

Community Consultation Report

Common Ground Project
Freshwater Creek, Wadawurrung Country

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FOOD HUB

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Common Ground Project is a regenerative farm and social enterprise that connects and empowers community through food and farming.

We exist to empower agency and access for those who need it most in the community so that we can cultivate a stronger, fairer and more resilient local food system for all.

Grounded in regenerative farming, we believe that connection to land, food, work and community can drive real meaningful social and environmental change.

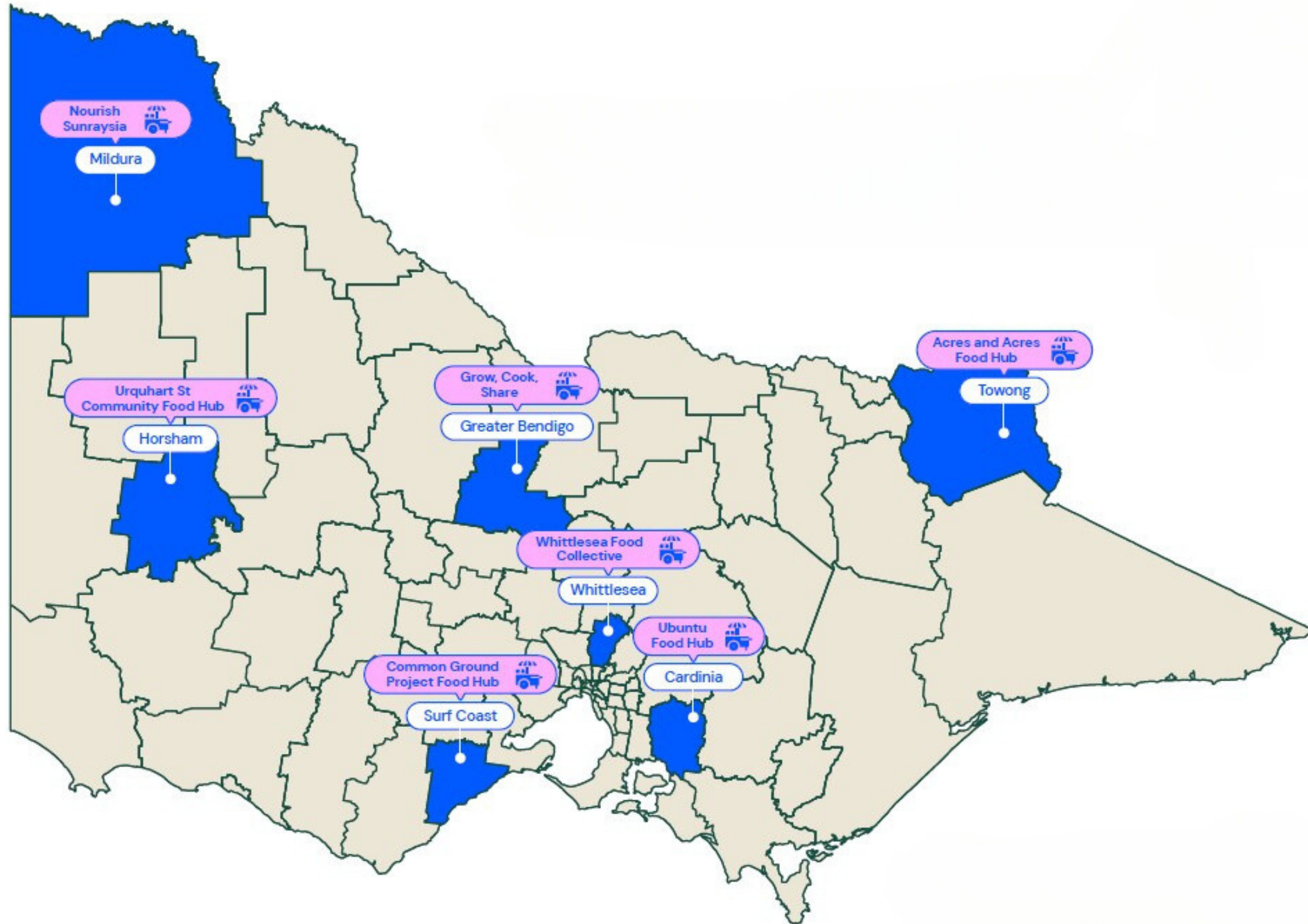




We are dedicated to rebuilding a food system which nourishes the environment that sustains it, the people whose livelihoods depend upon it, and the community who are daily fed by it.

