA, the FAC helped to expand the reach of the CIWG in gathering input and sharing information around the positioning of the new DOA and how the new agency was intended to address food security.
Significance	The charter amendment established the first county-level DOA in the State of Hawai'i through a grassroots process. The new DOA will advocate on behalf of farmers, help to increase support for small and medium food producers, bring increased attention and funding toward local food production, and strengthen the resilience of the local food system. Prior to the public vote, community members and food sector representatives were uncertain about the proposed department functions and were wary of potential negative impacts. Through education and outreach activities by the CIWG, community perceptions shifted towards supporting the creation of the County DOA.
Quote	"Both FACs were extremely instrumental in both of those crosses, not just the charter amendment, but also the legislation. Getting feedback, reeling information from their groups, talking about the issues and the needs, providing education to the other group members about that sector because when you're dealing with farmers, ranchers, other nonprofits, and educators, they're all working in their silos. So they have their own issues, needs and things, but to get everybody together and to be asking questions and learning about the other sectors is really where you start seeing the bigger picture and both FACs have been truly incredible in that aspect of sharing information, understanding where other people are coming from, trying to make connections. So it's really important." <i>(Participant 13)</i>

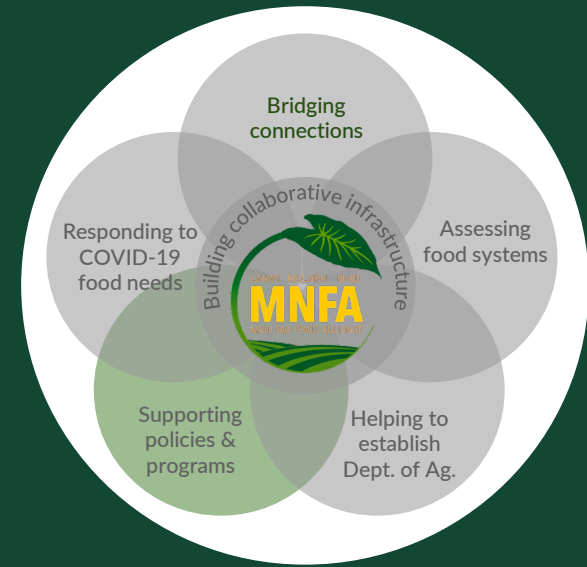
The Community Impact Working Group drafted a strategic plan for the Maui County Department of Agriculture.

Outcome	The CIWG drafted a strategic plan for the County DOA based on the community's vision and input for the Department. The proposal focused on infrastructure, markets & distribution, funding, research & development, education & outreach, and workforce development. The strategic plan outlines the priority issues, actions, and areas of need that will have the most impact over the next 5 years. The proposed strategic plan was presented to the Mayor's Agriculture Advisory Group; the new Director will decide whether or not to adopt the strategic plan.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC participated as a member of the CIWG after the charter amendment passed and provided input into CIWG working documents. The FAC provided expertise on food system issues from a public health perspective and elucidated the roles played by the FAC. For example, the FAC suggested the DOA specifically focus on improving food accessibility for SNAP-eligible populations. The FAC also assisted the lead CIWG facilitator with tasks, such as creating Google Forms to gather information about community priorities.
Significance	The County DOA strategic plan supports the food system needs on Maui, Lāna'i, and Molokai, and, if adopted, would be supportive of the food and nutrition security plan for Maui County. The community-developed strategic plan is in alignment with the work of the MNFA and would support creating additional FAC positions for Lāna'i, Molokai, and East Maui.
Quote	"The [FACs] were really great in providing information about where food insecurity is happening within the homeless sector, within schools, things like that. So they provided a lot of information on why food security is important, what the actual definition of that is, and where the gaps are in the community and different sub sectors of the community. So they were really great at providing that information to the other members of the group that weren't as familiar." <i>(Participant 13)</i>

The Community Impact Working Group put forth qualifications for the Director and Deputy Director positions in the Maui County Department of Agriculture.

