Social supermarkets and food sovereignty: A feasibility report for Visionwest

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Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi.

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Note: While this report has been prepared in good faith and every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, any errors are entirely the responsibility of the author.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga (Visionwest) is a large non-government organisation based in West Auckland. It provides a range of wraparound support services including Pātaka Kai (food support). Over the years, the demand for food support has increased. This has prompted Visionwest to pilot a social supermarket to create a more mana-enhancing experience for whānau when accessing food support. Visionwest are also interested in the opportunities that the social supermarket might offer for whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building), pathways into paid work, and other social benefits.

This report explores international and local models of social supermarkets plus the relationship of social supermarkets to the overall goals of combatting food insecurity and achieving food sovereignty in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Eleven people with experience in the development and operation of social supermarkets and/or food insecurity and kai sovereignty were interviewed in late 2022 or early 2023. These included representatives from Just Zilch, Whare Kai, Wellington City Mission (WCM) (New Zealand) and Your Local Pantry (United Kingdom). A desktop review of relevant literature and reports about social supermarkets / free stores and food sovereignty/security was also completed.

The report's findings are designed to inform the development and implementation of the Visionwest social supermarket pilot.

Background

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the demand for food support has increased dramatically since budget cuts in the 1990s. However, the roots of food insecurity are embedded in our colonial history through the forced alienation of Māori from ancestral lands followed by policies and practices that continued to ignore and neglect the interests and wellbeing of Māori. Food insecurity is experienced more often in large households with large numbers of children, by people living in the most deprived areas, and by children of Māori and Pacific ethnicities.

The experience of food insecurity has negative impacts on people's physical and mental health including malnutrition and obesity as well as chronic stress and poor psychological wellbeing.

The dominant charitable response to date has been the distribution of food through foodbanks although the limitations of this model are recognised. Social supermarkets are being promoted as one way to offer people greater dignity and choice.

Section One: Social supermarkets

Development and operation of social supermarkets

Social supermarkets have been operating for many years internationally, often with a waste minimisation focus and the intention of offering dignity and choice to shoppers. Some provide a mix of services including community hubs and kitchens, cafés, work brokerage and social supports.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the primary driver for the development of social supermarkets has been the desire to offer greater choice and a more dignified experience to people utilising food support. Except for Just Zilch, every social supermarket interviewed offered additional supports. Interviewees strongly advocated for social supermarkets to operate in ways that eliminate poverty stigma.

Of the supermarkets researched, each operated slightly differently:

- Some use a membership model and require a small payment, while some request a koha and others are free to shoppers.
- Some rely on rescue food, for example, Just Zilch, which was established specifically to reduce waste and to ensure that surplus food ends up with people who need it. Most European social supermarkets utilise rescue food.
- Foodstuffs North Island has partnered with community organisations to establish social supermarkets that distribute goods typically found in their stores. These social supermarkets may also have their own procurement relationships with local suppliers and/or use rescue food.
- Most social supermarkets are run by a mix of paid staff and volunteers—the numbers vary depending on the size of the store and the operating hours.

Social supermarkets usually offer a range of social supports other than food supply.

Benefits of the social supermarket model

Increased choice (compared to traditional foodbanks) and, as a result, the increased dignity for shoppers were described as the two main benefits of social supermarkets but there are others:

- Some interviewees had observed increased confidence for people using their supermarket.
- There is some research evidence that choice models of food provision contribute to reduced food insecurity compared to traditional food hampers.
- Some felt that people were more willing to access support from a social supermarket (because of reduced stigma) than they were from a traditional foodbank.
- The social supermarkets also create opportunities to connect with others and a reduction in the overall cost of food.

Section Two: Kaupapa Māori models and kai support

Kai sovereignty involves much more than just the supply of food. Interviewees pointed out that it is also about:

- Being healthy and nourished.
- Being able to share kai.
- Recognising and celebrating the uniqueness of the whenua, awa, moana and ngahere as a way to learn about whakapapa and having control over the way that kai is produced. Organisations in West Auckland have recently developed Mana Motuhake o te Kai which provides an overarching vision for a kai ecosystem that leverages ancestral practices to inform community-led solutions and enable whānau and community wellbeing.

Mana Motuhake o te Kai provides a useful framework for Visionwest to align with. The insights from previous co-design processes with whānau highlight the importance of understanding the specific strengths and resources of whānau who will use the Visionwest social supermarket. This will help ensure that the design is better placed to support whānau aspirations.

Section Three: Social supermarkets and food insecurity

In Aotearoa New Zealand, social supermarkets operate in a context where income inadequacy is the primary driver of food insecurity. Because the factors that drive food insecurity are systemic, service-led, or community-based, solutions are unlikely to make a significant difference. Charitable food responses such as social supermarkets don't challenge the conditions that intensify food poverty such as welfare and economic policies.

While acknowledging that social supermarkets don't address the root causes of food insecurity, some interviewees believed that they could offer a useful interim step while the upstream causes of food poverty are addressed.

Stock procurement is an area where the Visionwest social supermarket could help strengthen the local food ecosystem, especially if efforts are made to source products from Māori growers. The supermarket could also improve access to high quality food and plant-based options.

Where a social supermarket could be disruptive is if it was able to challenge the current supermarket duopoly and undermine dominant narratives about poverty.

Section Four: Opportunities for Visionwest

The findings from this report indicate that there are several opportunities for Visionwest to pursue as the social supermarket is developed and implemented.

1. Operate in ways that strengthen the West Auckland food system.
2. Design the supermarket with whānau so it meets their needs.
3. Take a learning approach: test and adapt the social supermarket with whānau who will use it.
4. Explore opportunities for collective approaches.
5. Explore opportunities for advocacy to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Introduction

Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga (Visionwest) is a large non-government, not-for-profit organisation with a head office in Glen Eden, West Auckland. Visionwest offers a range of services across Aotearoa New Zealand including home healthcare and community housing. In Glen Eden, Visionwest also provides money mentoring, early childcare education, counselling support, youth services, Huia Mai (cultural support), employment and education, and has a large Pātaka Kai (food support service).

The Visionwest Pātaka Kai was initially a small part of an opportunity shop located on the same site as a range of other community services. Eventually, the Pātaka Kai was moved into a separate building on site and set up as a small shop where people could choose the items making up their food parcel. With the advent of COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, the demand for Visionwest food services increased significantly. Expediency and COVID lockdown regulations meant the Pātaka Kai team shifted to a more traditional foodbank approach where food parcels were pre-packed for whānau (families or family members) so they could be loaded into cars without contactless or, in some cases, delivered.

Visionwest has observed that, for many whānau who use the Pātaka Kai, the food parcels have become an essential part of their everyday life (Visionwest, 2022).

Visionwest decided to pilot a social supermarket to create a more mana-enhancing experience for whānau when accessing food support. Visionwest is also interested in the opportunities that the social supermarket might offer for whakawhanaungatanga (building of relationship), pathways into paid work and other social benefits.

In 2022, Visionwest contracted Sarah Greenaway & Associates to develop a feasibility report that investigated international and local models of social supermarkets to inform the implementation of Visionwest's social supermarket pilot. This feasibility report explores:

- Best practice models of free stores, social supermarkets, and koha-based food initiatives.
- Māori models of practice relating to kai support.
- Volunteer to work schemes within the design of social supermarkets.
- Food education components and links to café / hospitality offerings.
- Payment philosophy – points systems / pay what you can / food swap initiatives.
- Operational issues including staffing and volunteer systems; use of rescued food products; operational models and operational hours / weekly client capacity; supply chain and stock management; funding and sponsorship approaches.

The report also explores the relationship of social supermarkets to the overall goals of combatting food insecurity and achieving food sovereignty.[1]

It should also be noted that, as part of its commitment to addressing food insecurity, Visionwest is a founding member of Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective with a collective goal of ensuring that each and every person in Aotearoa New Zealand has dignified access to enough good food.

1 **Food insecurity** is defined as a limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited ability to acquire personally acceptable foods that meet cultural needs in a socially acceptable way (Ministry of Health, 2019:1). **Food sovereignty** is when people can exercise the right to good food and have the right to define their own food systems - placing control of food back into the local communities (The Southern Initiative, 2020).

Approach

1. A desktop review of relevant literature and reports about social supermarkets / free stores and food sovereignty/security. The literature for the evidence scan was obtained by:

- A search of Google and Google Scholar
- Reviewing the reference lists of key studies
- Literature on social supermarkets and community need in West Auckland supplied by Visionwest
- Additional material provided by interviewees

2. Key informant interviews with eleven stakeholders who are either involved in social supermarkets, Māori-led kai initiatives, or food sovereignty initiatives. The interviews explored best practice approaches to social supermarkets, lessons learned, opportunities for innovation, challenges, and successes (see Appendix One for a list of interviewees).

Section one provides an overview of the ways social supermarkets are operating in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas with more in-depth information provided about four examples (covered in interviews). These are:

- WCM's social supermarket
- Whare Kai run by 155 Whare Āwhina in Whangārei
- Just Zilch in Palmerston North
- Your Local Pantry in the United Kingdom

Section two explores Māori models of practice relating to kai support.

Section three considers the drivers of food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as a discussion of the extent to which social supermarkets might address these drivers.

Section four outlines opportunities for Visionwest based on the findings of this report.

Section one: Background

In many high-income countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, the demand for food support has increased dramatically over the last 30 years (Macaulay, et al. 2022). The growth in demand for food support, typically through foodbanks, is associated with the decline in social welfare provision. Countries that spend less on social welfare have greater numbers of people using foodbanks (Pollard and Booth, 2019).

> *In the US and Canada, foodbanks began to expand through the 1980s, with a further expansion in the mid-1990s during major cutbacks and restructuring to the welfare state. In the UK, foodbanks were rare until 2010, when The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, then a social franchise of networked foodbanks, expanded rapidly. The expansion of Trussell Trust foodbanks and their use has been linked to local authority budget cuts, welfare reforms, and reduced welfare entitlements (Loopstra et al. 2019:1).*

While the budgets cuts in the 1990's led to the erosion of welfare state, the causes of food insecurity in New Zealand are rooted in our colonial history.