At Common Ground Project, we recognise the urgent need for a more resilient and equitable food system which acknowledges the significant role relationships to land, food and community play in achieving food sovereignty, healthy ecosystems and a thriving social network.

Future Healthy Food Hubs



In response to this, we have partnered with VicHealth as one of seven Future Healthy Food Hubs within Victoria. The Future Healthy Food Hubs initiative aims to create healthier communities across Victoria through increased access to local food, education and opportunities that encourage communities to celebrate, showcase and learn about our collective food system.

We are excited to bring our community a permanent Food Hub market shop mid-2023 whereby they will have access to locally grown fresh produce from our farm and local producers.

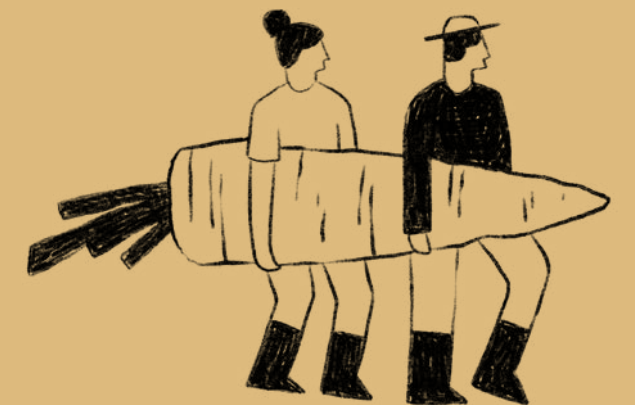


Correspondingly, we decided to engage with community in order to better understand how we can create and establish a space that attracts, engages and inspires individuals to participate in and support their local food system.

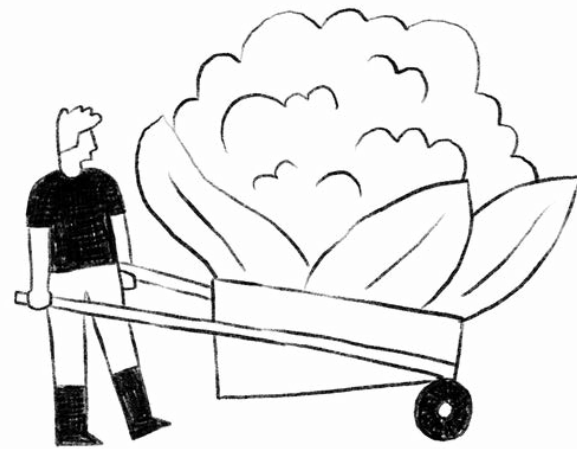
It's important to us at Common Ground Project that our communities voices form part of the design and development process of the Food Hub from day dot. We want to co-create and develop a Food Hub that meets the varying needs of local residents, families, community groups, schools and local business across the Surf Coast, Greater Geelong and Bellarine Peninsula.

Community Input Through Surveying

From November 2022 until February 2023, we actioned a survey for community asking them about their visions for the Common Ground Project Food Hub, set to launch in early-mid 2023. Our respondents were enthusiastic and ready to share their ideas for the Food Hub.




Where does our community come from?



Of the 55 respondents that we engaged via our survey, we can see that most reside in Torquay, Jan Juc, Bells Beach, Newtown, South Geelong, Freshwater Creek, Armstrong Creek, Mt Duneed and Charlemont localities. Many of our respondents will be travelling shorter distances to reach Common Ground Project compared to those who live in northern Geelong suburbs and on the Bellarine Peninsula.

**We asked,
community talked
and we listened.
This is what we
heard...**





An overwhelming majority (91.2%) of survey respondents stated that they believe the Surf Coast, Greater Geelong and Bellarine Peninsula is missing a space for local growers and makers to sell their produce, and for communities to learn and collaborate on regenerative and innovative projects. This is a huge need!

Is there a need for a Food Hub?

'There are a few places, it would be great to have one site that links all the places together, this makes it more accessible'.

'There are other options around locally but we could definitely do with more'.

'To be able to buy farm fresh weekly would be amazing'.

What Is A Food Hub?