Outcome	Results from CIWG surveys helped to inform the qualifications for the Maui County Department of Agriculture Director and Deputy Director positions, which were subsequently approved by the County Council in March 2022. One proposed qualification specified applicants have 5 years of experience in Hawai'i food systems to ensure the person understands local agriculture and has relevant cultural and community knowledge.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC participated as a member of the CIWG and helped to create community surveys that served as the basis for drafting proposed qualifications for the DOA Director and Deputy Director positions. The FAC also solicited information from within the MNFA to help inform these qualifications.
Significance	The CIWG surveys gave the community the opportunity to share their priorities about hiring the right fit for the Director and Deputy Director positions. Based on the feedback, the CIWG outlined qualifications that addressed the community's concerns and incorporated the community's vision.
Quote	"We outline things that were important to the community members, important qualities that our community members wanted to see in the director and deputy director to establish trust and to build that rapport to make sure that our community was actually being represented the way it wanted to be represented. It was a really important thing. And actually, talking to the folks on the [selection] committee, that qualifications of having the food experience from Hawai'i actually took out probably they said 75% of the people that applied. There is a very good chance that if we hadn't put that in, we would have somebody from the mainland that might have the degree qualification, but none of the knowledge that we actually need. So it was really important." <i>(Participant 13)</i>

Supporting programs and initiatives that increase local food production and healthy food access for food-insecure populations



The FAC and MNFA provided support with developing, implementing, and advocating for food system programs and initiatives.

The Kaukau for Keiki Program showcases the Food Access Coordinator’s role in bridging connections, supporting programs, and responding to the food needs arising during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcome	<p>The Kaukau 4 Keiki (KK4K) Program provided children facing food insecurity with weekly meal boxes during school breaks when they did not have access to school meals. Over 2,000 keiki across Maui County were served by KK4K from Summer 2021 through Spring 2022. From June to July 2021, KK4K distributed meal boxes to over 600 keiki in Maui County. By securing additional funding from private foundations, KK4K provided an additional 1,500 meal boxes for Fall 2021, Winter 2021, and Spring 2022 breaks. All meal boxes for Summer 2021 and Fall 2021 were filled with 100% locally grown produce.</p>
Contribution of the FAC position	<p>The KK4K initiative was initiated for Maui County by the FAC after hearing about the opportunity during meetings with other FACs in the state. The FAC was instrumental in the planning and capacity building phase of the program by helping to convene many of the initial partners, leveraging connections to secure additional funding, and supporting efforts to coordinate program implementation. Members of the MNFA played key roles in program implementation, including Maui United Way and Mahi Pono. The FAC promoted awareness of the KK4K program through MNFA newsletters, participated in volunteer efforts, and invited the KK4K Program Director to share updates at MNFA meetings.</p>
Significance	<p>The KK4K program highlights the importance of tailored food distribution programs, the need for programs and policies that center the family, and the potential for the KK4K program to be used as a model in future emergencies. Through KK4K, two food distribution models were developed and utilized in Maui County. The food distribution model developed for Moloka’i and the greater part of Maui Island utilized a home-delivery system to help families overcome transportation barriers. The second model served Hāna and utilized the local farmer’s market to distribute meal boxes on a first-come, first-served basis. The Hāna model was unique in that, outside of the shelf-stable milk, all meal boxes were filled with foods from within their community, including fresh baked bread, fruit leathers, eggs, beef jerky, and seasonal fruits. KK4K program implementers learned valuable lessons about the infrastructure needed to support food distribution programs and how to work within the community’s capacity to supply locally grown food.</p>
Quote	<p>“I think, primarily, it's breaking down the silos that [the Food Access Coordinator] has been able to do. I think you know with COVID, it's opened up our eyes to what some of the issues had been and everybody works on them right, but how many people are working together. And that's what they've been able to do. And as far as project management and facilitation like there's nobody better right, like the way that they're able to do it and connect those dots has been really good and it's bringing everybody together.” <i>(Participant 6)</i></p>

The Food Access Coordinator provides support to Maui Food Bank initiatives.

Outcome	In 2019, the Maui Food Bank, in partnership with the Blue Zones Project – Central Maui and the Mayor’s office, launched the Access to Healthy Food Day Proclamation to promote healthy food donations. After the proclamation, Maui Food Bank launched the Give Healthy Initiative to educate and encourage the community to donate healthier non-perishable items and fresh produce. Maui Food Bank also launched the Give Healthy Challenge in partnership with the Mayor's office and a total of 19 businesses participated. The Give Healthy Challenge is now an ongoing initiative of the Food Bank.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC supports the Maui Food Bank by meeting with staff to identify programmatic needs and providing requested technical expertise.
Significance	The Maui Food Bank initiatives helped change the community’s perception of what can be donated to the Food Bank and promoted healthier food donation options. In addition, the Maui Food Bank increased their capacity to collect and distribute fresh produce. Maui Food Bank has maintained ongoing relationships with community organizations like Common Ground Collective to distribute produce.
Quote	“Working with the Food Access Coordinators has been extremely beneficial to us at Maui Food Bank, not just because we have a place to– or they create a space for us to convene and collaborate with different organizations different stakeholders, right, there's a networking that is so crucial, but also, like I said, to really helped us get things done.” <i>(Participant 3)</i>