> *Shifting the focus to the colonial as opposed to neoliberal roots of hunger and charity brings deeper issues around discrimination and inequality to the surface, highlighting how these have shaped institutional policies and practices and continue to dictate access to resources and power (Cresswell Riol and Connolly, 2023).*

Cultivating food was the foundation of Māori communities. It was also important for social and cultural reasons. The forced land alienation that resulted from colonisation distanced Māori from their whenua and the ability to collectively produce food (Hond et al.,2019).

Since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, state-legislated policies and practices continued to ignore and neglect the interest and wellbeing of Māori cultural values, customs, and health (Moeke-Pickering et al. 2015).

Evidence from national health surveys shows that food insecurity is experienced more often in households with the largest number of children, by people living in the most deprived areas, and by children of Māori and Pacific ethnicity compared to New Zealand European and other ethnic groups (Macaulay et al. 2022). People living in high deprivation areas are four times more likely to be extremely obese and disproportionately affected by the double burden of malnutrition and obesity (Graham et al. 2019).

The experience of food insecurity is very harmful. In-depth qualitative research with people using a free community meal service in Aotearoa New Zealand found that:

> *...the chronic stress and worry associated with food insecurity made providing food for the family a difficult and distressing daily occurrence (Graham et al. 2019:104).*

Furthermore, people shared that they felt a sense of shame and stigma because they were unable to provide healthy and nutritious food for their family. The experience of accessing support from Work and Income was distressing and humiliating which meant people avoided seeking support as a way of maintaining their psychological wellbeing. Support from charitable organisations could be unreliable and time-consuming to navigate as well as demeaning (Graham et al. 2019).[2]

2 See Appendix Three for a visual depiction of the complexities that people living with poverty need to negotiate to meet the food needs of their whānau (Thinkplace, 2014).

Traditional response to food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand

There have been a range of efforts to address food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand. The dominant charitable response in recent times has been the distribution of food through foodbanks. Foodbanks have been criticised for their dependence on industrial food waste, where supermarkets benefit from foodbanks solving their food waste problem in an economically efficient manner that also provides corporate social responsibility credit.

Foodbanks are also seen as unresponsive to the needs of whānau (as people typically receive a hamper of food depending on what is available rather than what their specific dietary requirements) and as a demeaning experience for many which prevents people from accessing support when they need it.

> *Examination of reasons why households do not use charitable food assistance, even in the context of severe food insecurity, suggest that foodbanks are considered an intervention of last resort and that households endure going without food rather than turning to charity (Loopstra, 2018:275).*

Social supermarkets have been promoted as an improvement to the foodbank model, partly because they offer increased choice and a more dignified shopping experience.

Section One: Social supermarket operating models

Development of social supermarkets

Social supermarkets have been operating internationally for over 30 years. In France, social supermarkets were developed in the late 1980s with similar models opening in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria in the 1990's. The first social supermarket in the United Kingdom opened in 2013. There are now over 1000 social supermarkets across Europe (Schneider et al., 2015).

European social supermarket models

In many European countries, the landfilling of untreated organic waste is banned. Therefore, food companies have a strong incentive to donate any excess produce to avoid the cost of processing it. France has one of Europe's most attractive fiscal incentives for food donation. Companies benefit from a tax break of 60% of the donation, with a cap of 0.5% of the company turnover (Schneider et. al., 2015).

Generally, European social supermarkets distribute surplus food and charge a small amount for the products. In this way, social supermarkets are providing a service for large corporations as well as providing welfare support to citizens.

Many European social supermarkets offer work brokerage or reintegration services for people who have not been in the labour market for various reasons. Most staff are volunteers, and in some countries, there are significant financial benefits for volunteering. Many are run by charities with support from local or federal government. Cafés and kitchens are common features with some preparing meals that can be sold in the supermarket (Schneider et. al. 2015).

The rationale for social supermarket model in Europe is to close the gap between soup kitchens and traditional retail outlets and to meet the needs people, some of whom have an income but are not able to cover all their household expenses. A social supermarket is designed to give people a choice between different products, and to help them preserve their dignity (by requiring them to pay for the items, albeit at a reduced price, just like any customer of a regular store). By significantly reducing the food budget, social supermarkets provide an opportunity for low-income households to free up money to meet other expenses, such as utility bills, or to save, which will increase their financial capacity for unexpected expenses (Schneider, 2015).

US and Canadian social supermarket models

In the United States, there are large, centralised warehouses (foodbanks) that distribute food to a wide range of food initiatives across the country.

Freshplace includes a membership model social supermarket and provides one-to-one support as well as connection to other services based on needs and interests, for example, cooking classes. An evaluation of the Freshplace social supermarket found that, in comparison to the control group, people using Freshplace significantly increased their consumption of fruit and vegetables. In addition, Freshplace members were less than half as likely as the control group to experience very low food security (Martin et. al. 2013).

In Canada, there is a large foodbank network (Foodbanks Canada, 2023). Foodbanks serve the functions of both "food pantries" – the local not-for-profit agencies that provide food assistance directly to people in need – and the central warehouses and which distribute food to various types of frontline food programmes (Rizvi et. al., 2021). Like other developed countries, the use of emergency food provision has increased over the last four decades in Canada (Rizvi et. al., 2021). In recent years, new approaches are being tried including offering people more choice, providing more onsite support, and integrating food provision with Community Resource Centres (Rizvi et. al., 2021). There are also "pay what you can" and "pay what you feel" grocery stores in Canada (for example, Feed it Forward, 2020; Food Stash, 2021).

UK social supermarket models

In the United Kingdom there are a variety of collective models including Your Local Pantry, The Community Shop and The People's Supermarket. The Community Shop is a social enterprise that is part of the Company Shop (which offers discounted goods to people working in a range of services and industries across the United Kingdom, e.g., the NHS, charities, and Police). Community Shops include three components:

- A community store—which offers food and household products from well-known brands at deeply discounted prices.
- A community hub—which provides training and personal development aimed at helping people to increase their confidence, build on strengths and overcome barriers in their lives.
- A community kitchen—which is a welcoming space where people can enjoy good quality meals at low-cost prices and also engage in events and activities (Schneider, et. al., 2015).

The People's Supermarket aims to provide the local community with good cheap food that is fair to consumers and producers. Members pay an annual fee and contribute four hours a month to working in the store. Food is sourced from local producers.

> *The People's Supermarket offers another way - perhaps in the future all supermarkets can be vibrant community hubs with positive impacts that stretch right up along the supply chain to the person growing cabbages? How different would our world be then? (The People's Supermarket, n.d.)*

Social supermarkets interviewed for this report

Representatives from the following free store / social supermarkets were interviewed for this report:

- **Just Zilch** is a food rescue and free store that started in 2011 in Palmerston North. The main purpose was to reduce the amount of food going to waste and to ensure it ended up with people who were in need of food. It was set up as a supermarket where people could choose the products they wanted. Due to COVID and space limitations, they have adjusted their system so that people now choose a range of products from a tray. Sometimes there may be limits on certain items due to availability. Just Zilch also distributes rescue food to approximately 140 other NGO's. Just Zilch focuses on food support only and doesn't provide other social services.
- **WCM** opened their social supermarket in early 2021 after recognising the limitations of their foodbank model. They examined different models that were being used internationally and across Aotearoa New Zealand and concluded that the social supermarket concept was best able to achieve their goal of upholding people's dignity, building relationships, and providing choices (Kore Hiakai, 2022). Their social supermarket was Foodstuffs North Island's first partnership with a food support organisation. They are operating the current supermarket as a trial where they can develop and tweak the model before they move into a new building in a few years. WCM offers a range of social services to social supermarket shoppers.
- **Whare Kai** is a social supermarket run by 155 Whare Awhina in Whangarei. Prior to opening the social supermarket, Whare Kai were exploring ways to offer more choice to whānau. They initially began with a small foodbank before shifting to a catalogue system where whānau were allocated points and could choose food from a list of items. Whare Kai recently moved into a partnership with Foodstuffs North Island to open the social supermarket. 155 Whare Awhina is a kaupapa Māori service offering a range of social services.
- **Your Local Pantry** is a UK-based social supermarket that is run by the community, for the community. There are currently 80 Your Local Pantries operating as social franchises supported by a small national team. The national team supports each local pantry with set up, stock procurement, marketing, and a central database. Each local pantry is run by its members who pay a membership fee. For that fee, people can visit the supermarket and select the items they want and need. The pantry supplements a weekly shop. For each local pantry, it is recommended that there should be a place of welcome where members can come in, relax, have a cup of tea and a slice of cake, and socialise. From that interaction they can be helped and supported in other areas. Members are often part of a community organisation or church group.
- **The Southern Initiative**(TSI) at Auckland Council, completed stage one of a co-design initiative exploring a social supermarket in Otara. The project team included: Waste Solutions, TSI, Healthy Families and Kiwi Harvest. The co-design process involved:
  - Workshop with Otara agencies.
  - Workshop with families.
  - In-depth interviews with 15 families.
  - In depth understanding of the opportunities.
  - Ideation workshop with families (Auckland Council,2018).

The following sections describe how different social supermarkets operate in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

Purpose and values

Social supermarkets have developed with different motivations including:

- Waste minimisation
- To offer more choice and dignity to those experiencing food insecurity
- As an avenue to relationship and connection with others
- As an avenue to other social support services

For Just Zilch the impetus came from waste minimisation and the desire to divert perfectly good food from landfill to people who need it.

> *We were set up with the idea of there was food to be rescued, and there's people who need food. So, if we put those two things together, we can solve one problem with the other. So, two problems creating a solution (Rebecca Culvert, Just Zilch).*

Just Zilch challenges the view that food, nearing its best before date, is somehow of lesser quality. Rebecca, the founder of Just Zilch, points out the oversupply of food and the consequence waste is the result of the way food is displayed and marketed. Shelves are kept fully stocked to encourage people to buy products which leads to waste. There is nothing about the food that is of lower quality.