Experience in Local Food Systems



'We have our own veggie garden and orchard'


'Growing and selling organic veg in my backyard. Part of Belmont food sharing network (Transition streets). Used to be involved in buying and selling poultry at the old markets in Geelong. Purchasing meat and eggs direct from local farmers'



'We always buy from farmers markets, have previously been involved in a community garden, do grow own food and love preserving, was an original member of the team that instigated the Hidden Orchard in Ballarat'

'Members of Aireys Inlet community garden, Grow Free 3231, weekly shop locally and at farm gates, produce stalls etc, lots of local food swaps and grow our own produce. We previously lived in an intentional community and participated daily in activities in the permaculture garden and preserving produce etc. Have recently started running local preserving, passata, jam making etc workshops on the Surf Coast'

'Having a grow free cart at my home for excess produce to be shared in my neighbourhood. Run a kitchen garden program at a primary school'



'Purchasing directly from farmers at Torquay Farmer's Market and South Geelong market'

Top 10 Motivations to visit a Food Hub

1. Supporting local community

2. Freshness of produce

3. Value for money

4. Seasonality

5. Community

6. Reduced food miles

7. Healthy produce

8. Peace of mind knowing food origin

9. Variety of produce

10. Programs and events

Community Vision for Food Hub

‘Sharing, local economy, circular economy, education, social and diversity’

Variety to justify regular visits

Events (music/festivities)

Employment and volunteer opportunities

Seasonal and affordable produce

Support health/wellbeing

Education

Partnerships

Tool library

Community of shared values and passions

Cafe

Circularity

Workshops

‘Ideally, we want community/individuals to develop positive relationships with their food and waste that see them valuing the journey of their produce from seed to shelf, feeling empowered knowing where their food comes from, feeling connected to community through opportunities at the Hub and perhaps even walking away with new burning curiosities about our food systems’.

Cultural inclusivity and diversity across programs and produce for sale

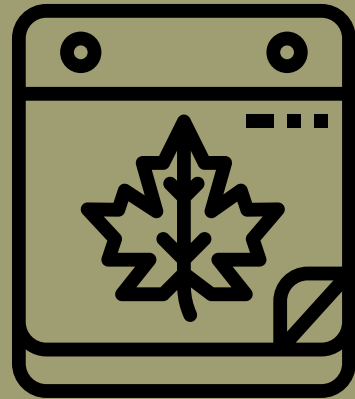
Space to connect with local growers

‘I would really love it if there's a central point where you know you can go and find quality produce. I think it would really reduce our reliance on the supermarket, which we would be so grateful for.’

Additional Needs of Food Hub

Produce calendar/understand what to expect seasonally

26.2%



Workshops/Events

29.2%



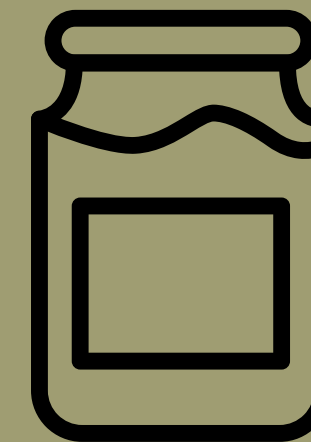
Local food systems directory

17.3%



Storage/preservation methods for produce

11.9%



Healthy recipes

15.5%



What Would You Buy From a Food Hub?