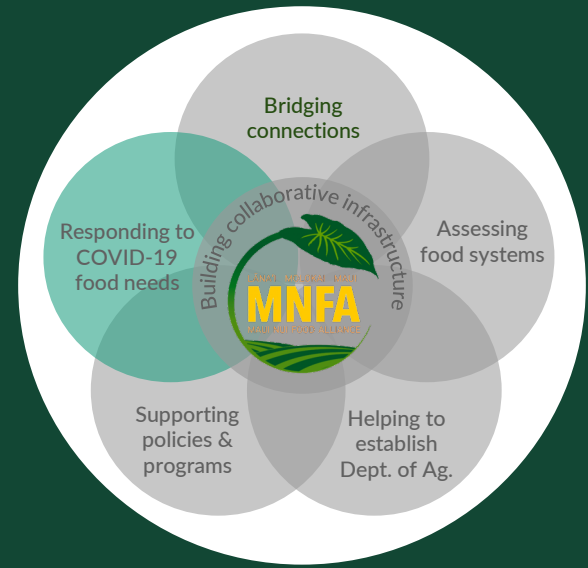
The Nuestro Futuro Foundation funded several food system initiatives in response to the increased food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcome	In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nuestro Futuro Foundation provided funding to organizations that were helping to feed families and strengthen the food system in Maui County, including the Feeding Hawai'i Project, Common Ground Collective, Kaukau 4 Keiki, and Maui United Way.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC engaged a board member of the Nuestro Futuro Foundation in the MNFA Steering Committee. Through MNFA Steering Committee meetings, the board member learned more about these community initiatives and was able to direct financial support.
Significance	More funding has been directed towards increasing food security for vulnerable populations in Maui County.
Quote	“That’s a shift in emphasis due to COVID...So what I'm saying is my perception of the past two or three years is that more funding has gone towards providing healthy food for our children than some of the other areas and right now we're looking at that balance.” <i>(Participant 4)</i>

The Hawai'i Farmers Market Association supported farmers markets to accept SNAP/EBT cards.

Outcome	The Hawai'i Farmers Market Association increased the number of farmers markets in Maui County accepting SNAP/EBT cards as a payment option.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC served as a technical assistant (TA) to support the SNAP/EBT initiative with the Hawai'i Farmers Market Association. The FAC supported the implementation process and marketing efforts for SNAP/EBT availability (e.g., Hana Farmers Market, Maui Hub). The FAC is currently working with partners to build capacity for WIC benefits to be accepted at farmers markets.
Significance	Increasing the number of farmers markets accepting SNAP/EBT and WIC is a statewide initiative that utilizes local experts to coordinate with farmers market managers. The ability to use SNAP/EBT and WIC benefits at farmers markets helps to increase access to local, healthy foods among food-insecure populations.
Quote	"[The Food Access Coordinator] really was kind of our boots on the ground for farmers markets on Maui. So basically in that role, we did a needs assessment, so she reached out to all the farmers markets there, and then we provided technical assistance as they needed it, whether they were applying for SNAP/EBT. We had a mini grant program to help people who are just starting out with that and then we told the farmers markets basically as issues come up here's your contacts and so [the Food Access Coordinator] was that contact from Maui Island." (<i>Participant 10</i>)

Responding to the urgent food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic



In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the FAC shifted priorities to supporting countywide emergency food response efforts to feed families in need.

Maui Nui Food Alliance Steering Committee meetings were reconfigured to focus on information sharing and updates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcome	During the COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly MNFA Steering Committee meetings became a space for members to provide updates and share information across communities.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC convenes the MNFA Steering Committee and facilitates monthly meetings. During the early phase of the pandemic, the FAC created and sustained an email system to share new and updated information about food system issues related to COVID-19 with the Steering Committee. In addition to convening the monthly meetings, the FAC was able to distribute information immediately via the email system.
Significance	By compiling and sharing relevant information, the FAC ensured that the MNFA Steering Committee received timely communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several Steering Committee members shared that the meetings were an invaluable resource to keep up to date on what was happening outside of their communities.
Quote	"COVID, when it hit, those meetings were really like a lifeline. I mean we all experienced it, a week was a decade. So every week it's like that's old information, like you really need to keep up. And so at the time having the food bank, even having big players, which I'm critical of, having big players at the table just to hear what was happening on their end. It was really a place for everybody to kind of connect and figure out you know where to go next." <i>(Participant 2)</i>

The Food Access Coordinator helped to direct federal CARES Act funding towards food needs.