For others, social supermarkets arose as an alternative to the foodbank model and a way to offer more choice and dignity to people experiencing food insecurity.

> *It's that dignity of choice, then basically, everything is built around that. And we worked very, very hard to make that experience for them really, really positive. But that's the big one. It's about dignity of choice (Jeremy Neeve, WCM).*
>
> *I like whānau to choose their kai. And that's rangatiratanga again. As we don't know your whānau. And we don't know your dietary needs. They know it. Also, with us, the foodbank, there was a lot of money that was going into that was going to waste. So it's cheaper for ourselves as well (Sam Cassidy, Whare Kai).*

Foodstuffs North Island (which has recently partnered with community organisations to open five social supermarkets) has a set of operational standards and principles that they are committed to because they see these as contributing towards dignity and choice for the people who will use the supermarket.

> *So that looks like a range of about 800 products, it looks like operating hours, it looks like a referral process to make sure the right people, the known people to the community. And it looks like having a set of points that enables the right amount of food into a basket for different sized families (Willa Hand, Foodstuffs North Island).*

The delivery of the 'social' aspect of the supermarket is also important. Sam Cassidy from Whare Kai describes how their organisation's values are practiced through the supermarket where relationship and connection are as important as food provision.

> *Our values come from our agency, 155. So, it's Manaakitanga, Rangatiratanga and Whanaungatanga. And how we practice it here, is that when people walk in the manaaki that they feel is welcomed, and that it's a safe space. And rangatiratanga is that they get to choose their kai, they have their own leadership, they know what they need for their whare, and whanaungatanga is that they have built that relationship with us that they when they leave, and if they ever need us, they feel safe enough to come back to us (Sam Cassidy, Whare Kai).*

The Your Local Pantry model also emphasises the importance of additional services

> *I think the wraparound services, the additional services, it kind of presented itself to us that we needed to do more. And as we kind of develop the pantries, we realised that this element was equally as important to us (Shabir Jivraj, Your Local Pantry).*

The provision of wraparound services is an essential aspect of the WCM model. While many shoppers may only come once, for another group of shoppers ongoing support to reduce debt is critical.

> *We have a lot of people shopping in here working with financial mentors. They're doing that because they're not getting there each week. Often, it's horrendous debt and we'll work with them to get that debt down. In the meantime, they'll come to the social supermarket every week and they're not having to spend money; they can be paying back debt (Jeremy Neeve, WCM).*

Social supermarket users (or target groups) and criteria

Each of the social supermarkets interviewed had slightly different "target groups" and approaches to setting criteria. These included:

- Having no criteria – anyone was able to access food
- Having no criteria for the first few visits but, after a number of visits, a conversation was had regarding needs for other support services
- Seeking help from WINZ before coming to the social supermarket

At Just Zilch, because the main motivation is to reduce food waste, anyone is welcome, and food given according to the number of individuals in the household. Just Zilch also expressed a general concern with using criteria as it may exclude people who are in genuine need but who don't fit the particular criteria that has been set. =

> *And so, anytime there is criteria, there's always the chance that someone misses out who may actually be genuinely in need, they might not fit the criteria, but there may still be a need (Rebecca Culver, Just Zilch).*

They also offer food to volunteers as an acknowledgement of their contribution.

> *For us the food is rescued food, it is food that would have otherwise gone to waste. And so, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter who comes to get the food. I want people to come here (Rebecca Culvert, Just Zilch).*

WCM no questions were asked (apart from the number of household members) on the first few visits but if people are coming more frequently, they are invited to have a more in-depth conversation about any support needs, for example, advocacy with Work and Income to ensure they are getting their correct entitlements. If shoppers are unwilling to have further conversation, they may be restricted from accessing the social supermarket (Kore Hiakai, 2022b).

For Your Local Pantry, membership is open to anyone local, with no requirement to be referred by a professional or other third party (Maynard and Tweedie, 2021). Most have had experience with other charity food provision such as foodbanks. The pantries tend to serve low-income people who need support rather than providing a crisis response.

At Whare Kai, people are asked to seek food support through Work and Income before coming to the supermarket. They support people to approach Work and , and also assist whānau with Review of Decisions if support is declined by Work and Income.

Most of the interviewees thought the social supermarket experience should be as free from poverty stigma as possible.

> *Social supermarkets should be operating in a way that enables whānau to retain their dignity and their mana. So that they don't feel like they're a charity case. They're able to come in and do their shop or whatever it might be and walk away feeling like they haven't had to lose a little piece of themselves. The social supermarket can not only ensure that one's mana and integrity stay intact, but furthermore if people can leave feeling empowered, that would be even better (Mike Tipene, Healthy Families Waitākere).*
>
> *But, you know, why can't poor people have the opportunity of choice, of consumer choice like other people do? It's kind of like why are we building a special and fairly stigmatised lane? (Tania Pouwhare, Community and Social Innovation).*

Both Just Zilch and WCM had considered the balance between ensuring their food services went to people who needed it the most and the desire to reduce or eliminate any feelings of whakama or shame experienced by shoppers.

> *We have no criteria or means testing. It means we allow anyone to come. There are no questions asked. And the whole premise behind that is that everyone has times of need. And in that everyone has a story, we know nothing about. I guess foodbanks and the like, try to find out what information they can. Sometimes there's a whole lot of shame, or whakama that comes about for people. If they have to share that information, it can be really hard. And sometimes, although might seem necessary, sometimes it's not as necessary as maybe we have thought in the past (Rebecca Culver, Just Zilch).*

One person questioned why separate social supermarkets needed to be set up at all when there is already an existing supermarket network. They suggested that a person could be given a card that identified them as a social supermarket customer which enabled them to shop at a regular supermarket and pay reduced prices for their goods. That way they would not need to go to an extra place to do their shopping and would have all the regular supermarket goods to choose from.

Some people may be very reluctant to access food support even when they really need it because of the shame or stigma attached to it. One interviewee thought this was a significant factor preventing Māori whānau from accessing support.

> *I do know that many of our at least our Māori find, though, we find it really hard to ask for help. And then we also find it really hard to, to accept help (Mike Tipene, Healthy Families Waitākere)*

Payment

As with other aspects relating to a social supermarket, there were differing payment options including:

- Completely free
- A koha option is given
- A set koha option, for example a ten-dollar charge
- A joining fee
- A set amount charged per shop to receive discounted goods

WCM does not charge anything or even ask for a koha from shoppers when they use the social supermarket. This is based on the belief that that those in need have nothing extra to give (Kore Hiakai, 2022b).

> *There's just no way anyone will ever be charged in the social supermarket. It's just not right. That's the model that we've chosen to follow. And that was after looking at a lot of the overseas models as well (Jeremy Neeve, WCM).*

Whare Kai and Just Zilch both have koha options. Just Zilch has a koha jar, but they have no expectations for payment. Whare Kai ask for a ten-dollar contribution from shoppers at the checkout and believe that most people are happy to pay something.

> *People like to give back too if they have got it. And if they don't have ten dollars then even if it's 50 cents to like, the proceeds. Plus, because we give the receipts, we also say you can claim that back at the end of the year, so hold your receipts because it's donations (Amanda Chittenden, Whare Kai).*

At Your Local Pantry members pay a joining fee. They also pay between 3.5 to 7 pounds (NZD$6.70 to 13.35) for each shop. For that amount each, shopper receives about 20 pounds (NZD $38.15) worth of groceries.[3]

In Europe and the United Kingdom, most social supermarkets charge a small amount to shoppers. In Germany, the price of food is usually 10-30% of normal price or a whole shopping basket for one Euro (about NZD$1.60). In France, goods are priced at 10-20% of normal retail price (Schneider, et al., 2015).

Procurement, stock, and funding

Stock procurement is an obvious focus for any social supermarket. This is achieved in a variety of ways including:

- A partnership(s) with a food supplier or local supermarket to supply food
- A partnership(s) with a food supplier or local supermarket to purchase food at a significantly discounted price
- Leftover food from food suppliers and supermarkets (rescued food)
- Private food donations
- Monetary donations from individuals, corporates, philanthropic trusts and/or MSD
- Membership fees
- State funded (in some places in Europe)

3 The average food cost per week for a single person in the United Kingdom is 34 pounds (Yurday, 2023).

As part of the partnership with Foodstuffs North Island, WCM has an arrangement with their local New World supermarket. Foodstuffs provides funding for food which WCM uses to purchase goods at cost for the social supermarket.

> *We place an order with our buddy supermarket. It comes down with their (New World) order. The New World unloads it, scans it and then we pick it up and bring it over here for placement on the shelves (Jeremy Neeve, WCM).*

WCM is a well-known organisation in their community as they have been operating for over 100 years. They get a large amount of food donated from Wellingtonians. They also get food directly from large food manufacturers who will drop off pallet loads at a time. WCM have their own procurement arrangement with a local fruit and vegetable supplier that developed during COVID.

The point-of-sale system (installed by Foodstuffs) means that WCM has good oversight of the stock that is in the supermarket as well as the items that shoppers are choosing.

> *Because of scan data, we can print out reports we know what shoppers are taking. We know how to stock accordingly. And that's a huge advantage over a foodbank model (Jeremy Neeve, WCM).*

WCM don't use rescued food other than bread that is left over at the end of the day from their buddy supermarket.

WCM has found it easy to raise funds for the social supermarket because people find the concept appealing. They have also had generous corporate donations. As a consequence, they haven't experienced any restrictions on purchasing.

Whare Kai also has a relationship with their local New World. Foodstuffs provides a budget for them to purchase food at cost. They manage their budget carefully. In contrast to WCM, Whare Kai has fewer resources for the social supermarket. Philanthropic trusts and the Ministry of Social Development are their other sources of funding.

> *We have to be very tight on our budget. But Foodstuffs gives us so much a year so it's very limited weekly for me (Sam Cassidy, Whare Kai)*

Whare Kai is also the food rescue hub for Tai Tokerau so they have access to all the donations that come through the hub.