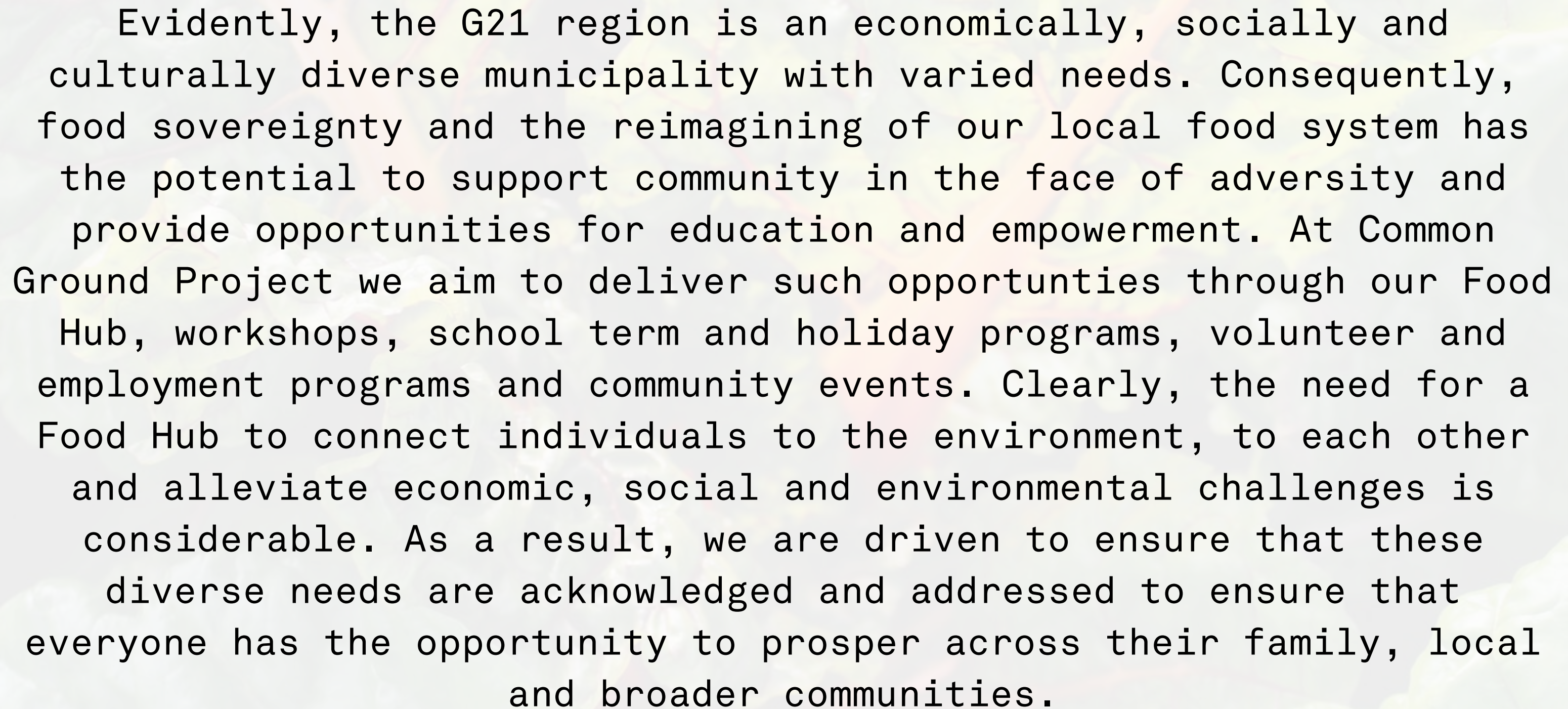
Diversity in our Community

Our community consultation has been an invaluable insight into the diverse needs and visions of our community members. The Greater Geelong (G21) region is one of the fastest growing localities within Victoria. Despite this, there is increasing economic and social disparity, with areas of the G21 region remaining some of the most vulnerable communities in Victoria¹. These include Corio, Norlane, Thomson, Colac (central and east), Whittington, Bell Park and a division of St. Leonards². These communities have been identified as vulnerable as they sit above the Victorian average on some significant indicators such as disengaged youth, low income households, education certification, unemployment, English proficiency and single parent families.³

1. G21 Regional Alliance 2023, 'Addressing Disadvantage', <https://g21.com.au/project/addressing-disadvantage/>

2. GROW 2023, 'FAQs', <https://grow.g21.com.au/resources-support/links-to-experts>

3. Informed Decisions 2021, 'SEIFA Index of Disadvantage', <https://profile.id.com.au/g21-region/seifa-disadvantage-small-area>



Evidently, the G21 region is an economically, socially and culturally diverse municipality with varied needs. Consequently, food sovereignty and the reimagining of our local food system has the potential to support community in the face of adversity and provide opportunities for education and empowerment. At Common Ground Project we aim to deliver such opportunities through our Food Hub, workshops, school term and holiday programs, volunteer and employment programs and community events. Clearly, the need for a Food Hub to connect individuals to the environment, to each other and alleviate economic, social and environmental challenges is considerable. As a result, we are driven to ensure that these diverse needs are acknowledged and addressed to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to prosper across their family, local and broader communities.

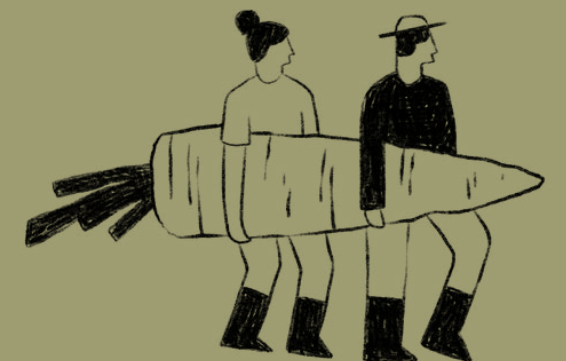
Summary of Key Findings

A summary of key findings from this consultation highlighted our community's desire for more choice and variety pertaining to produce, increased access to affordable and ethically grown produce, and finally, greater opportunities to connect with others.