Outcome	Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funding was allocated towards the food system in Maui County during the pandemic. Funds supported the Farm Produce Purchasing Program for Maui County, which purchased produce from local farmers that was then distributed through Feed My Sheep, Salvation Army, and other Maui Food Bank partner organizations.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC joined the Mayor's Food Security Committee and advocated for CARES funding to support: 1) DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks program, 2) local producers for farm inputs and other production costs, 3) food hubs, aggregators, distributors, and marketing services for Hawaii's farmers to gain entry into new markets, 4) outreach, education, and financial incentive programs to achieve the recommended 14-day supply of food and water for Hawai'i residents, 5) existing and new FAC positions on each island, 6) developing emergency food plans, 7) grab and go meals, 8) Farm to Food Bank, and 9) kūpuna feeding programs.
Significance	The FAC's participation in the Mayor's Food Security Committee increased education and prioritization of food security at the government level. The recommendation to continue the local food purchasing program supports the farm to food bank pipeline and increases access to fresh, locally grown food among food-insecure populations.
Quote	"From my understanding, they were the voice that really helped bring that funding down the pipe." <i>(Participant 3)</i>

The Maui Food Bank expanded its capacity to distribute farm-fresh, locally grown produce to residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcome	Using CARES Act federal funds, Maui Food Bank partnered with the Hawai'i Farm Bureau and Hawai'i Farmers Union United to purchase produce from local farmers that was no longer being purchased by restaurants and hotels. The locally grown produce was distributed to communities through Maui Food Bank partner agencies.
Contribution of the FAC position	The FAC brought awareness to the increased demand for food and advocated for CARES Act funding to be allocated from the County to support the Maui Food Bank and local food producers. The FAC leveraged contacts and networks to support the Maui Food Bank during the the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Significance	Internally, this initiative helped the Maui Food Bank identify and improve the gaps within their infrastructure to distribute fresh produce. The distribution of fresh produce helped change the public's perception of what kind of food comes from the Food Bank by showcasing the capacity of the Maui Food Bank to distribute fresh, locally grown produce.
Quote	"We were distributing some of the most beautiful food we've ever had during this time [COVID-19 pandemic], so yeah, it was encouraging to see like this is a type of healthful nutritious local food that we can be distributing to our community. And really would like to get back to that same quality of food, again, but yes, it was learning about our infrastructure and deficiencies, for sure." <i>(Participant 3)</i>

Next Steps & Recommendations

The Maui Nui Food Alliance Steering Committee helped to prioritize future directions for the Food Access Coordinator position.

In the key informant interviews, participants offered their ideas about what the FAC position should work on in the next five years. These recommended next steps were compiled and then shared with the MNFA Steering Committee through an online Jamboard. Steering Committee members were asked to vote for their top three priorities. Recommendations with at least two votes are presented in descending order, beginning with those receiving the most votes.

1. **Work towards food sovereignty.**
2. **Prioritize issues that are shared across farmers, including composting, water access, and creating a deer meat processing facility.**
3. **Invite representatives from state agencies (Agriculture, Health) to help MNFA members understand “red-tape” issues and find ways to overcome barriers facing small producers.**
4. **Ensure that farmers are making a sustainable living.**
5. **For MNFA members who are unable to attend meetings, provide meeting summaries and find other ways to gain their participation (e.g., soliciting comments by email).**
6. **Complete the food systems needs assessment, establish baseline measures, and ensure use of the food systems assessment findings.**
7. **Establish the MNFA Policy & Advocacy Subcommittee.**
8. **Increase participation in the MNFA by farmers, farmers’ organizations, food distributors, and the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources.**
9. **Share information and facilitate communication across the Mayor, County Council, and County Government agencies.**



“...thinking more big picture about the food systems on Maui, continuing to have people that convene the different groups. I mean socioeconomically, ethnically, geographically, the methods of growing. The food systems on Maui, it’s so easy for us to find where we’re different and we’re really not that different. We need the Food Access person to continue to remind people and to bring them to the table because no one else is doing that... As Kaukau 4 Keiki showed us, one or two little disruptions can really, you know, mean a shift. For me, food is sovereignty—like how you feed yourself, who you depend on... If we’re autonomous or independent in our food, we can start believing that we can be independent and autonomous maybe in our military or in our economy or in our schooling. If we can feed ourselves—everybody has to be fed—and what that could mean for the other things. So, that’s my lofty charge to the Food Access Coordinator, just, you know, back end Hawaiian sovereignty through food.”

(Participant 7)