Most of Just Zilch's stock is perishable goods. They pick up the stock in two shifts. In the morning, they gather food from supermarkets and other places that have contacted them to pick up food. In the afternoon, they pick up leftover food from cafés and bakeries. About 5 to 10 percent of their stock comes from donations. During COVID, they received some funding from MSD to purchase additional food. Local people also drop off donations of fruit and vegetables and, at times, left-over food when people are moving out of flats.

Your Local Pantry in the United Kingdom has been experiencing challenges with procuring stock. They originally partnered with Fairshare (an organisation that distributes surplus food to charities) but supplies of chilled and frozen items have recently decreased. Each local pantry is negotiating with wholesale suppliers in their area and the national organisation is exploring a partnership with a large co-operative supermarket chain.

The funding for each Your Local Pantry comes from the membership fees. Most pantries break even within 3 to 6 months because the demand for memberships is so high. The funding for the national Your Local Pantry coordination came from a Lotteries grant and the franchise fees are used to develop the model. Each Your Local Pantry pays a franchise fee (2000 pounds plus an annual fee of 500 pounds). They are provided with access to a bespoke database system to manage memberships, payments, and procurement. The coordinator helps organisations to set up their pantries so they operate smoothly which may include shop design, training, and support with compliance.

In Europe, almost all of the food distributed through social supermarkets is rescue food and some stores sell non-food products

In France, the A.N.D.E.S network supplies produce, and provides workshops on team management, training for social supermarket volunteers and promotion. They also develop workshops to help process excess food.

In Austria and Germany, most social supermarkets are co-funded by state or local government and charities as well as the public employment service. State of federal government funding is usually for personnel costs and local government funding is used for premises or rent. Other funding goes to vehicles, cooling facilities, websites, and training. The start-up costs are usually covered by philanthropic donations and/or community fundraising. Almost all social supermarkets are run as non-for-profit organisations. No taxes are charged on donated food (Schneider et. Al., 2015).

In Switzerland, the operating costs are covered by income from sales and philanthropic funding plus donations with minimal government support. In France, there is a mix of social supermarkets that are funded by local authorities and solidarity stores that are run by groups of individuals or associations (Schneider et. al., 2015).

Staff and volunteers

Most social supermarkets are run by a mix of paid staff and volunteers as shown in this table:

Social Supermarket	Staff

WCM	• 3 paid staff:
	  • a driver
	  • a Procurement and External Relationship Manager who looks after stock procurement and relationships with donors
	  • a Floor Manager who looks after the day to day running of the supermarket and supports the volunteers on the supermarket floor
	• (Both managers have lived-experience of food insecurity and are able to form trusting relationships with shoppers (Kore Hiakai, 2022)).
	• a minimum of two volunteers are in the supermarket at any one time

Whare Kai	• 3 paid staff
	  • a manager
	  • co-ordinator
	  • a check out person
	• a team of five volunteers of whom one or two are on site whenever the supermarket is operating

Your Local Pantry	Designed to be volunteer-led, but found it helps to have at least one paid person who has overall responsibility for the supermarket. There is usually a team of five people who run each social supermarket. These roles include: • a meeter/greeter • a cashier • a personal shopper • someone stocking the shelves • someone checking for short-dated items
Just Zilch	Has a larger team of seven staff and around 100 volunteers, but they also distribute food across the region as well as provide it through their store in Palmerston North.

In Austria, social supermarkets are staffed mainly by volunteers. On average, there are 11 volunteers per social supermarket, 4 part-time workers, 4 reintegration or alternative service workers and 0.4 full time staff. In Germany, over 60,000 volunteers had worked in social supermarkets in 2013. Germany has a range of incentives for volunteers including payment (Schneider, et al. 2015).

Location and opening hours

> *Transport and physical accessibility are as key as affordability (Kore Hiakai, 2022b:13).*

An important consideration for a social supermarket is its location. The co-design initiative with families in Otara found that shopping is a time-consuming activity for most families. Journeys are planned carefully. Families are very aware of the travel/petrol costs associated with shopping for food and this determines where they shop. The weekly shop can take all day because of the different locations, the distance between each one and because children and grandchildren are taken too (Auckland Council, 2018).

Social Supermarket	Location	Opening Hours	Added information
WCM	next to the rest of the Mission services and across the road from a New World supermarket in an area with significant social housing	Weekdays 9.30am to 4.15pm	They support two to three shoppers in 30-minute segments (to give people privacy while they are shopping). Each person is accompanied by a volunteer. On average they serve 120 people per week. When WCM noticed some people were struggling to get their shopping home from the social supermarket, they set up an Uber-type service to help deliver (Kore Hiakai, 2022b)
Whare Kai	Kamo, Whangarei	9.30am to 2.30pm Monday to Thursday	Serves around 30 people per day. On Friday, is open to volunteers and staff of 155 Whare Awhina
Just Zilch	Central Palmerston North close to other retail shops	Store opens twice a day, Monday to Friday—from 1pm to 2.30pm and again from 4.30pm to 6pm	People are encouraged to come once a day if possible
Your Local Pantry	Locations and times vary considerably. Some open for a few hours per week whereas others are open six days per week		

> *Some of our pantries are only open one day per week so for about two hours, they may see 30 people in that those two hours. Whereas we've got two pantries that are open six days of the week for longer hours, about seven hours a day. They expect up to 2000 people a week (Shabir Jivraj, Your Local Pantry).*

Work brokerage

Work brokerage support is not currently offered in the Aotearoa New Zealand social supermarkets or free stores that were interviewed as part of this project whereas, it was quite common overseas.

Work brokerage is a significant feature of the social supermarket models in Europe. Some social supermarkets operate as social enterprises with a focus on reintegrating long-term unemployed, ex-prisoners and disabled people into the paid workforce. The social supermarkets provide practical work experience as well as training (e.g., work readiness skills) (Schneider et. al. 2015).

In the United Kingdom, Your Local Pantry offers online training for volunteers who are interested in retail management. They provide details of another company that will help and support members to complete a recognised certified online course in their own time.

With regard to Visionwest's social supermarket, interviewees thought Visionwest should be very intentional about how they approach work brokerage. Key considerations include:

- Clarifying the purpose of the work brokerage offering. Is it to provide employment for people who might struggle to find employment elsewhere? Is it to provide a pathway for volunteers into other forms of employment? Is it to support self-employment? It was felt that any work brokerage offered should depend on the purpose for such an offering.
- Employment in the supermarket industry is generally low paid so supporting some people to work in this field may not improve their income.
- Providing part-time work for young people is likely to be beneficial. Longitudinal data from Australia shows that giving young people from low-income backgrounds part-time employment that doesn't take them away from study is important. It enables them to close the gap with their more affluent peers so that, when they graduate from tertiary studies, they are on a level footing.
- Offering employees (and volunteers) the opportunity to learn about the enterprise supply chain and what is involved in running a business is useful. People may be doing tasks like stacking shelves or serving customers, but they are also gaining other knowledge and experience that may be beneficial in the future.

Education

In Europe, many social supermarkets include a café where cooking lessons, workshops, and supervised time for school children are offered (Schneider et al., 2015).

With regard to a social supermarket at Visionwest, there was strong support from interviewees for an education component, but this would need to be based on whānau needs and interests and delivered in a way that worked for them. For example, if most of the shoppers are single parents with pre-schoolers, would childcare be available?

While Whare Kai offers Mara Kai (traditional gardening) courses and gives away free seedlings to shoppers they also noted that price is the biggest barrier for whānau when it comes to food security (rather than lack of knowledge). They also believed the advocacy they provide to ensure people get their correct entitlements and support with debt reduction was useful.

Healthy Families Waitākere also supported sharing knowledge that empowers people to grow their own food and access food from the local environment.

One of the insights from the co-design process with families in Otara was that families didn't need recipes to cook with because:

- They cook the same meals each week.
- They learn basic recipes early on and memorise these.
- They cook meals they know their children will eat.
- Their budgets do not allow for new and different ingredients.

Another factor that impacted on whānau was a lack of space at home in which to cook (Auckland Council, 2018).

Cafes and kitchens

None of the Aotearoa New Zealand social supermarkets interviewed were currently operating a café as part of their model, although WCM intends to open a 120-seat café once they move into their new building.

However, most Your Local Pantries include space for members to have a cup of tea and a snack, and to connect with others as part of their shopping experience. Some are connected to cafes, and one is linked to a two-star Michelin restaurant.

> *Some of our pantries are linked into a Community Café. If we do get any surplus, that surplus stock then will go to a community kitchen, who can then prepare a meal and that meal can then come back to the pantry as long as I've labelled it correctly. And all the ingredients and the allergens are on there. And how to prepare it once you've taken it out from the fridge or freezer. We can then put that back into the pantry. We do have one of our pantries in Wales that is linked to a two-star Michelin restaurant that make them a wonderful meal (Shabir Jivraj, Your Local Pantry).*

In Europe, many of the social supermarkets have a café near the main shop, which encourages social interaction. Several provide support and advice, for example, training and seeking employment (Schneider et. al., 2015).

The community kitchen is a central component of the Community Shop model in the United Kingdom.

> *About two-thirds of the surface area of the stores is dedicated to retail; the last third is a café. This allows a chef to cook cheap fresh meals everyday (subsidised) and to provide cooking classes (in particular for products that are available on the shelves that members may not be familiar with, therefore aiming to provide some nutritional benefits). The café also encourages social interactions between members (Schneider, et.al. 2015:46).*

At the Papatoetoe Food Hub in South Auckland, surplus food is rescued locally and turned into good affordable food in a commercial kitchen. Food scraps are recycled on-site, creating organic compost that is used for growing plants. Local people are employed in the hub and there is a partnership with Buttabean Motivation (BBM). The hub delivers the nutritional aspects of BBM's 'On the Couch' programme. This six-week programme is for people seriously in need of exercise, diet, and nutritional support (Weave, 2021).

One interviewee noted that it was important not to undermine any existing Māori and Pacific enterprises that might be happening in that space. They mentioned the Kitchen Project[4] which involves support for West Auckland people to set up their own food businesses.