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1. Variety

The desire for variety across the range of food items we offer, be they produce from CGP farm or local producers, was largely expressed by respondents in order to justify their visits to the Food Hub. Variety of food items remains particularly relevant, considering our endeavours to reach communities along the Bellarine Peninsula, as well as North and Central Geelong. Similarly, variety extends to culturally relevant food items which are necessary to engage multi-cultural circles. Further ideas proposed to support this need included a seasonality produce calendar and the implementation of a community garden (availability of plot hire) whereby individuals can exert and maintain varietal control.

2. Affordable and Ethically Grown Produce

A common theme expressed by a majority of respondents was the desire for locally and organically grown produce that is affordable. Given our understandings of the G21 landscape, affordability of produce would remain a key determinant for inclusive community visitation and participation at the Food Hub. Furthermore, an interest in produce that meets organically grown standards and adheres to circular system principles, especially in response to production and waste, was highlighted. Additional ethical desires raised included a want for seasonality and produce with low food mileage.

3. Community Connection

Many people expressed a clear eagerness to expand on their community connections and to meet individuals from an array of backgrounds through volunteering, education and community events. It was very clear that the Food Hub not only symbolises a place of connection to food, but equally people and place. A number of ideas were suggested to build community spaces and create opportunities for socialisation, for example a café, tool library, workshops, music and festive events, and a local food systems directory. Evidently, creating opportunity for community connection will remain a priority of the Food Hub when designing both physical spaces and collaborative opportunities.

Thank you for Your Contributions

It is clear that the Food Hub is an essential development for Common Ground Project and the wider community in realising a more equitable, diverse and healthy local food system. How and what we eat has long been the cornerstone of health, social cohesion, and our connection with nature. We are characterised by our experience of food, as individuals and as a community. Regardless of who we are, food is a common language we have always shared and understood. Hence, Common Ground Project aims to be a space for all and naturally values the contributions of community. We anticipate to continually collaborate in order to grow and flourish.

We understand that we weren't able to reach everyone in this consultation, however we thank those who participated and we are excited for all that is to come as a result of engaging with you now and into the future!

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Survey Questions

Question One:

Do you believe the three regions (Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast) are missing a community space that allows local growers and makers to sell their products and for community food and farming programs?

Yes

No

Comments below

Question Two:

What experiences do you have with engaging in the local food economy? (Being involved in a community garden, purchasing directly from a farmer, growing your own food would all be examples)

Question Three:

What do you see a Food Hub to be?

- A. Hub for local producers and makers to sell
- B. A space for farming programs/workshops
- C. A space for cooking programs/workshops
- D. Hub for diverse groups to hire out spaces (kitchen or plot of land)
- E. Food Relief
- F. Circular food economy- using leftover produce for making products
- G. Store of evolving produce/products open everyday
- H. Event space for food system experts

Question Four:

What do you see a Food Hub to be personally? (Include any anecdotes, personal views, recommendations large or small!)

Question Five:

What additional support or information would you like to see at a Food Hub other than selling local produce?

- A. Community workshops and events
- B. Storage of produce to keep longer
- C. Healthy recipes
- D. Directory of community resources/services across our shire and the neighbouring two
- E. Produce calendar/seasonal expectations of produce available

Question Six:

If a Food Hub was to be a community space that held a market of locally grown food and produce, what would motivate you to attend?

- A. Freshness of produce
- B. Supporting non-corporate or local businesses (local farmers)
- C. Healthy produce
- D. Community atmosphere
- E. Peace of mind of food source
- F. Variety of produce
- G. Value for money
- H. Reduced food miles
- I. Meeting with friends/family
- J. Certified organic produce
- K. Seasonality
- L. Coming to programs and events

Question Seven:

What are you more likely to purchase from a Food Hub? (Choose as many as relevant for you in an average month)

- A. Fresh local produce
- B. Artisanal homemade products (pickles, ferments, condiments)
- C. Cheap or reduced produce
- D. Dairy products from a local supplier
- E. Certified organic produce
- F. Eggs
- G. Mushrooms (varying varieties)
- H. Bread
- I. Pre-prepared healthy food/ hot food

Question Eight:

Which suburb postcode do you reside in?