Other features

As part of the co-design of a social supermarket in Otara, families were asked about other ideas that they would like to see located alongside the social supermarket. They identified the following:

- Help with housing and benefits
- A supportive mother's or women's group
- A café—cheap and good prices
- Making friends
- A coffee time to think and relax
- A nice and clean place
- Toilets and a baby change area
- Play area for children
- Cooking classes and demos
- A mediator to go places with them
- Room for buggies
- Somewhere the kids can be looked after while shopping
- Training space (Auckland Council, 2018)

The design process also identified key factors that are likely to contribute towards the success of the social supermarket. These were:

- Community-led
- Context specific – a 'posh place to go'
- Have a reliable source of must-have and extra food
- Customers willing to try a new solution comes with time
- Partnerships to design holistic solutions
- Part of a community hub of support
- Part of a wider food systems approach (Auckland Council, 2018)

4 See https://www.tsi.nz/the-kitchen-project for more information

Benefits of the social supermarket model

Throughout the research for the report a number of benefits of the social supermarket model were uncovered. These include:

- Increased choice in comparison with a traditional foodbank model
- People feel empowered and confident because of being able to choose their own food
- Higher quality diets are observed
- Increased dignity for shoppers, especially in membership and koha models
- A reduction in food waste
- Shoppers are more likely to access because it feels less like charity
- Provides opportunity for support and connection
- It reduces the cost of food

Overall, the main advantage of the social supermarket model is the increased choice (in comparison to traditional foodbank provision).

> *There is more choice, people can choose what they want in their trolley rather than have something prescribed to them, for example, whole bunch of lentils that you are never going to eat. However, that also depends on what the model is. If is based on surplus you're still only able to choose what is actually available rather than having the whole plethora of a supermarket. So, it is better than the current option (Sophia Beaton, Healthy Families Far North).*

Some interviewees reported that people feel more empowered and confident because of the ability to choose their own food:

> *Basically, it's just seeing the joy on people's faces when they come in and then be able to choose and they feel empowered to go out and try other things as well. You see them a bit more confident (Amanda Chittenden, Whare Kai).*

There is some evidence that offering choice is more beneficial than traditional foodbank provision. Studies in both the United States (Martin et. al., 2013) and a recent study of foodbanks in Ottawa, Canada found:

> *Across all four waves of data collection, the proportions of participants were lower in the moderately and severely food insecure categories if they accessed foodbanks using the Choice model, compared to participants who visited foodbanks offering food hampers (Rizvi et.al. 2021:12).*

There is also evidence that use of social supermarkets contributes to a higher quality diet such as increased fruit and vegetable intake (Martin et. al. 2013). However, these positive effects are limited to the people who have access to the social supermarkets.

The social supermarket shopping experience was seen as more dignified, particularly for membership models where the shoppers are also contributing towards the enterprise.

> *It's the dignity that it brings to people because members are contributing something, they're not getting a handout. They feel that they can go to the pantry and shop there with dignity (Shabir Jivraj, Your Local Pantry).*

The ability to choose was thought to reduce food waste because people get what they want and need rather than what is put into their food parcel.

Some interviewees thought that people may be more willing to access a social supermarket versus other types of food support.

> *I also noticed that we draw in a lot more whānau too now. That's because we're not a foodbank. They feel more comfortable coming to a social supermarket. So, I've noticed that. It's a nice feeling that you can just do your own shop. It feels like a supermarket. They feel like you're just doing the shopping (Amanda Chittenden, Whare Kai).*
>
> *And what we're seeing as well as, as people who have never had to frequent a foodbank before, because it's similar to a supermarket, their sense of self within that environment is more secure. That it's not quite as confronting as being, someone like me, who's for the most part, been able to provide for my family. And we know there are a group of people who just do not do that—they go without instead because it is such a big shift. So I think playing in the middle provides an intermediary step (Willa Hand, Foodstuffs North Island).*

Shopping at the social supermarket can create opportunities for support and connection.

> *From some of the stories that we've heard, it's actually really cool when someone's supported by someone. It's the conversations that are random, that come out when you're shoulder to shoulder with someone … that requires a higher level of trust, and the proximity to be able to do that. I know that that's not inherent in every model. It's been unexpected, even by those that set the system up (Tric Malcolm, Kore Hiakai).*

There are also chances to connect with other shoppers and community members.

> *It can be 40 or 50 people, they're not necessarily using the pantry, but just come for a warm drink or food. I got served a couple of months back by a vicar who made me a hummus wrap. It was wonderful. It was just such a great community environment (Shabir Jivraj, Your Local Pantry).*

Shopping at the social supermarket reduces the cost of food for people on low incomes and can also help to support local informal sharing economies.

> *People get more than maybe what they need—they tend to give it away. They don't want to waste it either. I know it's not in every case, but it does by and large, it seems to be what happens. One of the early revelations that I had of Just Zilch is that what we're doing is actually empowering people to give (Rebecca Culver, Just Zilch).*

Section Two: Kai support and Māori models

There are growing calls that the solutions for Māori food security and sovereignty need to come from within Māori communities and knowledge bases (Moeke-Pickering et al. 2015). Several interviewees pointed out that kai sovereignty involves much more than food. For Māori, it includes:

- Being healthy and nourished
- Being able to share kai
- Recognising and celebrating the uniqueness of the whenua, awa, moana and ngahere
- Having control over the way that kai is produced

> *And it's not only about food, it's much more than that. It's also about our customs, our protocols, the things we do, and also the way we use food, culturally, is seen as not just a means of nourishment, but it's also a means to learn about whakapapa and history of where your food came from, it's a means to learn how to grow, and possibly farm your own kai or gather your own kai from the sea (Mike Tipene, Healthy Families Waitākere).*

In West Auckland, Healthy Families Waitākere, Community I and Hoani Waititi Marae have developed Mana Motuhake o te Kai: A kai sovereignty plan for West Auckland. The plan was developed in response to the findings from a report on the impact of COVID-19 on Māori in West Auckland where kai resiliency was a key theme. In the pandemic response, important customs and protocols around kai were not always observed by providers. Māori were given emergency food supplies, but some contained unfamiliar food that whānau could not use.

> *We had no choice. We were given what we were given without really any sovereignty. And that's over what we choose to put in our mouth (Mike Tipene, Healthy Families Waitākere).*

The vision of Mana Motuhake o te Kai is: "To support the localisation and creation of a kai ecosystem, leveraging ancestral practices to inform community-led solutions and enabling whānau and community wellbeing." It has three central pou (pillars):

> ***Tāngata**: Māori in West Auckland are healthy and nourished. Sharing kai and learning about and through kai strengthens social connection and community.*
>
> ***Taiao**: The unique identity of the whenua of West Auckland is recognised and celebrated. The ecosystem is thriving and biodiverse. Māori hold sovereignty over land and food is grown following mātauranga Māori systems.*
>
> ***Tikanga**: The role of kai as sacred taonga enhances mana in West Auckland. Tikanga o te kai is woven through day-to-day activities and the whakapapa of kai is understood (Healthy Families Waitakere, n.d.)*

In Whangaroa, another Healthy Families project is examining how the strengths and resources of local whānau can enable the development of a food secure and resilient Whangaroa. They used a co-design process which identified the following insights:

- Whānau are very resourceful and the ability to 'make something from nothing' was valued highly. While many whānau described times in their lives that could be defined as moments of food insecurity, they rarely thought of their own experiences from this scarcity perspective. Instead, they talked about their resourcefulness, their ability to make something from nothing, their knack of hustling up a feed and utilising the resources from the world around them.
- The food economy of Whangaroa is largely based on a system of reciprocity and sharing. In this economy of sharing, whānau feel both a deep sense of responsibility to contribute and a willingness to receive–a state described by kaumatua and kuia as ngākau atawhai. This enables a relational transaction that enhances the mana of all those involved. The sharing economy is informal and relies on the existing relationships and kinship ties. It exists during times of both abundance and scarcity.
- The shared economy extends to large scale growing operations. In traditional commercial enterprises, the best produce is sold to the international market, followed by a local market. Surplus (or seconds) may be given away to the wider community. In Whangaroa, whānau sit at the heart of a flipped model with the core (and often best) produce being given away to an ever-widening group. The surplus is sold, used for trade, or bartered.
- Many people in Whangaroa think of the environment as being like a 'fridge'. Unlike a conventional fridge, this fridge provides more than just kai. Whangaroa's fridge provides whānau with a sense of belonging, a space to connect—to each other, to their tupuna and to ancient knowledge. It provides a place to learn, to exercise, to share and to grow together. Gathering food from this fridge provides multiple outcomes beyond sustenance. For some whānau, however, this fridge isn't always accessible. This might be from a lack of knowledge around harvesting, or from a disconnection to the whenua or moana.
- Kuia and kaumatua described different kinds of kai that they used to gather and eat. For many kaumatua and kuia, their early food memories of foraging are closely connected to their memories of play.
- Whānau have a strong desire to move towards a sustainable way of living that includes growing kai. Some whānau are further along that journey than others. Overwhelmingly, this journey wasn't an easy one, and that there are a number of key factors that can either help or hinder (Whangaroa Health Services et al. n.d:12-18).

Over the last twenty years, the number of māra kai initiatives have increased across Aotearoa New Zealand as the renaissance of Māori culture has extended into food production (Hond et al 2019).

> *Māra offer activity linked with ancestral knowledge, customary practices and tribal connection. They provide opportunities to practice Māori language and cultural processes in functional everyday ways, and thereby strengthen a sense of commitment to protect cultural heritage as a resource for community life. Importantly, hands-on collective activity with shared decision-making, which is characteristic of māra, fosters social cohesion and collective efficacy (Hond et al. 2019:44).*

Whare Kai, the social supermarket in Whangārei, offers māra kai courses and gives free seedlings to shoppers.

In West Auckland, research on the impacts of COVID-19 on Māori identified that there was a strong desire to utilise the thirteen local marae as cultural hubs and for greater use and valuing of Te Ao Māori approaches to support whānau.

> *One key example being considered is supporting whānau to develop mārakai as a vehicle to support te taha wairua / hinengaro / tinana / whānau. These kaupapa Māori worldview driven approaches provide a cultural base that will ensure people continue to flourish and to take charge of their own futures (Interviewee in Spooner and Ham, 2021).*

The pou from Mana Motuhake o te Kai provide a useful framework for Visionwest to align with. The insights from co-design processes with whānau highlight the importance of understanding the specific strengths and resources of West Auckland whānau who will access the Visionwest social supermarket. This will help ensure that the design is better placed to support whānau aspirations.

Section Three: Social supermarkets and food insecurity – some limitations

Social supermarkets operate in a context where income inadequacy is the primary driver of food insecurity, with Māori and Pacific peoples being disproportionately affected (Kore Hiakai 2022a; Macaulay et al. 2022; OPMCSA, 2022:3).

> *Overall, our findings reinforce food insecurity as an ongoing public health issue in New Zealand, resulting in significant and enduring hardship and requiring coordinated and targeted systemic action. Income inadequacy was identified as the underlying root cause of household's food insecurity. This issue needs urgent attention and substantial policy reform for meaningful and lasting change (Macaulay et al. 2022).*

In a recent survey of 600 people receiving food support from the Auckland City Mission, most participants (83%) reported that 'the cost of living exceeded their income' and this was the main reason that they didn't have enough money for food (Neuwelt-Kearns et. al., 2022).

Many whānau are regular users of both food support and Special Needs Grants (SNGs) from Work and Income. A recent study found that 54% of people who accessed a Pātaka Kai or foodbank weekly, fortnightly, or monthly also accessed SNGs fortnightly, monthly or every few months. This suggests that whānau are reliant on these sources to meet their basic food needs (Kore Hiakai, 2022a).

Food in West Auckland is expensive. It is 25 per cent more expensive than in London and 9 per cent more expensive than in Wellington (Kenkel, n.d.). There is an abundance of places to buy food in West Auckland—in the Waitakere local board area there are at least 107 food outlets, however, approximately 80 per cent of these offer mostly unhealthy options (Kenkel, n.d).

All this points to the benefits of social supermarkets. The report has, however, unveiled some limitations. These include:

- An inability to make a significant difference to the issues that lead to food insecurity because these issues are systemic in our communities.
- Social supermarkets don't challenge the conditions that intensify food poverty such as welfare and economic policies – in fact, the presence of social supermarkets (and foodbanks) may reduce the pressure on governments to improve income security.
- The issue of overproduction and waste in the food chain is not addressed.
- "Food deserts" may be created when, in low-income areas, stores close because potential clients avoid their stores preferring instead to go to local food support options.

Several interviewees pointed out that because the factors that drive food insecurity are systemic, service-led or community-based solutions are unable to make a significant difference.

> *I think one of the challenges is that there are so many food initiatives. Like there is great stuff happening at Papatūānuku Marae, with their fish [Kai Ika], there's the teaching gardens, the Pātaka Kai movement. There's lots of stuff happening. And it's great that it's happening. But it's not tackling the root cause of food poverty, which is we have a duopoly in this country...the fact that we live in a country that produces enough food to feed 40 million people, yet obesity related disease is about to become the number one killer in South Auckland. That's a malnutrition disease (Tania Pouwhare, Auckland Council).*

An unintended consequence of interventions such as foodbanks and social supermarkets is that they inadvertently strengthen the conditions that have led to their existence in the first place.

> *Food aid de-politicises food insecurity, creating the illusion that 'something is being done', which in turn dissipates efforts to address the root causes of food insecurity (Stettin et al., 2022:402).*

Further to this, social supermarkets don't necessarily challenge the conditions that intensify food poverty such as welfare and economic policies. For example, the reliance on the charitable food sector (while important and necessary) reduces the pressure on governments to improve income security (Riediger et.al., 2022).

> *Although food charity was the default answer to hunger since colonisation, setting the standard despite protestations from various fronts, soup kitchens were acknowledged as a social anomaly, whereas today foodbanks are a social normality. Looking across the historical periods, it is evident that food philanthropy has been increasingly used to depoliticise hunger to the point that there is no longer any significant debate, no moral outrage, and no public protest. Complacency has abounded due to the cementing of the belief that hunger is being addressed by the voluntary and corporate sectors together with the recent push for waste diversion and climate change mitigation (Cresswell Riol and Connelly, 2023:13).*

Another point to not is that the redistribution of surplus or rescue food through supermarkets does not address the issue of overproduction and waste in the food chain or the lack of government responsibility for ensuring that every person has access to the food they need.

> *[G]overnments, commercial sector, the voluntary sector, and social entrepreneurs are increasingly framing food waste diversion to the hungry as a social, economic, and environmental win:win:win . There are significant economic, environmental, and social impacts of food surplus and waste, and countries need to ensure sustainable food systems to remain food secure. The strongest solution to the problem is prevention that is, reducing food surplus at its source through holistic changes in the food system (Pollard and Booth, 2019:3).*

Smaller businesses, such as fruit and vegetable stores, may be unable to compete with charitable offerings which in turn contributes towards the creation of food deserts in low-income areas. At an individual level, the food charity system can also cause harm.

> *At the individual-level, the charitable food system has been shown to contribute to stigma and shame among patrons, offer poor nutritional value, provide insufficient and inconsistent food supply, consist of limited food choice and variety, and exacerbate pre-existing chronic health conditions (Riediger et al., 2022: 2).*

Even though social supermarkets may be more dignified than a traditional foodbank, model community-based food interventions are not going to be effective when the solutions lie upstream in social protection policies (Pollard and Booth, 2019).

However, while acknowledging that social supermarkets may not address the causes of food insecurity, some interviewees believed they can offer an interim step while the upstream causes of food insecurity are being addressed. For example, the social supermarket could improve access to a higher quality diet for the people who use it.

> *And I say band-aid because the causes of food insecurity are more upstream. And a social supermarket would do well in tandem while it takes a bit longer to address those causal factors. I know that income and lack of money are the biggest determinants of the quality of your diet and so this could do a lot for improving the quality of diet for people who are suffering from low income, and we also know that poor quality diet imposes the greatest burden on poor health for New Zealanders (Summer Wright, Massey University).*

Several interviewees identified stock procurement as an area where social supermarkets could strengthen local food systems and whānau, and potentially disrupt the current food system which is dominated by a supermarket duopoly.

> *When you look at it from a 'how do we procure this' and you can actually help people see that their local brand is here, that the local bread is here...that is a moment to build a relationship between the grower/ producer and the eater, that helps somebody feel more power over what they're putting in their body and what they're choosing to create for their whānau (Tric Malcolm, Kore Hiakai).*

Sourcing products from Māori producers is another way to enhance kai sovereignty in West Auckland.

> *If the social supermarket was able to use or source food from possibly Māori suppliers. That would be different if we think about the food chain in the social supermarket being the distributor or the final distribution point. How are we able to use more Māori suppliers? And hand on heart I don't know how many there are (Mike Tipene, Healthy Families Waitākere).*

Another interviewee thought social supermarkets could support the transition to more plant-based options (positive for health and the environment):

> *If you can provide plant-based alternatives to meat that are also healthy, then people will be more willing to try it. It's like free or reduced cost—I don't have to feel like I'm shelling out for it. I'll try it. And then maybe one aspect of that intergenerational diet transition is that as kids are more familiar with it, they'll grow up with it, and they'll be more likely to eat that way in future. It could be a really good way for people with low income who don't have much flexibility to try new things or get healthier foods (Summer Wright, Massey University).*

Stettin et al. (2022) argue that social supermarkets can strengthen the ability of local communities to challenge and shift existing conditions if they challenge the dominant narratives about poverty. One interviewee pointed out that advocacy needs to go hand in hand with service delivery.

> *The real solutions are different levers. A service response to food insecurity will always leave you in a service space. Which means advocacy must go alongside. If I was to want to disrupt the social service model, that would be that you should never do service without advocacy attached. Whatever funding you procure for service delivery, you should be procuring funding for advocacy at the same time (Tric Malcolm, Kore Hiakai).*

Social supermarkets could potentially be disruptive if they successfully challenge the current supermarket duopoly. Tanielu (2021) argues that if middle-class New Zealanders also choose to use social supermarkets their patronage would help improve the financial viability of the model because they would in effect subsidise lower income shoppers.

Opportunities for Visionwest

This report has revealed a number of opportunities for Visionwest to establish and maximise a social supermarket as part of their food support programme. On note (and expanded on below) are:

- To operate a social supermarket in ways that strengthen the West Auckland food system.
- To design the social supermarket with close input from those whānau who will use it.
- To take a learning approach; test and adapt the social supermarket with the whānau who use it.
- To explore opportunities for collective approaches.
- To explore opportunities for advocacy.

Operate in ways that strengthen the West Auckland food system

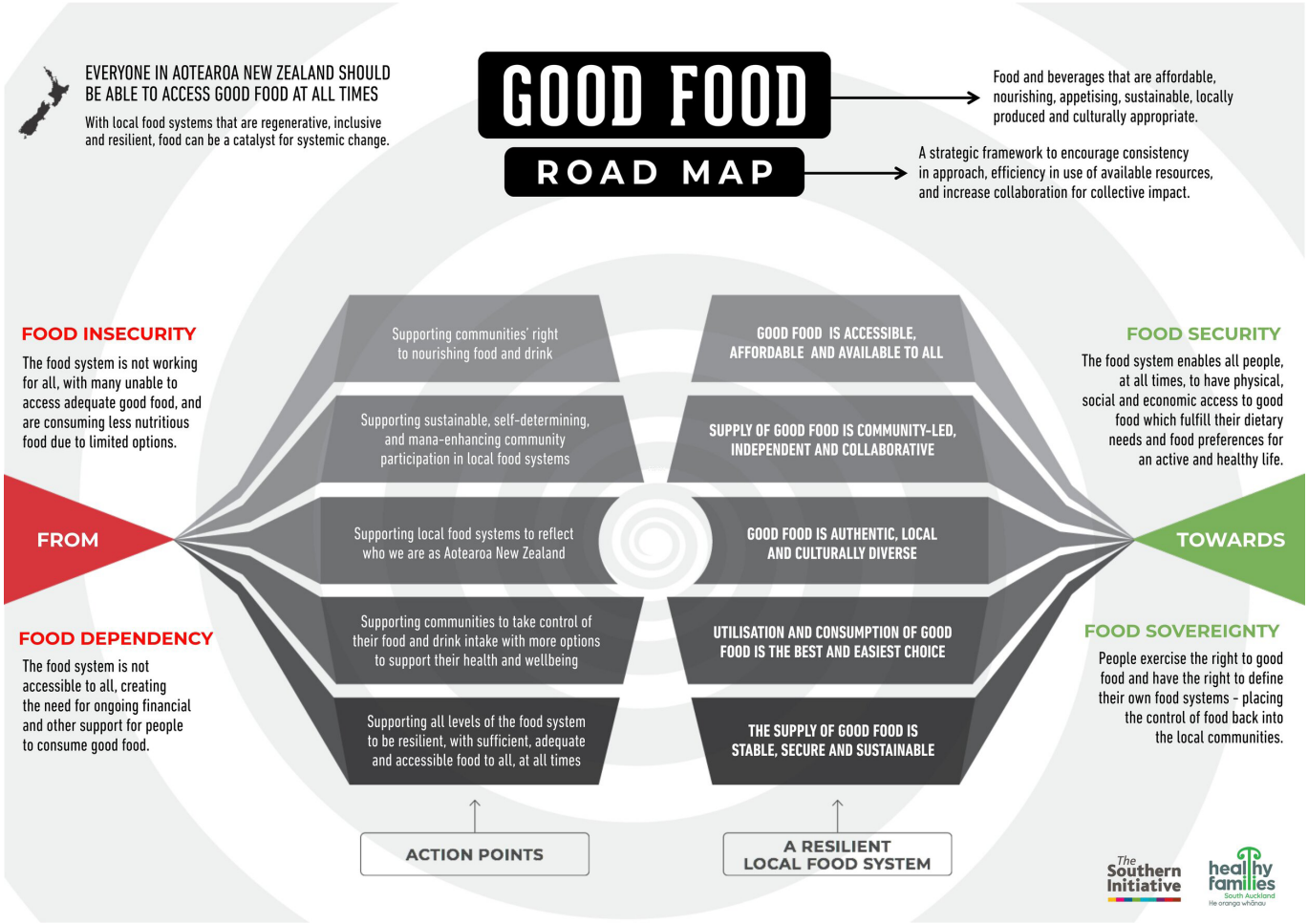
The findings from this report indicate that a social supermarket model is preferable to a traditional foodbank model because:

- it offers increased choice and dignity compared to foodbank models
- has less stigma attached
- it can be connected to range of other support offerings (which Visionwest is already delivering)
- it provides a range of benefits to the people that use it
- has the potential to be community-run
- could help to strengthen the local food system

However, on its own, a social supermarket is unlikely to achieve food security for the people who use it or for the West Auckland community. Therefore, as Visionwest implements the social supermarket model for their Pātaka Kai offering, it is important to consider how it will be part of and strengthen the wider food system.

> *How does that fit into your longer plan around food insecurity, response, or food security? And so even that moment of seeing it within the wider plan of something I think can be super helpful. This isn't the end goal. It's a step in this direction (Tric Malcolm, Kore Hiakai).*

The Good Food Map could be a useful tool to think about the ways that the Visionwest social supermarket might contribute to a healthy local food system (The Southern Initiative, 2020).



Another important resource for the project will be Mana Motuhake o te Kai (Healthy Families Waitakere, n.d.). These plans suggest that the Visionwest social supermarket could strengthen the local food system by the way food and other goods are procured for the store.

> *Because one of the things I think there is a potential for within the social supermarket frame is what is the role of procurement, where do you source your goods from and could they support systems change? One of the fastest ways to make a community food secure is to get them as close to the food source as possible, because supply chain theory will tell you that the more links in the chain, the less money anybody makes, except for the person who controls the chain, which is what we have with a duopoly (Tric Malcolm, Kore Hiakai).*

While a partnership with Foodstuffs is likely to provide a stable foundation for the initial operation of the supermarket, Visionwest could develop relationships with local food suppliers and producers (and in particular Māori).[5] This could be a similar approach to WCM who have a relationship with a local fruit and vegetable producer. The mapping work by Healthy Families Waitakere is a useful resource for identifying local producers (Kenkel, R., n.d.).

The social supermarket could also focus on the supply of healthy and nutritious food. As healthy food is generally more expensive, one option might be to make use of rescue food. Rescue food can be turned into healthy meals (see Papatoetoe Food Hub (Weave 2021) and the Community Shop (2022)) which could be supplied to whānau through the supermarket.

5 Visionwest may already have existing relationships with local suppliers through their Pātaka Kai.

The Visionwest social supermarket could be part of a sustainable local food system if local people are able to make decisions about the way it operates:

> *A Sustainable Food System prioritises resilience through the localisation of growing, foraging, preparing, packaging, distributing, sharing, eating, and recycling. All decisions relevant to kai are in the hands of the local people involved with feeding their community and is informed by their local and ancestral knowledge, resulting in decision-making that ensures community needs are being met (Healthy Families, 2022:6).*

Several interviewees raised concerns about the stigma associated with the use of rescue food as part of emergency food provision. The acceptability of utilising rescue food will need to be explored with whānau who will use the supermarket.

Visionwest can encourage links with Mara Kai initiatives and local community gardens to support whānau who wish to grow their own food as well as potential sources of vegetable and fruit supply for the social supermarket.

Design with / by whānau who use the social supermarket, so it meets their needs

The design of the social supermarket needs to be driven by the realities of the whānau who will use it.

The social supermarket should strengthen rather than undermine the resourcefulness of whānau who are experiencing food insecurity. One way of doing this is through using a thoughtful, whānau-centric human-centred design approach that incorporates kaupapa Māori principles. This would involve building deep empathy with the whānau who will use the social supermarket; figuring out how to use those learnings to design new solutions or elements; building and testing ideas before finally putting them out into the world (IDEO, 2015).

> *Visionwest should be strongly involving their community in all parts of development, implementation and ongoing evolution and set it [the social supermarket] up in a way that it can continuously adapt and learn and evolve based on what they learn from the people who use it (Sophia Beaton, Healthy Families Far North)*

Pollard and Booth (2019) argue that food provision to address food insecurity needs to be based on the following principles:

> *(1) a client-centred focus; (2) empowering individuals by fostering autonomy and enabling food choice in socially acceptable ways; and (3) providing opportunities for active involvement, social connection, and broader support (7).*

As the findings from other co-design processes in this area have indicated, whānau in West Auckland will have their unique strengths and resources. The features of the Visionwest social supermarket need to be designed around these as well as the strengths and resources of the local community and food system.

Take a learning approach; test and adapt the social supermarket with whānau who use it

Whānau who use the Visionwest social supermarket need to be involved in decision-making about how it operates. It is, therefore, likely that many changes will be made to the way the social supermarket operates.

For example, WCM have developed various innovations for their social supermarket based on the experience of whānau. These are worthy of listing:

- The "uber" delivery service for people who had difficulty getting their shopping home.
- The simple meal kits they created to make planning and cooking meals easier when they had feedback that people were having trouble cooking meals
- The provision of pet food when they found that people were also struggling to feed their pets (Kore Hiakai, 2022b).

In the United Kingdom, the Your Local Pantry are trialling a slow cooker initiative as some of their members are living in bedsits or temporary accommodation with limited cooking facilities. Similar initiatives are also being tested in West Auckland.

Explore opportunities for collective approaches

Collective approaches have the potential to reduce stigma as well as creating opportunities for community connection and capability building.

> *There's a really great example in London, which is called the People's Supermarket. There is a difference between something that is based on collectivity, versus a service for the poor (Tania Pouwhare, Auckland Council)*

Visionwest could explore ways that the social supermarket could be collectively owned and/or run in the future by the whānau who use it. This idea could be explored with whānau.

Connections to local māra kai initiatives and community gardens could also support local efforts to strengthen the kai ecosystem in West Auckland.

Explore opportunities for advocacy

Alongside the operation of the social supermarket, Visionwest can use its position in the community to continue to advocate for measures that are likely to make a difference to food security for whānau in West Auckland. International research has identified the importance of sustained actions by cohesive, responsive, and strongly led nutrition action networks with the strategic and organisational capacities for effective commitment-building to generate and sustain political commitment to address nutrition issues (Baker et al. 2018). Visionwest's current participation in Kore Hiakai (along with other strategic collectives) is an important part of this advocacy work.

Some of the actions that may enhance food security for whānau in West Auckland include:

- advocacy for a food security policy / strategic framework for Aotearoa New Zealand
- continued advocacy for the increased supply of affordable housing
- supporting efforts to raise incomes of beneficiaries and low wage workers
- support for initiatives such as Universal Fresh Food Supply (Graham et al. 2019)[6] and/or subsidies and price promotions on healthy food to ensure its affordability (Pollard and Booth, 2019)

Furthermore, a network of social supermarkets would enable sharing and exchange of products, ideas, and resources (Schneider et. al., 2015, Auckland Council, 2018, Tanielu, 2021).

6 A universal fresh food supply would involve the provision fresh food to all households to ease food insecurity and reduce associated mental distress. Universal provision would have the advantage of reducing the shame and stigma that negatively impact on mental health, promoting equity, and easing burgeoning food insecurity. The provision of fresh food could have the added advantage of strengthening local producers and food systems (Graham et al. 2019). A similar initiative was also recommended as part of the ENHANCE study. This involved the provision of a Smart Card or loyalty card, providing discounts on healthy nutritious food (Bowers et al. 2009).

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Appendix One: List of interviewees

- **Sophia Beaton**, *Practice and Development Lead*, Healthy Families Far North (Te Runanga o Whaingaroa)
- **Sam Cassidy**, *Foodbank Coordinator*, Whare Kai, 155 Whare Āwhina
- **Amanda Chittenden**, *Floor Manager*, Whare Kai, 155 Whare Āwhina
- **Rebecca Culver**, *Founder and Manager*, Just Zilch
- **Willa Hand**, *Head of Membership Experience*, Foodstuffs North Island
- **Shabir Jivraj**, *Project Officer*, Your Local Pantry, Birmingham, United Kingdom
- **Tric Malcolm**, *Pou Arahi*, Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective
- **Jeremy Neeve**, *General Manager*, Social Enterprise, Wellington City Mission
- **Tania Pouwhare**, *General Manager*, Community and Social Innovation, Auckland Council
- **Mike Tipene**, *Māori Systems Strategist*, Healthy Families Waitākere
- **Summer Wright**, *PhD Student*, Massey University

Appendix Two: Summary of key elements of social supermarkets

Table

Social supermarket	Operating hours	Shoppers per week	Criteria	Payment	Stock
WCM	9.30 to 4.15	90	None but access to social supermarket may be limited if no engagement with supports after multiple visits	None	Purchase from Foodstuffs chain, direct from suppliers, individual donations and family to family promotion.
Whare Kai	9.30-2.30 Monday to Friday	120 approx.	People asked to try Work and Income for support first. Available to staff and volunteers. Whānau can shop once every 8 weeks.	Request $10.00 payment but will accept koha or no payment	Purchase from suppliers, food rescue
Just Zilch	1-2.30pm 4.30-6pm	306	None	None but have koha jar	Food rescue and donations
Your Local Pantry	Varies between pantries-most open 3 hours 2x per week; 2 are open 7 days per week	30 to 2000 per week	Membership model	3.5 to 7 pounds (NZD$6.70 to 13.35) per shop	Food rescue (through FareShare); local procurement and donations.

Social supermarkets in Aotearoa New Zealand

Te Hiku Pātaka, Kataia https://www.tehikupataka.co.nz/

Whare Kai, Whangārei https://www.155.org.nz/155-whare-kai/

BBM Tokoroa Social Supermarket https://thebbmprogram.com/bbm-tokoroa-social-supermarket/

Social Supermarket, WCM, Newtown https://wellingtoncitymission.org.nz/what-we-do/social-supermarket/

Otumoetai Social Supermarket Tauranga https://www.facebook.com/people/Otumoetai-Social-Supermarket/100087234431298/?paipv=0&eav=Afbu0EGirj9ffgUFLYYGGlQt0WBZJ4dKtK-4GFQVN4gyNXJ8DP3Fghgc3UTd-HgrMN0&_rdr

Free Guys Avondale a social style of supermarket where you "take what you need, pay what you can." https://www.facebook.com/groups/kaiavondale/

Free or low-cost stores

Just Zilch https://justzilch.org.nz/

Reduced to Clear https://www.facebook.com/ReducedToClearHenderson/

Bin Inn https://www.bininn.co.nz/

Why Knot Outlet Shop https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068447032686

Collective food initiatives to reduce food costs

Food Together Co-op is a social enterprise that has partnered with local community groups across the country for almost 30 years to connect people around fresh food. They aim to connect communities around healthy food, create jobs and to equip and empower local collectives, to make fresh food more affordable and accessible for all while resourcing communities. There is a hub in Avondale, Auckland https://www.foodtogether.co.nz/

Perfectly Imperfect Perfectly Imperfect is a social enterprise that believes that there is no such thing as perfect food, only tasty food. Their goal is to save the 122,000 tonnes of food going to waste each year in NZ by bringing new value to these "ugly" goodies. Their Mystery Boxes allow people to enjoy some of this rescued food while also supporting initiatives to get food to those that really need it https://www.perfectlyimperfect.org.nz/

Wonky Box is a fresh fruit and vegetable subscription box delivering produce that's at risk of going to waste. They collect odd-looking and surplus produce from local growers and deliver it straight to households in the Wellington, Manawatū and Auckland regions https://wonkybox.nz/pages/how-it-works

Papatoetoe Food Hub revolves around community-led enterprise (café—with pick up, delivery and takeaway options during COVID), within a circular economy model in which surplus food is rescued from being wasted and turned into good affordable food for the community https://www.facebook.com/papatoetoefoodhub

Sikh Temple Gardens Takanini—large gardens at the Sikh Temple in Takanini that are used to feed the community https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/garden/109333486/sikh-temple-community-garden-growing-food-to-share

Pātaka Kai movement—includes neighbourhood pantries and larger Pātaka Kai. The Pātaka Kai movement is committed to promoting Community Empowerment and supporting the growth of the many assets that already exist in our communities within residents, enabling inter-generational connectedness and turning strangers into neighbours. https://www.patakai.co.nz/auckland-pantries.html ; https://www.patakai.co.nz/glen-eden-pantries.html

International models

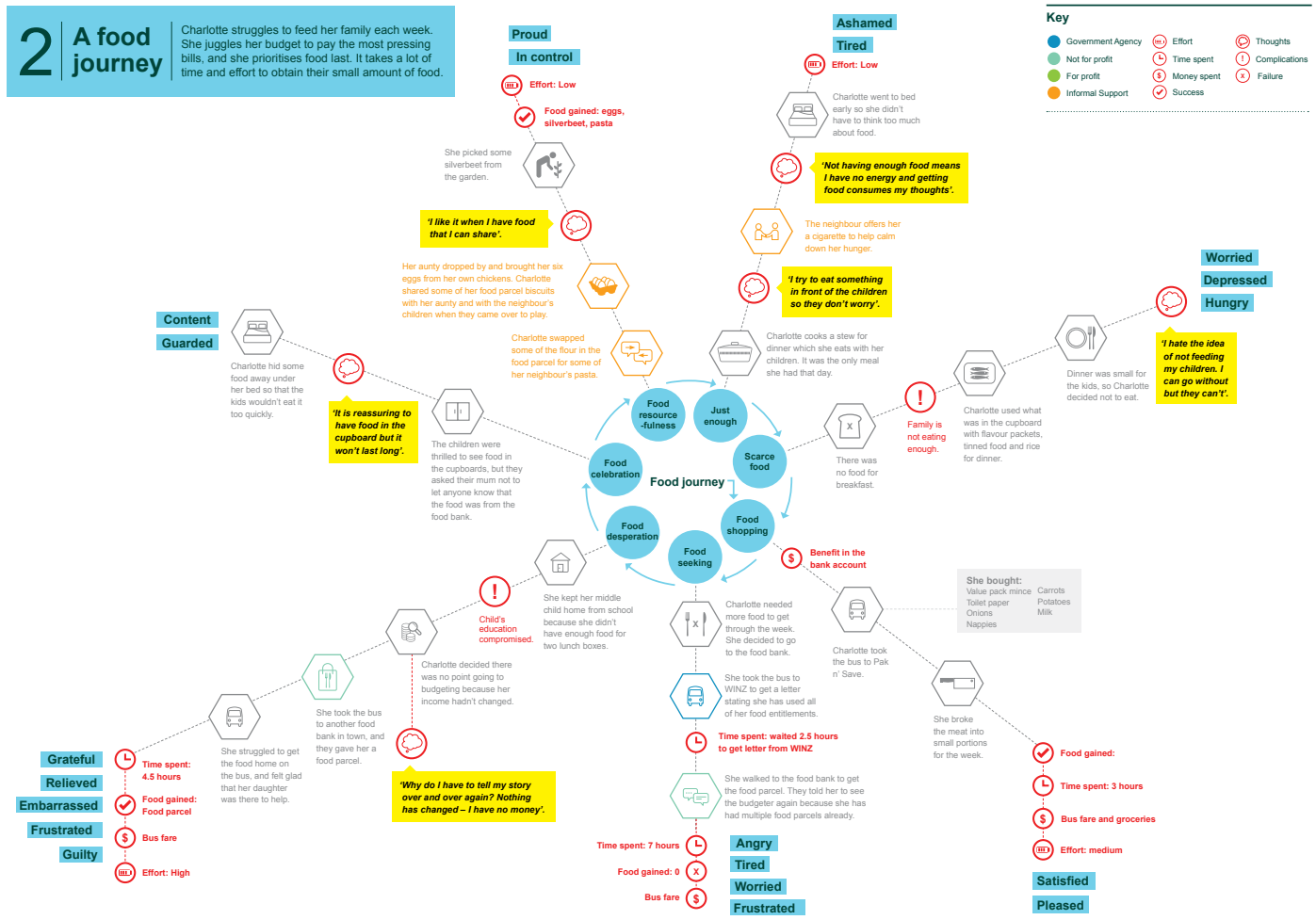
Solidarity stores are designed for people with low income (working poor, unemployed, retirees with a low pension etc.) who can't afford buying food in "normal" supermarkets but who are, on the other hand, reluctant to benefit from charity. There are more than 700 social and solidarity stores in France, serving between 120 000 and 170 000 "clients" per year.

Community Shops use surplus food to feed people on the cusp of food poverty. The aim is to build confidence, give people purpose and nurture stronger communities. The shop provides members with access to discounted food, as well as learning and development programmes. Community Shops are connected to Community Hubs and Kitchens https://www.companyshopgroup.co.uk/community-shop-our-social-enterprise

The People's Supermarket provide fresh local produce for a great price. Members work there for 4 hours a month in return for cheaper food. The People's Supermarket presents an innovative, inspiring, disruptive, and brilliant new business model to supply people with quality food. It demonstrates how, by collaborating in new ways, we can find economic, social and environmental triple wins - where all of us do better https://www.thepeoplessupermarket.org/

Freshplace is a client-choice food pantry where members choose their own food, the majority of which is fresh and perishable. Freshplace also includes a hydroponic grow centre; farmers market; railway gardens; food forest; and two social enterprises—La Cocina culinary arts training program and La Cocina catering https://chrysaliscenterct.org/programs/food/

Appendix Three: A food journey



The food journey is based on the lived experiences of people interviewed for the Families 100 Project to help portray some of the most significant findings (Thinkplace et al., 2014).

Visionwest
Waka Whakakitenga

building hope together | Kia Tūmanakotia

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